

Welcome to Digital Discipleship, a weekly video teaching from Pastor Shawn and a downloadable weekly devotional guide. We pray that you will grow stronger in your walk with Jesus as you lean into these teachings and devotions.

## DIGITAL DISCIPLESHIP – LESSON 9 –

### Grow Godly Character through Suffering & Trials

#### Day 1

#### Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

Saints should expect to suffer.

**First:** the curse hasn't fully been reversed ... YET!

1. Jesus (the last Adam, 1 Corinthians 15:45) came to undo the curse triggered by the first Adam.
2. Only in Paradise will it be said ... **Revelation 22:3 (NIV)** *No longer will there be any curse.*
3. The full impact of the curse placed on this earth will be reversed – but NOT YET!
4. You still wrestle weeds in your garden; giving birth to your next child will be no picnic; and it is still appointed for people to die (Hebrews 9:27)!
5. It's true that on the Cross, Jesus cried out: "It is finished!"
6. The purchase of salvation was complete and inaugurated – the "**NOW**"
7. But the results of salvation were just beginning and aren't fully realized or experienced – **YET!**
8. So-called evangelicals and charismatics struggle with this, but from opposite ends of the continuum:
  - a. **Evangelicals** emphasize the "not yet;" excluding much of the "now"  
Result: they experience little of the Spirit's power and witness few miracles
  - b. **Charismatics** emphasize the "now;" excluding the "not yet"  
Result: many experience disillusionments because they expect everything to be as it will be in the Kingdom – but it isn't.
9. Both are half right, and both are half wrong! They're caught in what someone termed, "the tyranny of the 'either, or!'"
10. The answer to this dilemma is the 'both, and!' And that's why we still suffer.
11. At the Cross the outcome was assured, and victory is now in sight!
12. And so, we fight on against Satan (Ephesians 6:11-13), knowing that the outcome is now secured!
13. **YET...** Satan won't be finally bound until Jesus returns the 2<sup>nd</sup> time (Revelation 20:2); he fights on.

**Second:** disease and trouble are still our lot ... NOW – though we all experience healings and deliverance

1. Were there healings in the Old Testament? YES!
  - a. Naaman, commander of the army of the Aram was healed after he listened to Elisha's instruction to dip himself in the Jordan River seven times (2 Kings 5).
  - b. King Hezekiah was healed of a disease that would have otherwise killed him (Isaiah 38).
  - c. Elisha raised the Shunamite's son back to life (2 Kings 4:30).
2. And there were healings in the New Testament too:
  - a. Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple (Acts 3).

- b. Dorcas not only was healed – she was raised from the dead (Acts 9:36-40)!
- c. God performed such extraordinary miracles through Paul that even handkerchiefs that touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and evil spirits left them (Acts 19:11-12).
3. And, incidentally, we experience the same things **NOW**.
4. **YET** ... many of God's followers then and now DID NOT and DO NOT experience God's healings!
  - a. Even the great apostles and saints of the Early Church experienced sickness and death!
  - b. Timothy had stomach illness (1 Tim 5:23).
  - c. Epaphroditus was ill and almost died (Phil 2:25-27).
  - d. Paul left his friend, Trophimus, sick in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20).
  - e. And Paul, after praying three times, was left with a 'thorn in his flesh.'
5. Based on the following verse, some suggest that Jesus healed every ailment when He was on earth and therefore, we must too.
6. **Matthew 4:23 (NIV)** *Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*
7. However, there are significant problems from such an interpretive rendering
  - a. First, it clearly says that Jesus healed every disease/affliction – it does NOT say that he healed every person who had a disease/affliction. That's quite a distinction.
  - b. Second, we know for a fact that Jesus didn't heal every sick person He met.
    - For example, at the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus only healed one paralytic (John 5:1-15), even though there were sick people lying all around the pool!
8. Paul said it clearly: *...[we] groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* **Romans 8:23 (NIV)**
9. Our souls may be redeemed, but our bodies sure aren't!
10. At best, healings here are only temporary, for in the end we still deteriorate and die! These are NOT our resurrection bodies! They are mortal (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).
11. One value of present healings is to remind us that this will be our inherited state in heaven!
12. And incidentally, isn't it TRUE that every one of us experience many personal healings in our life-times?
13. How many colds and flus and headaches and pneumonias and fevers and aches and broken bones and cuts has God healed us of?
14. All healings (natural and supernatural) and miracles He grants now are simply a 'taste' of what's coming at the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9)!
15. **Revelation 21:4 (NIV)** *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*"
16. How about troubles in our life? Can they all be eradicated in our lives?
17. On the one hand it appears that the Bible says, "yes."
18. **Psalms 34:17 (NIV)** *The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. YET Jesus said ...*
19. **John 16:33 (NIV)** *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*
20. In light of the claim of some that grace is exclusive to the New Testament, it's ironic that the two verses completely reverse roles here, thereby refuting those claims!
21. Hardship followed Paul and his teams to the end of their lives. Paul says ...
22. **2 Corinthians 6:4 (NIV)** *Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses;*
23. And because hardships greatly impacted the apostles' followers too, the apostles spent much effort encouraging and exhorting them to remain true to the Lord despite their trials.
24. **Acts 14:21-22 (NIV)** *They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.*

25. Writing from prison, the Apostle John identified with his brothers and sisters who were suffering for Christ.
26. **Revelation 1:9 (NIV)** *I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*
27. The Voice of Martyrs reports that approximately 150,000 Christians are martyred every year; that's 410 per day or 17 per hour!
28. Jesus warned us not to expect better treatment than He received ...
29. **John 15:20 (NIV)** *Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.*
30. So, BECAUSE the Kingdom and all its blessings have not **YET** been fully realized, Jesus taught us to pray accordingly ...
31. **Matthew 6:9-10 (NIV)** *"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

## Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. We continue to suffer as believers. What two key points are noted today?
3. Has the curse of sin and death been fully reversed yet?
4. What are some biblical passages that indicate that we can expect suffering to continue?

## Life Application (James 1:22)

1. What are some examples of suffering that you have faced since you gave your life to Jesus? Write them down.
2. Read over the verses again from the 2<sup>nd</sup> point about disease and trouble.
3. Can you think of a time in your life where God healed you, or delivered you – or someone close to you? This is a taste of what's still to come! Spend some time praising God for this healing or deliverance!
4. Review Philippians 1:3-5, Romans 12:2, James 1:22, Matthew 28:19-20, John 10:27, Ephesians 4:11-12, Psalm 1:1-6, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Joshua 1:8, John 14:21, Matthew 6:9-13, 2 Peter 1:3-11, Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 6:19-24

## Day 2

### Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

On Day 1, we looked at two key points regarding our continued expectation for suffering. Today, we'll consider one more.

#### **Third:** Suffering is God's plan and will for Christians

1. Let's begin with Job. Some say that what happened to him was all Satan's doing.
2. So far as the initial challenge to God to harm Job is concerned, this is true.
3. But it's not the whole story, for Satan couldn't do anything to Job without God's permission!
4. Satan challenged God, saying that if trouble plagued Job, Job would surely curse Him.
5. See how God responded to the challenge ...
6. **Job 1:12 (NIV)** *The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*
7. Who did Job's wife blame? God – not Satan!
8. **Job 2:9 (NIV)** *His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"*
9. And who did Job himself credit with all his calamities? God!
10. **Job 1:20-22 (NIV)** *At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship <sup>21</sup> and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." <sup>22</sup> In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.*
11. Well surely Job must have done something wicked to deserve it, right?
12. That's what his so-called friends (God save us from such!) reasoned.
13. But hear God's evaluation of Job ...
14. **Job 1:8 (NIV)** *Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."*
15. This is fascinating!
16. Not only is this suffering one a, 'blameless and upright man,' he is suffering precisely because he IS blameless and upright!
17. And though in the end, God corrected the thinking of Job and his friends, he never corrected Job or his friend's claim that the ultimate cause of Job's suffering was God!
18. The writer of Hebrews goes one step further in explaining God's dealings with His own.
19. He says that God sends suffering because we are His children and because, as His children, He loves us!
20. **Hebrews 12:5-6, 11 (NIV)** *And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" ... <sup>11</sup> No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*
21. And because God knows that one day we'll care more about "the line of our eternities than the dot of our present on earth," He gives us that which we will really want then. THAT is loving!
22. And that is one good reason why God isn't reluctant to take the credit for sending calamity!
23. **Isaiah 45:7 (NIV)** *I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.*
24. Interestingly, the New Testament writers are unanimously in step with this understanding.
25. See how Luke quotes Jesus concerning what He had planned for Saul/Paul ...
26. **Acts 9:15-16 (NIV)** *[Paul] is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.*
27. And not only was it God's plan for Paul, Paul said it was God's plan for others as well ...

28. **Philippians 1:29 (NIV)** *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.*
29. Some object that if people just had enough faith, they wouldn't have to suffer such things. After all, isn't that what Jesus said? And then they point to passages such as this ...
30. **Matthew 9:22 (NIV)** *Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.*
31. But did you know that TRUE FAITH can result not only in so-called "positive" effects in believers' lives, but "negative" ones as well?
32. In the famous faith chapter of Hebrews 11, you can see faith bringing about BOTH "positive" AND "negative" results or effects:
- First, by faith, some experienced healings, resurrections and great victories
    - By faith, Sarah received power to conceive (Hebrews 11:11).
    - By faith, some women received back their dead by resurrection (Hebrews 11:35).
    - By faith, some achieved great victories and accomplishment (Hebrews 11:7, 29-30, 32-34).
  - Second, by faith some experienced martyrdom and others didn't see the fulfillment of promises made to them
    - We must look at this in its entirety, because it is seldom, if ever, considered!
    - **Hebrews 11:35-40 (NIV)** *Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. <sup>36</sup> Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. <sup>37</sup> They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- <sup>38</sup> the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. <sup>39</sup> **These were ALL commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.** <sup>40</sup> God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.*
33. There's a deep misunderstanding among many, about what faith is.
34. Sometimes God's "word" to us is to escape suffering. **E.g. Paul and the shipwreck** (see Acts 27:23-26)
35. Contrast this with Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- He even gave Paul the reason: to keep Paul from becoming conceited, because of the surpassingly great revelations being given to him and not to others!
  - If Paul had become conceited, he would have lost his reward (1 Corinthians 9:27).
36. Here's where many go wrong when it comes to faith ...
37. Many think that biblical faith is something that arises from believing something WE WANT. It doesn't!
38. Biblical faith is trusting and believing something that GOD WANTS!
39. And whatever God wants is ALWAYS for our ultimate, though not our seemingly immediate, good
40. **Romans 8:28 (NIV)** *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*
41. "God cares more about the line of your eternity, than the dot of your present."
42. And THIS IS WHY James could say that trials and afflictions were good, and we could rejoice in them.
43. *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance."* **James 1:2-3 (NIV)**

## Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. We continue to suffer as believers. What key point is noted today?
3. What are some biblical examples of believers who suffered, though they trusted God?
4. Does our faith always lead to less suffering? Explain. What are we to put our faith in?

## Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you three examples from your life where suffering resulted in something good. Write these down.
2. Spend some time praising God for what He did through your suffering.
3. Share at least one of your examples with someone else (believer or unbeliever). Ask them (if a believer) for any examples that they can think of.

## Day 3

### Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

#### How to survive during suffering and trials

1. Some people don't survive seasons of afflictions.
2. Jesus referred to such people in His parable about soils, calling them rocky soil (Matthew 13:5-6).
3. As soon as trouble or persecution come, they quickly fall away (Matthew 13:20-21).
4. Other people, however, are exemplary in their response to suffering – Job is the obvious choice here.
5. Even his wife “threw in the towel” at that point, baiting her husband ...
6. **Job 2:9 (NIV)** *“Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”*
7. Still, Job would not give in. He replied ...
8. **Job 2:10 (NIV)** *“You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”*  
*In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.*
9. Upon receiving all the bad news about his losses, He worshipped God!
10. **Job 1:20 (NIV)** *At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship ...*
11. It takes a mature trust in God to do that!
12. So then, how can we survive in the midst of suffering and trials?

#### **First:** understand God's love in redemptive suffering

1. Many Christians are very familiar with the teaching that Jesus went to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:9).
2. What they are apparently less acquainted with is the fact that He is at the same time preparing us for that place!
3. Job couldn't see any rational or redemptive purposes for his suffering. But when God finally revealed His purposes to Job, Job marveled ...
4. **Job 42:3 (NIV)** *Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.*
5. We come to see that God's thoughts and ways are so much better than ours!
6. And when we do, it anchors us in the midst of the tempest!
7. That God allows suffering to come into our lives to mature us, of that there can be no question.
8. Jesus Himself said that the Father PRUNES us for the purpose of making us more fruitful.
9. **John 15:1-2 (NIV)** *I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he PRUNES so that it will be even more fruitful.*
10. Such discipline is good for us first, because it produces the abundant or renewed life in this present life.
11. **1 Peter 1:6-9 (NIV)** *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*
12. Beyond that, we also experience greater measures of the abundant life through the godly character the afflictions were designed to produce!
13. But trials and suffering also achieve something for our eternal future!
14. **2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NIV)** *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*
15. How do these troubles and suffering achieve an eternal glory for us?
16. Though we are saved by grace through faith, we will be judged and rewarded according to our works.

17. **2 Corinthians 5:10 (NIV)** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*
18. However, we won't be judged just on whether the works in themselves were good or bad.
19. Even the motives for our good works will be tested for genuineness (1 Peter 1:6-7) at the Judgment.
20. **1 Corinthians 3:12-13 (NIV)** *If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.*
21. Think about it – a good work doesn't need such testing, because it is plain to everyone!
22. Therefore, Paul is saying that God is testing for something that isn't plain for everyone else to see, because it is hidden in our hearts (1 Samuel 16:7).
23. **Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*
24. What is it that is hidden in our hearts and will be laid bare, brought to light or tested by fire?
25. **Philippians 1:18 (NIV)** *But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.*
26. We can't see motives, but God can.
27. And while He prohibits us from judging motives in others (Matthew 7:1-2), He will uncover and judge them on the Day we give account (1 Corinthians 3:12-15 and Hebrews 4:13 above).
28. Because this is such a sobering reality, God, in His great love for us, allows trials and suffering which will produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness that will withstand His holy scrutiny at the Judgment.
29. **How we embrace and navigate our suffering will either cause us to shake a fist at God or hold our hand out to Him. Those who reach out their hand to God are people who experience incredible closeness to God. They will tell you that it was through their suffering that Jesus became more real to them than ever.**
30. If we don't use our suffering as an opportunity to invest in our eternal futures, we miss one of our greatest opportunities or gifts, as Fran would put it. What a loss!
31. We shouldn't focus all our energies on avoiding death, as death comes to us all anyways.
32. Rather, we should use our present life to prepare for where and how we will live forever.
33. Christians sometimes testify about what they USED to do for Jesus – many years ago!
34. And then some life circumstance hits them broadside, and they fall away. They don't persevere.
35. Your responses during these times determine whether God's intended results will take hold.
36. Your trials will make you bitter or better (the difference is one letter!). You will either grow up or give up.
37. You'll either become what God wants you to be; or you will shrivel, and your heart will become hard.
38. When you go through those difficult times, what happens to you isn't nearly as important as what happens in you.
39. Will you submit to our loving Father and live (Hebrews 12:9)? Or will you resist what He wants to do for you in your trial? You choose. Much is on the line.

## Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What key point is shared in today's reading, that will help us survive when suffering and trials come?
3. What good does God want to bring from our suffering, that helps us now?
4. What good does God want to bring from our suffering, that helps us in eternity?



## Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Do you feel like you are prepared to meet God? Have you given your life to Jesus? Are you serving Him? Would you say that your motives are being purified? It is awesome to ask these questions of ourselves, prior to standing before our King and Judge.
2. Go to Psalm 139:23-24. Pray this passage. Listen carefully to what the Spirit is saying and write down what He says.
3. If there are things revealed about your life or motives, find someone to confess to. Don't be ashamed to bring this to a brother or sister. God works through our confessions! (James 5:16)

## Day 4

### Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

On Day 4, we looked at one way to survive our suffering and trials – understand God’s love in redemptive suffering. Today, we’ll discuss three more ways that will help us walk through difficulty.

#### **Second:** understand who’s in the ‘boat’ with you

1. Bible commentators have pointed out that Matthew and Mark (4:35-41) laid out the account of the calming of the storm, using language almost identical to the famous Old Testament account of Jonah.
2. The descriptions are strikingly similar:
  - a. Both Jesus and Jonah were in boat.
  - b. Both boats were overtaken by a storm.
  - c. Both Jesus and Jonah were asleep
  - d. In both stories the sailors woke up the sleeper and said, “We’re going to die.”
  - e. And in both cases, there was a miraculous intervention and the sea calmed.
  - f. Further, in both stories the sailors then became even more terrified than they were before the storm was calmed.
3. Two almost identical stories – with one key difference.
4. In the midst of the storm, Jonah said to the sailors, in effect: “There’s only one thing to do. If I perish, you survive. If I die, you will live” (Jonah 1:12).
5. And they threw him into the sea.
6. In one of his books, Timothy Keller then asks: “Which doesn’t happen in Mark’s story – or does it?”
7. The following is a brief summary of what Keller wrote:
  - a. I think Mark is showing us that the stories aren’t actually different when you step back and look at them with the rest of the story of Jesus in view.
  - b. In Matthew (12:41) Jesus says, “One greater than Jonah is here,” and He’s referring to Himself: “I’m the true Jonah!”
  - c. He meant this: “Someday I am going to calm all storms, and still all waves. I’m going to destroy destruction, break brokenness, kill death.”
  - d. How can He do it? He can only do it because when He was on the cross he was thrown – willingly, like Jonah – into the ultimate storm, under the ultimate waves, the waves of sin and death.
  - e. Jesus was thrown into the only storm that can actually sink us – the storm of eternal justice, of what we owe for our wrongdoing.
  - f. The storm wasn’t calmed – not until it swept Him away.
  - g. If the sight of Jesus being thrown into that storm is burned into the core of your being, you will never say, “God, don’t you care?”
  - h. And if you know that He didn’t abandon you in that ultimate storm, what makes you think He would abandon you in the much smaller storms you’re experiencing right now?
  - i. Mark recorded these events while he & Peter were staying in Rome.
  - j. It is not difficult to imagine the impact this story had on the members of the persecuted Church.
  - k. It assured them that the strong Son of God loved them and would go with them into the storms of opposition and persecution.

#### **Third:** Receive God’s wisdom in the midst of your suffering and trials

1. Sometimes God is willing to tell us what the purpose for our suffering is – if we ask Him, as Paul did.
2. We should ALWAYS ask Him, though sometimes He may choose not to reveal His purpose at that time
3. When God chooses not to tell us the purpose for our suffering, it is because withholding the purpose is key to the trial.

4. For example, though Job asked for understanding of his trial, God chose to remain silent precisely because the silence was vital to the test.

**Fourth:** Receive God's love in the midst of your suffering and trials

1. Though the other three points are all important, none of them come close to achieving what experiencing God's love can do.
2. Explanations and reasons are helpful for the mind, because in part, they answer the question "Why?"
3. But sometimes good answers just aren't good enough!
4. When your heart is being wrung out like a sponge, an orderly list of 16 good biblical reasons as to why this is happening can sting like salt in a wound. You don't stop the bleeding that way.
5. **E.g.** A hurting child:
  - a. When a crying child looks up into their mom's face and asks, "Mommy, why?" they aren't actually asking for an explanation.
  - b. All they want is for mommy to pick them up and reassure them that everything is going to be okay.
  - c. All they want is to be loved!
6. Job never did get any answers to his questions.
7. In fact, God responded to him with 71 questions of His own!
8. But though Job didn't get any answers to his questions, see how Job responded.
9. **Job 42:5 (NIV)** *My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.*
10. What satisfied Job? When He saw and experienced God's presence!
11. Go to Him – He wants to give you the ultimate gift – Himself. And it will satisfy!
12. What you and I really need in our suffering and trials, is God's experiential love.
13. That's what Paul prayed for those suffering in the church at Ephesus.
14. **Ephesians 3:16-19 (NIV)** *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,<sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*
15. There it is! That's what you need! Go to Him!

## Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.
2. What three key points are shared in today's reading, that will help us survive when suffering and trials come?
3. Will God always tell us the, "why," of our suffering? Explain.
4. What really is the most important thing for us to experience in our suffering and trials?

## Life Application (James 1:22)

1. Think of some suffering, or a trial, that you experienced in the past. Write down some of the details.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit these questions, and record your answers:
  - "God, what were you doing through this suffering/trial?"
  - "God, is there anyway that I was impatient in my suffering/trial? If yes, how can I grow in patience?"
  - "God, is there something that I can learn from this past suffering/trial, that would benefit me in my present?"

## Day 5

### Renew the Mind (Romans 12:2)

#### Steps to grow your godly character in trials and storms

**Step 1:** Worship God, knowing He is working all things out for your good

1. That's what Paul said in Romans 8:28.
2. Do you believe that God is working all things for good in your life? Can you praise Him in the good times as well as in the hard times? Try it and see what it does for your soul.
3. In this way your spirit is telling your emotions how they should feel about it.
4. David did just that ...
5. **Psalm 42:5 (ESV)** *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation.*

**Step 2:** Go to Him daily for comfort and strength to carry on

1. God will not always give you the reason just yet, why He is allowing difficulty in your life.
2. But in suffering, when we don't know the WHY, we can be content with the WHO!
3. He is your refuge and beneath you are His everlasting arms.
4. **Deuteronomy 33:27 (NIV)** *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*

**Step 3:** Set your eyes on eternity by meditating on eternal things

1. Memorize verses about eternity in order to move your focus from temporary things to fix them on eternal things.
2. This will give you hope and the necessary strength to persevere to the end of your trial.

**Step 4:** Ask God to reveal what His purpose(s) in this are

1. We learn from the example of Paul that we should seek to understand God's purposes when we're faced with suffering.
2. He didn't sink into despair or disillusionment; he didn't become anxious trying to fix it; he didn't shake his fist at the heavens in anger.
3. He will have said, "OK Father, show me what you're up to. Your ways are so much higher and your thoughts so much greater. What are you doing that is greater and higher than getting me out of jail! Show me!"
4. And God showed Paul – Paul saw it!
5. And what God showed Paul is another purpose for which God allows us to suffer.
6. Now, at other times God does NOT reveal the reason for the suffering – at least not until the testing or trial is over.
7. For example, when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac – God didn't tell Abraham that he would supply another sacrifice!
8. However, Abraham did find out after the test, what God was trying to do in the middle of the test!
9. Sometimes we find out years later.
10. And some things we simply won't know until we reach heaven.
11. However, not to ask is to dishonor the Lord – for according to James 1 He invites us to ask.
12. No doubt, God will be working out several purposes in our trials or suffering – perhaps He'll reveal one or two of them, while withholding the other purposes for the time being.
13. But when He does reveal purposes, He does so for several reasons:
  - a. So, we can align with His purposes, rather than working at cross-purposes to His.
  - b. To comfort us.

- c. To show us how we can cooperate with Him in the development of our character.
14. Perhaps He won't give us the purpose, but He may wish to speak to us and show us how to navigate the trial or challenge.

**Step 5:** Pray daily for a character trait

1. When God shows you what character trait that He wants you to learn during the time of trial and testing, begin to pray for that trait to become a part of your character.
2. If He doesn't show you which character trait He is working out in your life, choose one that you would like for Him to work out during this season and then pray for that.

**Step 6:** Confess any sinfulness in the area of character growth needed

1. The area that God wants us to grow in is the same area in which sinful, unrighteous or ungodly behavior will be seen. This needs to be confessed.
2. Go to Him. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
3. **1 John 1:9 (NIV)** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**Step 7:** Receive inner healing, deliverance and freedom from harmful family patterns

1. Perhaps an old wound from your childhood or past is contributing to your suffering.
2. Or there is a bondage you just can't conquer alone. Perhaps it's even generational.

**Step 8:** Tell someone & ask for their prayers

1. You can't survive your trials and suffering alone. God designed us to need one another.
2. Ask your spouse or a friend or a small group to pray with you in these days.
3. And when you do, don't just ask for prayer to remove circumstances; ask prayer to align with God's purposes in this, including growth in godly character.

**Step 9:** Be filled with and live by the Spirit

1. You cannot change your character alone.
2. You need to be filled Holy Spirit, so that you can receive the desire and ability to work on your character.
3. Paul named four ways to be filled:
  - a. When we minister to others – addressing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
  - b. When we worship the Lord – singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord.
  - c. When we are grateful to the Lord – giving thanks to God always and in all circumstances – even bad.
  - d. When we submit to one another – submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**Step 10:** Learn and memorize Scripture about the trait

1. This will help you remember the trait, but also wrestle God's truth about it into your heart.
2. If you do this, it will help you immensely.

**Step 11:** Keep in step with the Spirit

1. Stop and choose correctly.
2. The Spirit will remind you of the responses you are learning in the midst of your trial.
3. Walk with Him, so He can guide you through it.

## Reflecting and Reviewing (2 Timothy 2:7)

1. Write down something that stood out to you, from the reading you just completed.

2. What eleven steps are given to help us grow through our suffering and trials?
3. Is this something we can do alone, or do we need others?
4. What four ways does Paul give us to be filled with the Spirit?

### **Life Application (James 1:22)**

1. Listen in prayer with your spouse (or a friend, if single) about a CURRENT struggle:
  - a. Personal struggle
  - b. Marriage struggle
  - c. Ministry struggle
  - d. Other struggle
2. What is God saying to you about your struggle? Write it down.
3. Work through the Steps presented in today's reading.

## Day 6

### Obedience

1. For this final day, we want to focus on OBEDIENCE, as we as disciples are to be doers of the Word (James 1:22-25). The Bible clearly teaches that obedience is a clear echo of our love for God (1 John 5:3).
2. It is also through obedience that we find blessing and our lives are built on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).
3. Take this lesson and quickly scan the title and headings – do not re-read the entire lesson.
4. Humbly go before God and ask – “what is one step of obedience that I can take as a result of this lesson?”
5. Perhaps have a section in your journal where you record this step (and steps from future lessons). Or put it in the calendar on your phone. This shows God that we are both intending and committing to obey.
6. Write or speak out a prayer of commitment based on the step.