

1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11

Seventh Sunday of Easter



Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, indeed! Eastertide is a period of 50 days, beginning on Easter Sunday and ending at Pentecost, when we celebrate the birth of the Church. During Eastertide, we celebrate the Risen Christ and imagine how we might live as Easter people. Rachel Held Evans wrote, "God showed us how to heal instead of kill, how to mend instead of destroy, how to love instead of hate, how to live instead of long for more. When we nailed God to a tree, God forgave. And when we buried God in the ground, God got up."



Scripture

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.



Questions

- We're in the season of Easter when we remember how Jesus wants us to live. What are some things Jesus taught us to do?
- This passage talks about how one community of people trying to follow Jesus was having a hard time. Why do you think the people in power didn't like when this community tried to spread Jesus' message and live how he taught?
- What are some ways this scripture invites the community to respond to the hard things they're experiencing?
- This passage tells the people to trust in God. What does trust mean? Why is trusting in God important?
- This passage also tells the people to remember others have hard times too. How can we offer help and comfort to people who are having a hard time?

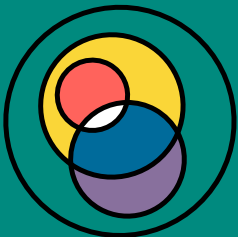
Look it Up!

We can share Jesus' love by helping people going through hard times.

Look up some organizations in your community that support those who are struggling. Which ones does your church partner with, and how can you volunteer to help?



mini
REVOLUTIONS





Activity

Materials:

Writing utensils
Paper

Optional: A whiteboard to use collaboratively

What does it mean to suffer? We suffer when something physically, emotionally, or spiritually hard happens to us. To explore this concept further, make three columns on a whiteboard or on individual papers. Label the columns physical, emotional, and spiritual, and write examples of suffering, directing the conversation to age-appropriate examples.

We suffer physically when we are sick or hurt. We suffer emotionally if a pet dies or a friend moves away. We feel sad or confused. We suffer spiritually if we pray and God doesn't "give us" what we asked for or if someone at church acts against Jesus' direction to love. We feel disconnected from God or our church family.

Various forms of suffering can be interrelated. For instance, when we experience physical illness, it can lead to emotional suffering, such as feelings of sadness when missing out on an exciting event. In this case, physical suffering connects with emotional suffering. Draw an arrow from the physical column to the emotional column. Furthermore, when we pray for recovery but don't see immediate results, we may experience spiritual suffering as well. This demonstrates a connection between emotional and spiritual suffering. Draw an arrow from the emotional column to the spiritual column. Can you recall a time when you encountered multiple types of suffering that evolved from one form to another? Share your experiences, and discuss how one kind of suffering can transform into another.

The author tells us in this letter that we should notice when one type of suffering transforms into another and try to change our mindset. The author says not to be surprised when we suffer. Instead, try to be joyful and stay connected with God until the suffering ends. Give God all your worries, and pray even more when you don't understand why things are happening.

How would you put this advice into practice? What advice would you give someone who is suffering? How can we help people who are suffering? Talk about how others helped you when you were sick, sad, or disconnected from God.

Activity Adaptation

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Play charades with your favorite G/PG movies. Act out the main character through the story's beginning, middle, and end. Once the movie is guessed, discuss who suffered in the movie and how they suffered (physically, emotionally, spiritually, or a combination).

Help participants notice how suffering usually happens in a combination of ways. In the movie, who helped the main character? Identify how friends and supporters strengthened the characters. In the end, how did the character feel? How was the suffering resolved?

How can we be of help when someone is suffering? How can we be like the helpers in movies and do this? Who are some safe people in our life to talk to when we are suffering?



Micropractice

When you feel stressed or worried this week, take a moment to say a breath prayer: "I breathe in calm, I breathe out (insert stress or worry)." This is one way to "cast our cares on Jesus."



Download a graphic to share with your community and on social media. You can download it here: illstrtdm.in/minirevAEaster7



Prayer

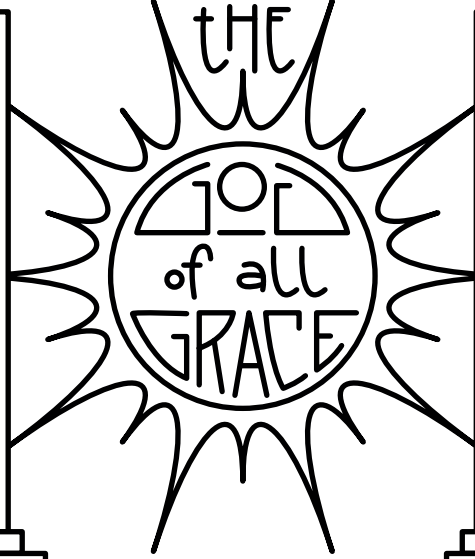
Dear God, who knows about our suffering, help us be brave when facing hard things. Help us to see the suffering of the people and animals around us and to be the helpers. Amen.

AND AFTER

YOU HAVE SUFFERED FOR

A LITTLE WHILE

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...WILL...

PROBATION

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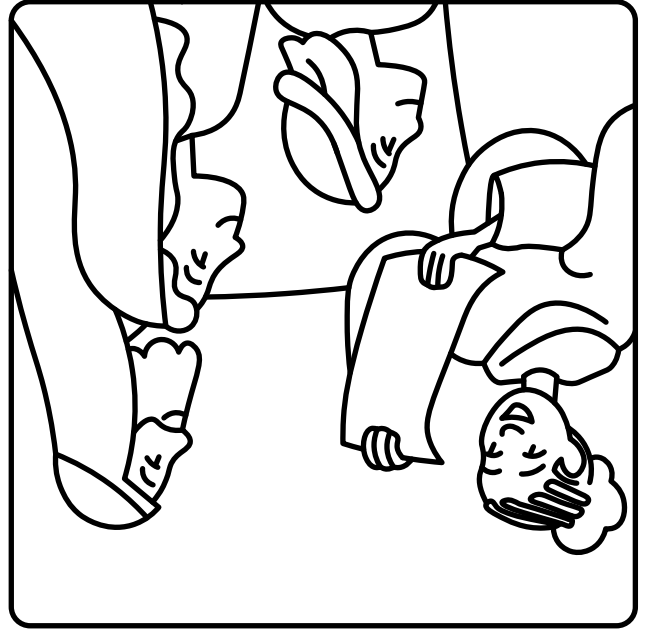
2. Some people in power did not like when Jesus' followers shared Jesus' message to worship God, help those in need, and love everyone. This made them feel less in control, so they made life hard for Jesus' followers.



1. After Jesus died, came back to life, and went to live in the ways Jesus taught them. They worked to share God's love and serve others.



3. Knowing communities following Jesus were struggling, one leader in the church wrote to this community to encourage and remind them Jesus understands their struggle. The leader invited the people to trust God cares about them and will comfort them.



4. The church leader tells this community life will not always be hard and reminds them to share these difficult things with God. God will support them, help them feel good again, and make sure they are safe and sound.