

## 1st Peter #7 - Suffering Leads to Sinning or Serving

- Well, howdy, good to see you all. Today we're in 1 Peter 4. If you've got a Bible, we tend to go through, 'cause I really like to go through books of the Bible, so thanks for joining me. And today we're in 1 Peter 4, and before we jump in, let me just start by telling you I love you and I want to help. And this could be one of those really practical sermons that, really, if applied could make a massive difference in your life, in your family, in your relationships for honestly generations to come. It's really, really significant because one of the things that we don't learn when we're in school is how to suffer. How many of you went through elementary school? You didn't have a class, "How to Suffer." Go through high school, they don't give you a class on how to suffer. You can make it all the way through college, you can get a graduate degree and not know how to suffer. And one of the most important lessons you and I can ever learn is what to do when we're suffering and what not to do when we're suffering. And when Jesus Christ said, "Pick up your cross and follow me," He meant at least two things. Number one, that He was going to suffer, and number two, that Christians who follow Him, that we were going to suffer. The question is not will we suffer but how will we suffer, what will we do with our suffering, and what will we do to learn about helping others who are suffering. And when it comes to suffering, I want you to think about whatever you're going through right now. How many of you it's financial suffering? All right, have you looked at the economy? Wow, if you're doing well, you're defying gravity, amen? The rest of us are a little concerned. How many of you it's physical? You've got some physical problems right now, maybe surgery, injury, health, lingering pain. How many of you it's relational? You've got strained relationships with family or friends. How many of you right now it's mental? There's some things that you're really struggling with. How many of you it's emotional? It's a difficult season for you. How many of you it's spiritual and you're wondering where God is and what He's saying and doing and how you can respond to Him. Everyone is dealing with varying kinds of suffering constantly, and the suffering is often multilayered. But suffering has an opportunity to teach us some things about God and how we can become more like Jesus. Some years ago, my family and I, we were in for us what was the hardest season collectively as a family of our entire life. It was just really the roughest season, quite frankly, that we've ever been in, Grace and I and the five kids. And I didn't want to waste it because I believe that life is a class and that class is always in session and whatever you're going through in life, there's an opportunity to learn and to get better from it. And so what I did is I started journaling out what we were learning collectively through what we were experiencing through suffering. And I want to share with you today 14 things from that journal, and this is just the introduction. If you're new, it's like a Groupon here. You always get one sermon and then another one for free. So this is the free one, and then we'll get into 1 Peter 4. But what this is, this is setting up the whole Biblical context for suffering. We believe in the whole Bible, we love the entire word of God, and Peter is one of the final books of the Bible written. A lot has been said previously, and I'm gonna collect that together to sort of open your understanding so that his specific instruction is most beneficial. So there's 14 kinds of suffering, at least. There's Adamic suffering. That's our father, Adam, he sinned against God. As a result, everyone and everything is just kind of broken. Everyone and everything is just kind of broken. In addition, there's demonic suffering.

Sometimes Satan and demons, and there is an unseen, unholy, unhelpful realm just attacks you and you didn't do anything. You're really a victim of demonic attack. There's a man named Job in the Bible. It says he was a righteous man and Satan just declared war on him. Not because of anything he had done, but because of his love for God, that's demonic suffering. Victim suffering. Sometimes you are not guilty. You didn't do anything, you just got attacked. Sexual assault victim, thievery, business partner steals from you, spouse runs off and commits adultery, something catastrophic. You didn't cause it or create it or perhaps even contribute to it. You're just a victim of injustice and evil. There's also collective suffering. This is where you're part of a group of people and they're all suffering, so you're feeling your suffering and their suffering. Today we would call that America. Amen, are you feeling this? Right, right now, everybody's kind of in a hard season and we're all feeling it together, which raises the suffering level. There's also disciplinary suffering. The Bible says that God is a father and just like a good parent corrects a child, it's to prevent greater future harm. So if you see your kid doing something that is ultimately going to harm them or endanger them, you discipline them to correct them. Well, God is a father and He disciplines us to save us from greater harm, it's an act of love. There's also persecution suffering. We'll get into this more specifically next week as we conclude 1 Peter 4 but this is where you love Jesus and they don't, and as a result they're going to treat you the way they treated Him. This is really out of your love for Jesus. In addition, there's empathetic suffering. And this is that someone that you love, care for very dearly, is really having a hard season and they're going through it and so you're sharing in their grief. The Bible says to weep with those who weep. That's what empathetic suffering would be. How many of you right now there's somebody you know, you love, and they're really going through it and you're going through it with them because you care for them. And what makes it even harder in our day is we can't even physically be together to comfort those that are suffering and we care for. Life is so complicated and isolated right now that it multiplies empathetic suffering. There's also testimonial suffering where what you're going through is really hard, but God has a great testimony for you on the other side. That you're gonna use this to talk about the goodness and glory of God and people will pay attention because of all that you've endured. We saw this not long ago on the news. There was someone that had a family member that was murdered tragically, and it was a horrible situation. And the mother, I think it was, got on the news and she said what happened was wrong and evil, but Jesus Christ is a God who forgives and He has forgiven me. Therefore, I forgive them. That's testimonial. What happened was horrible, but she used it as a witness to her love for Jesus and His love for her. Providential suffering is where God is working out and orchestrating a lot of details in your life towards some greater cause or good in the end. This is the story of a man in the Bible named Joseph. He goes through a cataclysmic series of betrayals and complexities, and then in the end, it was all to get him in another country during a famine so that he could save many many lives. And God had a great story planned for him, and he just needed to keep going until he got to the happy ending. Mysterious suffering, category 11. You're like, I don't know why, how many of you, this is what you've experienced. Somebody comes to you like, "Okay, why did this happen?" You're like, "I have no idea." The Bible says we see in part, we know in part. There are certain days, you're like, "Lord, I love you and I don't know what's going on. "I just don't know." There will be things that we don't know until we see Jesus and then He lets us know, that's the mystery. There's also

punishment suffering. This is where you do something bad, and as a result there's a consequence. You commit a crime, you get arrested. You drink too much, you blow out your liver. You yell at your wife, you sleep on the couch. This is just cause effect, this is the way that it works. And if you slept on the couch last night, now you know why, okay? There's also consequential suffering. This is where we're not entirely victims but the decisions that we make contribute to the pain that we experience. What's happening right now, many of us are dealing with consequential suffering. I was overextended on my mortgage and then the bottom fell out. I really spent some money I shouldn't have spent, racked up my credit card or college or car debt, and then I lost my job. I really didn't watch my health, and now I'm in a high risk category. This is consequences for decisions that we make over time. And then lastly, there's apocalyptic suffering and what this means is history moves toward its conclusion and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, things get worse. This is the opposite of evolution, by the way. And if you still hold to evolution, you're adorable. How many people think it's getting better? Anybody think it's getting better? Like--

- Yeah!

- It's going so well! I can hardly wait for the future! The election, I'm so excited! You know, and so what happens is apocalyptic means the closer we get to the end, the more Satan and demons declare war, the harder and darker it gets until Jesus comes to fix the mess we've made. All of that to say a few things about suffering. Number one, you will suffer. You will suffer. And some people think, well, God said He loved me, why am I suffering? Well, even God Himself suffered. Part of life on this earth includes suffering. You will suffer. Number two, your suffering is complex and multilayered. These categories are not mutually exclusive. There could be multiple things happening at the same time. How many of you even going through that list thinking about your life right now, you say, check one, check two, check three, check four. You can check a lot of boxes on that menu of causation. Number three, you're not always a victim. Now, sometimes you are. Sometimes suffering chooses you, but sometimes you choose suffering. You're not always a victim. Sometimes suffering chooses us, sometimes we choose suffering, sometimes it's a bit of both. Now what happens when we're suffering, we like to see ourselves as victims, why? It elicits sympathy and compassion from other people, and it allows us to get away with things that we otherwise wouldn't if we weren't considered the victim. True?

- Yeah, that's right.

- This is what happens. And sometimes what happens is if you are suffering, but part of it is your own doing, you tell your tragic terrible tale of all that you're enduring and then the person would want to say, "Yeah, but have you considered the fact "that maybe you contributed to this?" But we feel bad doing so because it seems like we are adding a burden to someone who is already broken. And as a result, if all we ever do is just take our suffering and assume that we're victims, we'll lose the opportunity to deal with the reasons that perhaps we contributed to our own suffering. In addition, though you can't always choose suffering, sometimes you do choose suffering, you can always choose what you do with your suffering. And this is what I'm gonna tell

you. This is where 1 Peter is going. Suffering comes, what are you gonna do with it? How are you gonna respond to it? And then the last thing I wanted to say by way of preface is that the most helpful and the most harmful people in our world have one thing that they share in common, and that is usually great suffering. Think about it. The people in your life that have been most helpful to you, have they been through some really complicated, difficult, painful seasons? Usually they have. They've walked through it with the Lord, they're healthy, they're godly, and as a result, they're helpful. They're like, "Okay, I've been where you're at. "Here's what I was feeling." And we have this phrase for those people. We say, you, what? You get it.

- Get it.

- You get it. That means, okay, you've been through it. You're ahead of me. Now I'm in it, now you can help lead me through it. Those are the most helpful people. They've been through the suffering. Other people that are the most harmful, sometimes the most dangerous or even deadly, they've also been through tremendous suffering, but they've not handled it in a godly way, and they've not learned it to help others. I was thinking about it yesterday 'cause I'm weird. I was sitting in my chair at the house working on the final kind of draft of the sermon. And I'd wondered to myself, I thought, "Okay, I wonder what happened to Mother Teresa "when she was a little girl," 'cause the truth is, right, if you think of the most helpful person, the most compassionate, empathetic, sympathetic. You're like, if you're having a bad day, who do you want a visit from? Mother Teresa, amen? I mean, she's as nice as it gets. And she's just a itty bitty thing too. She's gone home to be with the Lord now. But she's little, but she had great strength and power because true strength and power is not based upon your size, but the Spirit of God in you. And she, she loved Jesus. And so I did some research and I was wondering what made Mother Teresa Mother Teresa? When she was a little girl, she went through tremendous suffering. She was very close with her dad, she was a daddy's girl. Her and her dad really close, affectionate, loved each other, great relationship. At age eight, her daddy died, her daddy died. And as I researched it, her mom knew the Lord and did a really good job helping her process her pain. Brought her to church, brought her to the Bible, brought her to prayer, brought her to Jesus. Said, "You know what, Jesus conquered death. "Daddy is with Jesus, someday you'll be with Jesus. "You'll get to see Daddy again. "You know, what can we learn through this? "Jesus suffered for you. "How can you become more like Jesus through your suffering?" And she grows up to be Mother Teresa. Contrast that as I was sitting in my chair, 'cause like I said, I'm weird. I wondered who's the greatest serial killer in the history of the world. So I looked it up, he's a British guy. So congrats to you Brits, you're number one. His name is Harold Shipman. He is the most notorious serial killer that we are aware of. They have proven 218 victims and there are many, many more that they're not sure about. Harold Shipman and Mother Teresa had the same experience when they were young. He was a mama's boy. He and his mama were very, very close. When he was 17 years of age, his mother finally died after a lengthy battle with an illness. She was sick and in decline for some years. Once his mother died, he then spent the rest of his life, taking the pain that he watched his mother experience and inflicting it on others until it took their life like it took her life. Rather than alleviating pain, he multiplied pain. This is the difference between responding in the spirit versus the flesh. This is the difference between bringing it to

the Lord and not bringing it to the Lord. This is the difference because the truth is we all go through sometimes the same experiences or categories of suffering, but how we respond determines the trajectory we move and the legacy we leave after the life that we live. How many of you, the most harmful people in your life have been through tremendous suffering? You look back on experiences in their past and you realize there are reasons that they are the way they are, but there are not excuses because those reasons could be overcome by the grace of God.

- Right, amen.

- Okay? So this is where Peter goes, and what he says is basically this, if I could summarize. Suffering comes to you, you've really only got two choices. You're gonna respond in the flesh and you're going to sin or you're gonna respond in the spirit and serve. Suffering comes. It's not, if it comes, it's when it comes. And then the decisions you have to make are in the flesh, I will sin, in the spirit, I will serve. That's where he's going. We'll jump into 1 Peter 4. Option number one, you can suffer in sin. 1 Peter 4:1-6, "Since therefore Christ." So he's gonna focus us back to Jesus and His suffering. "In the flesh," that's his physical body, "arm, yourselves with the same way of thinking." You've got to get your mind straight. Okay, when suffering happens, I got to go up to Jesus and then I need to respond with His example for me. "For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, "so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, "no longer for human passions." Right, that's the flesh, that's the sinful rebellious response. "But for the will of God," that's the Holy Spirit supernatural means of serving. "For the time that is past suffices "for doing what the Gentiles do." The first Christians were Jewish. It's funny, the other day I asked for directions from this elderly couple and it was to find a church. I was looking for a church out of town. Just wanted to drive by it and just pray, I just felt inclined to pray for this church. And this Jewish couple pulled up. I didn't know they were Jewish from their car. I said, "Do you know where this church is at?" And they're like, "Well, we think it's over there, "but we don't go, we're Jewish." I said, "It's okay, I worship a Jewish guy, we're fine." So the first Jews, the first Jewish people were, the first Christians rather, were Jewish people. And then Gentiles joined and you know who we are. We're the dirty Gentiles, that's what we are. We're the dirty Gentiles, okay, so he's talking about us. What the dirty Gentiles want to do, "Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, "drinking parties, lawless idolatry." How many of you are like, "That's not Saturday?" No, that's wrong. "What about if it's in Old Town?" It's still wrong, okay. "With respect to this, they are surprised "when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery." What he's talking about is the whole cultural current. If you jump in, it just leads to those sorts of self-destructive behaviors. "And they malign you, but they will give account "to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." That is Jesus, "For this is why the gospel," the good news of the suffering of God for the forgiveness of sin, "was preached, even to those who are dead." There's not an opportunity for them to be saved, but there is a proclamation that Jesus is Savior. "Though they are judged in the flesh the way people are, "they may live in the spirit," that's the supernatural response, living in the spirit, which we'll examine in a moment, "the way God does." And what he's saying is this, that when we are suffering, we either respond out of the flesh or the spirit. It's what he just said, same thing Paul says. Every time you have a decision to make, there's only two places that you will go to then ultimately determine what your

course of action will be. The flesh is your sinful, fallen, rebellious, foolish, self-destructive, self-righteous, excuse-making, fallen nature. In the spirit is, as he said, finding out the will of God. It's God the Holy Spirit who empowered the life and suffering of Jesus coming to empower you to live in the footsteps of Jesus and to use your suffering to greater appreciate and become like Jesus. On saying this, let me just say, I love you, I'm your pastor, and I know that there are people here that in their past there is tremendous suffering. I know that there are people here present and listening online that right now today there is for you tremendous suffering. For some of you, you could see it on the horizon, in the future. It's coming and it has some anxiety for you because there is suffering that seems to be in the next season for you. In those moments, we need to make this decision. And if we make the decision to live out of the flesh, the flesh is concerned about self. If you're filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit wants you to be concerned about God, others, and yourself, God, others, and yourself. The flesh has no regard for God or others, it's only self. Now hear me in this, what happens then if you are suffering and you choose to live out of the flesh, you will be selfish in two ways. Number one, you'll be selfish. And what that means is in addition to your suffering, you're going to multiply that suffering by causing everyone else around you to suffer. Suffering people can be very selfish people. They're so consumed by their own pain that they overlook the pain that they are causing others. How many of you, there is somebody that you really love, you care about, but you can't be close to them because they've been through a lot, but they're not healthy. As a result, their pain is very real, but rather than healing up and having Jesus fix that pain, they instead multiply it. They name call, they yell at you, they accuse you, they attack you, "You're not loving, you're totally selfish. "You only think about yourself." And the truth is that they are overlooking the pain that they are causing because they are selfish. And oftentimes what these people will do, if you confront them on this and say, "Now, wait a minute, you're being really rude here. "You're being mean, you're being very selfish. "It's very hard to get along with you. "Okay, so it's all about you, it's always about you. "You're very selfish, you're very unloving. "I thought, I thought you were a Christian." And they will manipulate their pain so that then they can multiply their pain. So the flesh is very selfish and the flesh is very self-destructive. Sometimes people who are suffering add to their own suffering by self-destructing. And he gives a list, sort of a checklist. This is like a diagnostic for you and I. Am I self-destructing? Am I self destructing, the first one is sensuality. And this is the question of where do you lack restraint? This can be food, money, anger, your tongue. Once you get emotional, once you get passionate, once you get fired up you make some really bad decisions. And sometimes when people are suffering and then they're very passionate about their poor decision-making, if you address them, they'll say, "Well, I'm just really hurting right now." Yes, you are hurting, but self-destructing is not helping. It's not helping. You're taking your pain and multiplying your pain. That's what Satan wants, that's not what God wants. That's going to destroy you and everyone who cares about you. That's not going to deliver you and everyone who cares about you. Number two, he talks about passion. These are evil desires. We all have things in our flesh that are like gravity. If we don't fight against them, they literally just drag us down until ultimately they bury us. These are evil desires for sinful, rebellious, and/or self-destructive decisions that when we're weakened through suffering, those temptations are more alluring. Number three, drunkenness. This is any sort of addiction and self-medication. He's going to distinguish between drunkenness and drinking parties, and there

is a difference. Drunkenness is where you're self-medicating. This is where you're alone just drinking or doing drugs or some other form of self-soothing. If you're drinking by yourself in isolation, and every time you are suffering you open a bottle or you take a hit, you're in real trouble. You're in real trouble. And it almost seems like in our day we're allowing people to self-destruct out of a sense of love. There are whole cities that have decriminalized drug use as if encouraging drug use is going to help anybody who's suffering. Right now as our country and our world is actually dealing with a lot of complexity, alcohol abuse is exploded. People are drinking more than ever. There are surveys in particular nations. Some nations are suggesting that the number of people that are alcoholics has doubled so far this year. It's self-destructing in the middle of suffering. And that's drunkenness. Drinking parties are social sins where you're worried about what everyone thinks and how you look, and in the age of social media and selfies and big events in Scottsdale and donor dinners and fundraising events, I'm not wearing enough clothes, I have a drink in my hand, and I'm with someone I'm not married to. I'll put this on social media. And what that is, those are drinking parties. The whole point is to impress people with behaviors that are not healthy. He furthermore goes on and he talks about orgies. So what does that mean? Okay, you know, so I'm not gonna talk about it. It's a word right here. And if you don't know, don't google it, just don't, just move on, okay? So debauchery, "Pastor Mark said to look this up." No, he didn't, no, he didn't, no, he didn't. Debauchery, these are grotesque things that we have some appetite for. When we're home alone, when we think no one is looking, when the lights are out, when we're particularly weak, there are habits that you and I can fall prey to that are debased, they are disgusting. How do you know? All right, let me ask you. Is there anything that you do even occasionally or rarely, particularly when you're weakened through suffering or hardship, that if Jesus was there there's no way in the world you would do that? Let me just tell you this, He's, He's there. He says, "I'll never leave you nor forsake you." You're like, oh, he was there, yeah, and He was grossed out. So knock it off. Okay, okay? And then what he says is if you've been living out of the flesh and you start living out of the spirit, people will start maligning you because they feel like your behavior is a judgment on their behavior. How many of you, you became a Christian and your family was not very excited about that. You were dating an unbeliever, you met Jesus, and they really didn't like your new lifestyle. And as a result, we can respond to the maligning of others by maligning them. We're gonna talk about that next week. I know you guys are really wanting a series that includes suffering and enduring evil. So I've got both of them for you 'cause I love you so much. I just kind of sensed that you wanted me to talk about painful, dark things. So I'm doing it for you the next two weeks, come back, bring your friends, bring your friends who are maligning you, we'll fix them. Okay? And what he does here, he says, "Okay, when you're suffering, don't feed the flesh, "be selfish or self-destructive, "go to the Spirit and consider your Savior." That's what he's talking about. So he starts, "Since therefore Christ "suffered in the flesh." He's like, okay, when you're suffering, you can think about yourself after you think about Jesus. Okay, and when you think about Jesus, the first thing you learn is this. Our God suffered, Jesus Christ is our God, He suffered. What this means is before you and I can be victims, we have to confess the fact that we're villains. It's cause here's what happens. And this is so popular in our, people are like, "Let me tell you about all of my suffering "and what a victim I am!" Great, we'll get there. Let's start with the suffering that you caused.

- Right.

- Not just the suffering that you endured but the suffering that you caused. See, 'cause what we like to do, we like to repent of everyone else's sins. "Let me tell you what they did." I've never seen a march or a protest where people have signs talking about the things they did. Never seen that. "I'm kind of a jerk to my wife and I drink too much, "and I stole from my employer. "I'm protesting my behavior." I've never seen that. But this is what sinners like to do. They like to use the sin that they have experienced to excuse the sin that they're committing.

- [Audience Member] Amen.

- So if we're gonna talk about suffering, and sin that causes suffering, great. Let's talk about all of it or none of it, that's my thesis.

- Amen.

- If we're gonna talk about all of it, let's talk about the suffering that you and I have caused Jesus. Our God shed many tears, was arrested, tried, falsely accused, beaten, reputation destroyed, and murdered for our sins, for my sins. That means that I am a villain, and that, of my sin, Jesus is the victim of my sin. In fact, He's perfect. He did nothing, nothing, nothing ever wrong in word or deed, and yet He suffers for me. If we're going to talk about suffering, particularly through sin, secondly, let's talk about the suffering that you and I have caused others through our sin. I'm happy to talk about your suffering and their sin if you will talk about your sin and their suffering. Paul told us, or excuse me, Peter told us earlier to have sympathy for one another. And that is considering what we have done, not just what has been done to us. He says to consider Jesus Christ, our God who has suffered for our sin. And Jesus was one who endured our sin and suffered for us. Did he respond in the flesh or the spirit? Did He respond in the flesh and sin? No, He never did. He always responded in the spirit and served. Jesus Christ suffered and use the suffering to serve. Therefore to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, as we suffer, we need to invite the spirit and find ways to use our suffering to serve, to serve. And so that's where he pivots in the second option. You can suffer and serve, and here's what I want to tell you. The suffering that you go through, it is incredibly expensive. It costs you time, energy, money, emotion. It is so expensive to endure suffering. My admonition would be don't waste it on sin, invest it in serving. Find a way for it to serve you and find a way for it to serve others who are going through what you're going through. And so he says it this way, "The end of all things is at hand." We tend to think in terms of days, weeks, months, years, decades, eons, millennia. God thinks in terms of Jesus, that's how He sees history. There's the First Coming where Jesus comes to live, die, and rise for our sins as our Savior. He's coming again to judge the living and the dead and to sentence people to heaven or hell. And what he says is since Jesus has died, rose, and returned, we're now into the last phase of human history, the end. So we know the end. That Jesus is coming back, we're all gonna give an account, and that ultimately Jesus Christ is God. Knowing all of that, we reverse engineer our life and we live for the last day

'cause the most important day of your life is the last day, it's the last day. "The end of all things is at hand, "therefore be self-controlled." Is our world lacking that right now? Say yes, yes.

- Yes.

- I agree with you, "and sober-minded!" We'll deal with each of these, we'll deal with each of these in just a moment. "For the sake of your prayers. "Above all, keep loving one another." It's like I loved 'em once, it didn't work! Keep going, keep loving 'em. "Earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. "Show hospitality to one another without," what? Grumbling, complaining. So what he says is if you're going to choose the way of the spirit, which is the way of the Savior so that you can follow in the way of serving, a couple of things to pay attention to. Number one in your will, your will, your decision-making, self-controlled. Paul tells us in Galatians that part of the fruit of the spirit is self-control. You know what, we live in a world right now where there's a lot of argument over authority. "Well, we need less authority." Well, you know what? If you had self-control, we could get away with less authority. If there was self-control, there wouldn't be as much need for police officers, but there is a need 'cause there is not self-control. If there was self-control, we wouldn't need as many soldiers. If there was self-control, we wouldn't need as many prisons. If there were self-control, we wouldn't need as many rehab centers. If there was self-control, we wouldn't need as many guns. But because there is a lack of self-control, we need those things. We won't use them in the kingdom of God because everyone will be controlled by the Holy Spirit, and there'll be under control rather than out of control, practicing self-control. The best government, the best governance is self-control! The best police on duty in your life should be God the Holy Spirit to keep you from doing self-destructive things toward yourself and self-destructive things that also implicate and harm them. Our world lacks self-control right now. And let me just say this, everybody has a reason for it. "Well, here's what I went through, "here's what I experienced, here's what I'm feeling! "Let me tell you the tragic terrible tale "of why I'm out of control!" But that's self-destructing, which is not helping. It's self destructing, which is not helping. Only self-control not self-destruction is beneficial for those who are already suffering. Number two, he talks not just about the will, but the mind. And what does he say about the mind? He uses a word minded, what's the word?

- Sober.

- Sober-minded, what's the opposite of sober-minded?

- Drunk.

- Drunk-minded. He hit this earlier in the book. He keeps hitting it because the drunk-minded people keep missing it so he keeps bringing it up. Okay, have you ever had an argument with a drunk person? How did that go? It was amazing: syllogisms, reason, emotional temperance. Fantastic, we reached a resolution. Have you ever seen two drunk people argue? The Holy Spirit is never there. He's just, he's like, "I'll be back later." It's, they're on their own. When drunk people are arguing, they're loud.

- That's true.

- And they're crying, and they make no sense, and usually you can't even understand the words. "And then you did it!" And you're like, I, okay, my turn? All right, ah! You know, that's drunk-minded. All right. Our culture right now, drunk-minded.

- Yes.

- So we're like, "No, no, no, no, that's not true "and I'm gonna post it on social media." You are proving my point clearly. All right, just go to social media and ask yourself, self-control, sober-minded, there it is! It's not there. We now live in a world where communication could be instant, constant, global, permanent. Your suffering feeling, you just get to be venting and ranting and it's not self-controlled or sober-minded. And then what happens is you are hurt, so then you hurt them and then they feel hurt and then they hurt them. Now all we have is an epidemic of brokenness and emotional people and a lack of self-control and the omission of sober-mindedness. And we're wondering why everyone is depressed and has no hope for the future. See, some people think, "Oh, this is an old book." No, this is an eternal book. That means it's always timely. He says "In your soul to be uttering prayers," okay? When you're suffering, when you're hurting, when you're frustrated, when you're emotional, praying does a couple of things. Number one, it helps you verbally process. How many of you are verbal processors? I've turned that into a career, by the way. I think as I go, I don't know if you've noticed that. Right, I think as I go. How many of us who are verbal processors, it's not always helpful? Okay, some people are, I had a guy come up recently. He's like, "I don't agree with everything you've ever said." I was like, "We're on the same team, brother. "I don't agree with everything I've ever said." And so, but in prayer you can verbal process with the Lord rather than with others, which is the only safe place to ultimately process. If you want to know what this looks like, read books like the Psalms. There are places in there that are prayers where someone is in it, feeling it, struggling, fighting through it and they're talking to God about it. And it helps them to process what they, 'cause oftentimes when we're suffering, we feel it but we can't yet explain it. So we need to talk about it so we can get categories for it. But if you do this with the wrong people, you're not helping, you're not helping. And I just feel inclined in the Spirit to say this. So don't do this in front of your children. If you are verbal processing your suffering in front of your children, you're putting them in a place that God can handle, but they can't. You're burdening them with things that they cannot carry, which is the next point of prayer. Not only do you verbal process, you burden transfer. See when we're suffering, we've got a burden, amen? You're feeling it. Prayer is where we transfer the burden. Jesus says, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light. "Come to me. "You are weary, just sort of worn out, heavy laden, "broken, beat down." And He wants us to transfer that burden. We do so in prayer. When we were in the middle of the hardest season of our whole life, I was having a conversation with one of our overseers, Pastor Jimmy Evans who I love very much, and he's like, "How's your prayer life doing?" I said, "Well, you know, I think it's going good." He's like, "Well, after you, after you pray, "how do you feel," I said, "I feel burdened." He said, "Then you're not praying. "You're just

complaining to the Lord." I was like, "Okay, explain that," I got a pen, like, apparently this is a life lesson I need to learn. He said, "It's not really praying until the burden "has been transferred. "Until then, it's just complaining." Or as Peter's gonna call it, grumbling, grumbling. He says in your heart to love one another. Does it, we already dealt with this last week. But does it say to like one another? Nope, 'cause you can't like everybody. And even if you like somebody, you don't like 'em all the time, amen? We call this marriage. Like, "I like you, but not right now. "Maybe later." So liking someone is intermittent, but loving someone can be consistent.

- Amen.

- Because liking someone is predicated upon their conduct. Loving someone is predicated upon his character, okay? So it says love one another. And what love means is I do what's in your best interest. I don't use you, I serve you. And he includes in this hospitality, which is inviting people into your life because here's what happens with some people. Some people, when they're suffering, they just let the whole universe know kind of where they're at, right? And other people, they withdraw, they retreat. They become very isolated. They're home a lot. They don't return your calls, texts, or emails. You don't really know what's going on. They're very isolated. They've come to the conclusion someone hurt me, therefore people are dangerous. I will isolate myself so they cannot hurt me. The problem is if you're isolated, they also can't help you. So not only will you avoid pain, you will avoid healing. And this is, this is why he says to practice hospitality. As you suffer, you get more discerning and judicious with people in relationships. You don't open up to everyone, but you carefully select who you can trust. And then with your tongue, he says, "Don't grumble." What's grumbling? What's grumbling?

- Complaining.

- Complaining! Can you do or say the right thing with a sour attitude? Yes, okay, yes. And sometimes we will put this under the guise of truth. We will say something that is truthful, but it's just our way of grumbling. Like, okay, "You're a jerk! "You never make me breakfast, I made you breakfast. "You don't really need breakfast, you need a treadmill. "But because you know, the Bible says to patiently endure, "I've made you breakfast." That's grumbling. "Well, it's true!" So's the fact that you're grumbling, right? And what happens is when we're suffering and we start grumbling, does God tend to deliver us? No, ask the Israelites. The most legendary story in the Old Testament about grumbling, they're in Egypt as slaves. They're delivered from Egypt. And then they got a little walk to get home. As long, and so God leads them with a pillar in a cloud. Day and night, God's like, "Just follow me." So here's what they do for 40 years. They walk in a circle for 40 years! The whole time, what are they doing? "This sucks, God sucks, I miss, I miss Egypt, "I'm so sick of manna. "Homeschooling while camping, gotta be kidding me. "This is terrible." Right, "My husband, he's got a bum knee. "We're in the back. "I can't even be out front where all the healthy people are. "This sucks," you know? "Now my kid's got diarrhea. "What the heck am I supposed to do about that? "He got diarrhea. "We're in the woods, good Lord. "I need a spa day," okay, so what happens is... That was the verbal processing part. So, and, I'm a little dizzy by the way, too. Wow, you know you're a certain age you're like, I can't handle walking in a

circle. We're there, okay. I'm suffering, okay, so, what God says is this is all a test to see if you'll what? Stop grumbling. Like, well, "I'll stop grumbling "as soon as you get us out." He's like, "No, you stop grumbling first." Okay, you stop grumbling first. And what God is not saying is that life isn't hard, he's saying that grumbling doesn't help.

- Amen.

- I got one amen. That's a, gotta start somewhere, okay! And then what he says is love covers a multitude of sins.

- [Audience Member] Wow.

- What he's not saying is that love covers up evil, but it covers the evildoer. Not that love covers the sin, but it covers the sinner. He told us earlier in 1 Peter 2:16, "Don't cover up evil." If somebody's stealing or abusing or committing a crime, it's not like, well, the Bible says to hide it. No, no, no, the Bible says to heal it. And to do that, we bring it out. But then covering the person means we only involve the people who are part of the solution. How many of you, you've gone through either suffering or sinning, it was a hard season. And then you confided in someone or some persons, and then they invited in a bunch of people who are not helpful. They weren't part of the solution. They became part of the problem. This is where very dysfunctional family systems, if something happens, the whole family needs to be involved. Well, sometimes the whole family should not be involved because they're not part of the solution. They become part of the problem. And the difference here is between secrecy and privacy. Secrecy is something evil, wrong, bad has happened and we're trying to hide it. The other is privacy. We're going to get this person the help that they need, but we're going to do so only with the people who are helpful. That's the difference between secrecy and privacy. I'll give you an example. You go into the hospital, where do you start? In the waiting room. Aren't you glad that they don't come out and say, "What's going on?" You're like, "I think I got a hernia." They're like, "Okay, well let's check it right now." "Here?" "Well, in the waiting room, yeah." "Well, does everybody need to be involved?" And everybody's like, "No, we don't," okay, so. So what do we do if the person has got a physical problem? We take you into another room, little privacy, where we put a paper gown on you that does nothing but makes you feel emotionally better. Right, and at least it's open in the back so we can't see what's happening, right, and then, shouldn't have said that. And then, and then a doctor and/or a nurse come in, or maybe your spouse, or if you're a parent, maybe the parent comes in for the child, the people that are part of the solution, to help. That's what he's talking about, that love covers the sinner. We're here to help, but we're not bringing in people who are not going to be part of the solution. So when you are suffering again, flesh, sin, self, spirit, serve others, okay? And where he concludes with this as a church family is we're better together, we need each other. Every one of you have been through certain things that have given you tremendous insights. So what you've been through would really help them. And what you've been through would really help them. And some of you would say, "I didn't handle that season well." Well, even your testimony of your failure would encourage them to do it differently than you did. So you don't need to go through something perfectly to be helpful, you

just need to be perfectly honest about how you went through it. And he's talking about here, "As each has received a gift." He's talking here about spiritual gifts, supernatural endowments, capacities and abilities that God has given you. We're gonna do 1 Peter, then we're gonna do 2 Peter. Then I'm gonna do some months in Romans and for Christmas I'm gonna do a whole spiritual gifts series, so we'll get into this. Use it to what? Serve, right? You can sin or you can serve when you're suffering. "To serve one another as good stewards," we're gonna talk about that, "of God's varied grace." Everything in your life can be a means of God's grace, a bucket that carries God's grace, if you'll receive it and use it as God intends. "Whoever speaks as one who speaks the oracles of God, "whoever serves," so the two ways that we serve are through speaking and serving through our words and our works. "Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength "that God supplies in order that in everything "God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. "To Him be glory dominion forever and ever, amen." I just want to hit two big concepts here. He distinguishes between the owner and the steward of your life and everything in it, including all the experiences, relationships, okay? Your life, who's the owner?

- God.

- God. Hardly anyone believes this. Hardly anyone believes this. Your life is God's life. Your money is God's money. Your relationships are God's relationships. He is the owner, you are the steward. Therefore you need to do what the owner asks you to do with that which he's entrusted to you. I'll give you some examples. How many of you, you've got money in a bank? Money in a bank?

- Yeah.

- Is the bank the owner or the steward?

- Steward.

- The steward. And you want them to keep this straight, right? You don't want to put your money in the bank and then come back and say, you know what? "I decided I'm gonna pay cash for a car "so I'm gonna need a check "or I'm gonna need some cash to buy a car." They're like, "Actually, Susie's really had a rough time. "She's been at the casino a lot. "She sort of upside down, couldn't make rent. "She prayed about it, looked into your account, "said, hey, I'm looking after it, it's kinda mine too. "So she borrowed some forever." You would say, "Call 911." "No, no, no, no, no. "Don't be so judgy." "No, I'm gonna be judgy right now, "that's what I'm gonna do "because it's mine and they took it."

- That's right.

- Okay, and if the government does this, it's still a problem, by the way. Okay, now nonetheless, just threw it in there, okay, just to find the socialists in the room. Okay, so, redistribution is stealing by the way, just so you know. I just, I didn't mean to do that, but you know, it happens.

So, I told you, I verbal process, okay. The socialists are like, "I'm suffering." No, you're not, you're getting delivered. Okay, so, so let's say you've got a mechanic. How many of you got a mechanic, amen? You drop the car off. Is the mechanic the owner or the steward?

- Steward.

- The steward. What if they fix the car, you show up a week later, you're like, "Where's my car?" They're like, "We got it all running, it's awesome! "And Tony took it, Tony took it out for a test drive. "Never came back. "Last we heard he was in Vegas, said thanks for the car." You would say, "Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. "I'm gonna kill Tony "and I'm gonna get my car back because it's my car." See, what we do all the time is we own things, and then we entrust others to steward those resources. But if they don't steward them in the way that we assigned them, they are then going to be judged. And there is a consequence for their failure to obey what the owner has asked. Let me ask it again, your life, who's the owner?

- God.

- God is. This is, I believe this is ultimately why a lot of people do not become Christians. It's not that they don't like the idea of having their sin forgiven. It's that they don't like the idea that their life belongs to God.

- Absolutely, absolutely.

- Yeah.

- I don't mind that God picks up my tab, but I do mind when God takes over my life. That's why Jesus is Savior. He does forgive, and Lord, He is in control of your life. What that means is practically your money belongs to God. So you got to ask God, "Okay, how much do you want me "to keep of your money?" Not how much of my money do I have to give you? This is the difference between ownership and stewardship in your finances. If it's my money, how much do I got to give God? God's like, "That's my money, how much "do you want to keep?"

- That's true.

- That's a different discussion. So your marriage is God's marriage. Your family is God's family. Your company is God's company. Your days are God's days. Your suffering is God's suffering. Your ministry is God's ministry.

- Amen.

- And this, this mindset of a steward means when you are suffering, it'll keep you from sin and self and it'll put you in the spirit to serve. And I'll give you four kind of examples. And this is the question of who is the owner and who is the steward of my life. Number one, the godless view is

"I'm the owner and the steward. "Self-made, independent, my life, my money, my career. "It's just mine, I do what I want." That's godless. There's actually no consideration of God whatsoever. Number two, the selfish Christian. "I am the owner and God is the steward. "Out of this, we get prosperity "and health and wealth," which is silly and wrong. And it is, "God, it's my life. "You should make me healthy. "You should make me wealthy. "You should make me successful. "I prayed in faith, I sowed a seed in time. "You are now obligated to do what I tell you to do "and to make my life into what I want it to be!" And you know that you've got this attitude when you're frustrated and disappointed and angry with God. "God, I prayed, why didn't you do your job? "Who do you think you are, God?" Exactly the issue we need to deal with. It is not that we are on a throne and God exists to give us the vision for our life. It is that God in a throne and He gives us the vision for His life lived through us. So much of modern Western psychologized Christianity is literally God exists to give you glory. No, no, no, you exist to give God glory.

- That's right.

- Okay? The lazy Christian, God is the owner and steward. "Yeah, God's in charge and I don't need to do anything. "He'll figure it out." I hear this from pastors all the time. "Well, if God wants to grow the church, he can grow it." That's why you're there. That's like a farmer saying, "Well, if God wants crops, "He can plant them and harvest them." Get up, right? Go to work! That's why you're there. You are part of the means to His ends. This would be as silly as a parent saying, "Well, if God wants these kids to be godly, "I'm sure He'll take care of it." You're the parent, that's why you're there. God works for you, in you, through you. You're part of the means of Him accomplishing His will. And ultimately the lazy Christian just says, "Well, God will figure it out, not my responsibility." The godly view is that God is the owner and I am the steward. That God is the owner and I am the steward. So when we get money, it's like, "Lord, what do you want me to do with your money?" We get a marriage, "God, what do you want me to do "with your son or daughter whom I'm married to?" We get kids, "Okay God, what do you want me to do "with each of these kids that's ultimately yours?" We get a job, "Okay Lord, how can I honor you in this job?" "Okay Lord, I now own a company. "Lord, this is your company. "What do you want me to do with your company?" You got time, "Okay Lord, what do you want me to do "with your time?" Your suffering, "Lord, what do you want me to do "with this pain that belongs to you? "I don't want to waste it, I want to invest it. "How can I become more like Jesus "and who can I help to learn more about Jesus?"

- Amen.

- Amen? The difference is that the Christian and the non-Christian will go through the exact same experience with a completely different perspective. And as a result, the Christian has hope and joy. And I love you, and if you can reduce the suffering in your life, please do. But invariably, it's going to come. And when it does, I need you to know what to do with it and to know what not to do with it 'cause I love you. Now, what we've been doing is taking questions. I'll throw one up, we'll end with a little Q&A. This is a good one. I do these little videos called Ask

Pastor Mark and you guys send in questions on social media and to [hello@realfaith.com](mailto:hello@realfaith.com). And a lot of the questions that we get are very much centered around suffering and pain and hardship. And sometimes people have personal questions and sometimes they have the big Bible questions. This is one of those big Bible questions. "Why do Christians suffer the same way "as someone who isn't saved?" I told you all the different categories of suffering. We're all children of Adam. We all are broken in a broken world. We're in this together. In addition, when it comes to things like demonic suffering, do you think Satan attacks Christians or non-Christians more fiercely?

- Christians.

- Christians. 'Cause if you don't know Jesus, you're automatically on His team.

- [Audience Member] That's right.

- If you do know Jesus, you're on the other team. Why would I shoot someone who's on my side of the war? I would save my bullets for someone who is in their side of the war. Dear Child of God, hear me in this. When you receive Jesus and you hear that God loves you and then Satan attacks you, one of the most confusing things is that sometimes you think that God is attacking you. Because oftentimes we don't even factor in the demonic into our life. Okay, there's me and there's God. So this is happening, is it me? And sometimes it's yeah, I did or said something that contributed to my pain and suffering. I made some dumb decisions that have caused some real dark days. But sometimes it's like I don't see the cause and effect. I didn't say or do anything. I know I'm not perfect, but I didn't cause this hardship. Sometimes it's just being in a fallen, cursed, broken world.

- [Audience Member] That's right.

- Sometimes it's Romans where it says, "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" And the answer is, "Not me." God knows, but I can't connect this suffering with this sin. I can't see it. Sometimes when that happens, it's demonic. And really what you are is you're being attacked. Let me ask you, did this ever happen to Jesus?

- [Audience Member] Yes.

- Jesus never sinned, but He did suffer. The Old Testament Book of Isaiah from Chapter 40 to Chapter 66, it talks 700 years in advance that Jesus would come as the suffering servant. It just dawned on me, that's what Peter's saying, right? I mean, it just dawned on me. He said that Jesus in His suffering was our servant. So when we're suffering, we need to learn to be servants. He got that from Isaiah, he was a good Hebrew. Jesus suffered and it was all spiritual warfare and demonic attack. Satan attacked Him and caused Him to suffer. Satan caused Him to suffer when he was hungry, isolated, and tired in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting and praying. And it says that he was tempted. Satan came through religious leaders to attack him

and malign him. And he said, "Your father is the devil." He said it was spiritual warfare. At the end, Satan filled Judas Iscariot, who was supposed to be Jesus' bookkeeper and friend. And Judas had been stealing from Jesus for years, betrayed Him, participated in his murder. When Jesus is being tried and falsely accused, Peter who writes this, was the leader of the disciples and he denied even knowing Jesus Christ. Three years. "The person I picked to be the leader of my ministry. "I fed you, I taught you, I loved you, I prayed for you. "Peter, I put up with you for three years "and on the one day that I'm hurting, "you deny that you even know me "because you don't want to join in my suffering." And then Jesus goes to the cross and He suffers and He dies our place for our sins. Man, some people ask, "How do I know that God loves me?" Just look at the cross of Jesus, "No greater love does anyone have than this "than to lay down their life for their friend." Jesus calls you friend and He laid down His life to suffer so that He can have relationship with you. The point is that when we go through suffering, the non-Christian and the Christian oftentimes will go through the same suffering. But the Christian has the perspective of Jesus and the hope of Jesus. So when the Christian is suffering, they can ask, "What suffering have I caused Jesus? "What's suffering have I caused others? "How could my suffering make me more like Jesus "so that I could have a deeper relationship with Him "and a healthier relationship with others?" For the non Christian, they don't know any of those things. And so all they can become is sometimes angry or emotional or self-righteous or self-destructive, which is exactly what's going on right now in our world. In addition for the Christian, there is this demonic component. Because if you belong to Jesus and you are publicly testifying that you belong to Jesus, what Satan wants you to do in your suffering is he wants you to be selfish. And he wants you to be selfish so that you are hurting others, and he wants you to be selfish so that you are self-destructing because that's his way of stealing your testimony. That's his way of causing you to not be a trophy of grace, but to be a trophy of disgrace. And some of you feel that. And if you and I start grumbling against God and get angry against God and get bitter against God. His name is Jesus, He suffered for us, and He used His suffering to serve us. And he invites us in the spirit to use our suffering to serve others. And that is the countercultural way of Christ. And I just feel inclined to tell you, then I'll close in prayer and bring the band up. Some of what you're going through is spiritual warfare. It just is. There's a guy named Job in the Old Testament. He's a righteous man. His whole life is horribly painful. And do you know what his friends, his friends, do? They show up and they ask this question. "So what'd you do, what'd you do, what'd you do?" He's like, "I don't know, I'm not perfect, "but I'm not sure I did anything to cause this." And they say, "Well, I'm sure if there's suffering, "it must be because of sinning." And let me just say this. When we're dealing with people who are suffering, we need to be very careful that we don't take a true verse and apply it to the wrong person. We can do this when people are suffering. We can rush to some remedy. Well, you know, Ananias and Sapphira, they stole money from the Lord and so God killed them. So when you sin, God hurts you and you're hurting, therefore you must have sinned. What did you do wrong? Good verse, wrong application. Good verse, wrong application. Religious people do this all the time. We rushed to a judgment, we throw a verse on it, and then we feel like we're done with the person. Now empathy, sympathy, compassion, love, hospitality means if you're gonna go through the valley, if you're gonna walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I'm gonna go with you. And I'm not gonna pretend like I got this all figured out. And I'm not gonna say, "Oh, there's a happy ending. "There's a pot

of gold on the other side of the rainbow," 'cause I don't know. I'm not gonna just quote verses out of context because I don't know what to say so I just say the first thing that comes to mind. I'm gonna try and walk with you. And this is the art of Christian friendship, and it starts with marriage and parenting. What are you going through? How are you feeling? How are you processing? How can I come alongside? How can I help? If the Holy Spirit is the helper and the Holy Spirit fills me, He sends me to be helpful. Let me not rush to a conclusion as to why this has happened. As I get understanding, let me see if I can't bring the appropriate scriptures to bear to give you understanding and context. And then let me walk with you so that you're not alone. And ultimately I didn't think of it until this moment. Peter is writing this letter not to a bunch of individuals who are sitting at home having private quiet times. He's writing it to a church where people are gathered together. And it's his way of saying you guys need to help each other because the only thing worse than going through it is going through it alone, amen?

- [Audience Members] Amen.

- That's why we're here, that's why we're church, that's why we're family. It's not enough just to have principles to live by. You need to have some people to live with and ultimately a person to live for. I love you, I'm sorry for what you're going through. But it's a wonderful opportunity, so don't waste it, invest it, amen?

- [Audience Members] Amen.

- And this is part of our witness to the world 'cause people aren't acting like this. They are selfish and hurting others and self-destructing and hurting themselves. Father, God, as we go to a time of worship, God, I want this to be a word of hope and encouragement, not a word of hopelessness and discouragement. Lord God, I pray for the church family that I love very, very deeply. And Lord, I pray for those who give us the honor of listening online through technology. Lord, some of the most important decisions that we make, we make under the greatest duress and pain. Some of the most significant words that we speak are under the greatest pressure. And Lord, we confess that right now there's a lot of suffering going on in the world. There's a lot of suffering going on in our lives. There's a lot of suffering going on in our families. There's a lot of suffering going on in our businesses. God, there's just a tremendous amount of suffering. And Lord, we just see so clearly from the words of Peter that ultimately if we respond in the flesh, we're gonna be selfish and hurt people, starting with the people who love us the most. And God, if we respond in the flesh, we're gonna self-destruct and harm ourselves. Lord, right now, people are screaming and yelling at each other. They are name calling and accusing one another. They are drinking alcohol and beating their wives and smacking their kids and ranting on the internet. And Lord, that is just not the way of Jesus. So I pray against the enemy of servants, their works and effects. I pray against the powers, principalities, and spirits. And I ask that the Holy Spirit would rule and reign in the hearts and the lives of these dear people so that even if this world is in distress that they can have peace in the Spirit and that they can in the example of Jesus in whose name we pray, amen. Love you guys, thank you.