

We Wouldn't Suffer

Jesus Never Said That

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OPENING QUESTION

When you hear the phrase 'joy in the midst of suffering,' what's your honest reaction—and why?

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Main Reading(s):

John 16:33

Phillipians 1:2

Matthew 5:4

Hebrews 12:2

KEY TAKE AWAY(S)

My joy is not determined by what happens to me, but by what Christ is doing in me and through me.

QUESTIONS

Honest check-in:

When you look back over your life, can you name a time of suffering or disappointment that has shaped you the most?

- How did it affect your view of God—did it draw you closer, push you away, or both?

Joy and suffering together (John 16:33):

“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” – *John 16:33*

How do you react to the idea that joy isn't just “in spite of” suffering, but can sometimes come *through* suffering?

- Does that feel real to you, or hard to believe right now?

Pulpit in your prison (Philippians 1:12):

“I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.” – *Philippians 1:12*

Steve talked about “setting up a pulpit in your prison”—letting God use your present hardship for His purposes. If you’re comfortable sharing, what is one area of pain, confusion, or waiting in your life right now? How might God want to work *in you* and *through you* there?

Not suffering alone:

What has helped you most when you’ve gone through something hard—words, presence, prayer, practical help? What would it look like for this group to be that kind of presence for one another?

PRACTICE

Weekly Practice: “One Moment of Joy in the Midst”

Goal: Train your eyes to see small signs of God’s goodness *in* the middle of a hard or ordinary day—not after everything is fixed.

Each day this week:

Notice one moment of joy or grace.

It can be very small:

- a kind word
- a good cup of coffee
- a laugh with someone
- a sense of God’s nearness
- a verse that stands out
- a moment of peace in a stressful day

Name it with God.

Take 30 seconds and say something like:

“Jesus, thank you for this little moment of joy.
Help me see that you’re with me, even here.”

Write it down.

Keep a short list in your phone or a notebook.

One line per day is enough:

“Monday – Walk outside at lunch; felt calmer.”

“Wednesday – Friend texted to check in.”

Next time we meet:

Everyone bring 1–2 of their “moments of joy” from the week.

Share:

Was it easy or hard to notice joy in the middle of everything?

Did anything shift in how you saw God or your situation?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank you that you meet us in both our suffering and our joy. Teach us this week to see you in the middle of our real lives, not just when things feel victorious. Strengthen us by your Spirit to walk with you and with one another, trusting that you are working good even when we can't yet see it.