



## Message Series Guide

### The Pursuit of Happiness

#### Part 4 – Comfort/Security

#### Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 + Matthew 16:24-26

Convenient. Controllable. Predictable. These are words that we would love to use to describe our life. These are words that lead to comfort, security and certainty. But what if the comfort and certainties we crave are a recipe for complacency and laziness that draw our hearts further from God rather than closer? One of the ways God seems to refine spiritual complacency is through suffering, hardship, and difficulty. Throughout Scripture, it seems God is more interested in making His people holy rather than keeping them happy...and many times that process involves suffering. No one enjoys suffering or hardship, but they produce a spiritual endurance that cannot be achieved any other way (Romans 5:3-5). Therefore, it may be necessary to sip from the cup of suffering today, so we don't have to drown in the devastations of tomorrow.

### READ:

**Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 • Matthew 16:24-26 • 1 Peter 5:10 • James 1:2-4 • Romans 5:3-5**

- According to Ecclesiastes 7:13-14, what does it mean that we cannot straighten what God has made crooked? What does this say about God's sovereignty? What should we do in the days of prosperity? In days of adversity? Why?
- Why do you think the Bible warns against pursuing comfort, ease or a life without suffering? According to Romans 5:3-5, what good does suffering/hardship/difficulty produce in our spiritual lives? Why are these traits important in our walk with the Lord?
- In Matthew 16:24, what three imperatives do Jesus say are necessary if we are to follow Him? Discuss what each of the three imperatives mean and give an example of each: 1.) Deny yourself; 2.) Take up your cross; 3.) Follow Jesus.
- According to Matthew 16:25-26, what two ways can a person lose his or her life (soul)? Jesus said a person's soul is more valuable than what? What does this mean for our eternity?

### DISCUSS:

- Why does our human nature seek comfort, security and/or certainty in life? Though there is nothing wrong with living a comfortable life, why is pursuing comfort as a priority not a good idea?
- How can we rest in what God ordains for our life whether it's good or not? Because God holds the future how can we increasingly trust Him no matter our circumstances? What disciplines help you trust God even in through the most difficult of circumstances?
- Are you willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ 100%? How does that look in your day-to-day life?

### PRAY:

Pray that you will be willing to sip from the cup of suffering today, so you don't have drown in the devastations of tomorrow.

### RESPOND:

Consider how you can 1.) deny yourself; 2.) take up your cross; and 3.) follow Christ this week in order to produce spiritual endurance.



## **Sermon Notes**

### **The Pursuit of Happiness**

#### **Part 4 – Comfort/Security**

**Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 + Matthew 16:24-26**

Our greatest pain often becomes our greatest purpose for drawing closer to God.

#### **Three imperatives for those who want to follow Jesus:**

1. Deny Yourself
  - a. To *deny yourself* means to refuse to recognize or acknowledge oneself.
  - b. Denying ourselves produces discomfort, but discomfort produces endurance.
2. Take Up Your Cross
  - a. The willingness to take up our cross means the willingness to lay down our lives.
3. Follow Me
  - a. Present tense verb meaning *a daily following*.
  - b. A lifestyle of following Jesus.

#### **QUOTE:**

*It is doubtful that God can use a man greatly until He has first hurt him deeply.* – A.W. Tozer