

INTRO

- Christmas will look different for each of us this year. Is there one thing you are looking forward to?

READ

I Peter 4:12-19

I Peter 5:1-5

Sixteen times in this letter, Peter uses the word suffer or suffering. Twice he writes about trials. Peter describes himself, not as a witness of the miracles or teaching of Jesus, or even the resurrection of Jesus, but as a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

REFLECT & RESPOND

1. Comparative Suffering

An unproductive way we face our suffering is to avoid feeling the pain of our own suffering by comparing it to the suffering of others.

It sounds like this:

I shouldn't feel this way

I should be grateful

I know others who have it so much worse

Qu: In the Covid months, who do you compare yourself with to minimize your suffering?

2 Corinthians 10:12 (NIV) ends like this, "When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise."

2. The Weight of Suffering

Our English word "suffer" comes from Latin — *sufferre*: from *sub-* 'from below' + *ferre* 'to bear'.

From below + to bear

Qu: What are you "bearing from below"?

What is weighing you down right now?

3. Accept the invitation

Accepting the invitation to the refining work God does through suffering

This is the kind of life you've been **invited** into, the kind of life Christ lived.

— **1 Peter 2:21 MSG**

Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. — **1 Peter 4:1 MSG**

This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner. — **1 Peter 4:13 MSG**

Qu: Have you considered your suffering as an invitation to grow?

Qu: If we know suffering and trials are God's spiritual refining process, what is God bringing to the surface in your life?

PRAY

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.. (1 Peter 4:13)

- pray for strength in this time of suffering
- pray concerning your fears for your future
- pray for continued hope