

Count It All Joy  
Study Questions

Jesus is the foremost authority on suffering. He was ridiculed, beaten, and crucified at the hands of those He had come to save. Because of His suffering we can know that He understands our suffering.

Is that it, though? We have to go through suffering and put up with it because He did and He understands?

Does God have a purpose in our suffering as He did in Jesus' suffering? Is there something we are supposed to take from it, learn from it, or give to others?

The Bible has a lot to say about the suffering we face in our day to day lives and the godly qualities it can develop in us when we endure.

Begin by asking God to teach you what He has for you to learn about our suffering.

1. Write a brief description of the most difficult suffering you have experienced in life.

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2. If it is behind you, are you able to see something that God taught you from it or some good that has come from it? How did it test your faith?

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3. Has it been helpful for you in a time of suffering to have other Christians quote scripture to you? Why or why not?

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4. The Bible sometimes refers to difficult times as "trials". One definition of a trial is "to prove by testing."

A. What do you think is being "tested" or "proven" by a trial from a spiritual perspective?

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B. Do we get to choose our trials? \_\_\_\_\_

5. A. What is a consequence?

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B. Do we have any control over whether or not we suffer consequences?

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6. What difference should there be in the way we respond to a consequence and the way we respond to a trial?

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7. What is the dictionary definition of discipline?

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8. A. According to Hebrews 12:5-9 (below) why does God allow trials in our lives?

(5) And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. (6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? Hebrews 12:5-9

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B. What do these verses say about a person who never experiences trials in their life?

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C. What do you think it means "not to regard lightly the discipline of the Lord"?

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D. Why does God discipline us according to verse 6?

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9. Read Proverbs 3:11-12. What do these verses say our response to the Lord's discipline should be?

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10. Look up the following verses and record what God has done for us because of His love for us.

John 3:16

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Romans 5:5

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Ephesians 2:4-5

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2 Thessalonians 2:16

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1 John 4:10

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11. "It is for discipline you have to endure." Hebrews 12:7. How would apply this verse to your own life?

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12. How does the discipline of an earthly parent compare to the discipline of God?

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13. How does Hebrews 12:10-11 say we will benefit from God's training in our lives?

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14. John Mac Arthur defines joy like this: "Spiritual joy is not related to circumstances. It is a gift from God to those who believe the gospel of Christ, being produced in them by the Holy Spirit, because they receive and obey the Word of God, mixed with trials, and keep their focus on eternal glory." How does he relate joy to circumstances?

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15. James MacDonald in “When Life is Hard” defines joy as “a supernatural delight in the person, purposes, and people of God.” Who is at the center of our joy in this definition?

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16. Based on these two definitions of joy, can non-Christians experience real joy?

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17. In the following verses, what is James encouraging us to do in our trials?

(2) Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, (3) for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (4) And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

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B. What reasons does he give us to persevere in our trials?

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18. James instructs us to “Count it all joy, my brothers” when we face trials. How is this different from the response most people have to their trials?

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19. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. What does this teach about our trials (afflictions)?

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20. How can we bring glory to God during our own difficult times?

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21. James mentions “trials of various kinds”. List some of the different kinds of trials we face.

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22. People turn from trials for many reasons. What reason does 1 John 2:19 suggest?

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23. Think about your current or most recent trial and ask yourself these three questions in relation to it.

- A. Do I believe that God is in control regarding it? \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Do I believe that God is good no matter what I see, hear, or face? \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Will I wait on Him until the darkness becomes light? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Psalm 27:13 says “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!” Do you believe like David, that you see God’s goodness now (in the land of the living)?

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25. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. What do these verses teach about our own weaknesses?

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26. How have you seen God demonstrate His power in your difficult circumstances?

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27. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19, below. Record four things he tells us to do, or not to do, in our trials.

(12) Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. (13) But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (14) If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (15) But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. (16) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (17) For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (18) And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" (19) Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

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- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

28. Romans 8:28-29, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (29) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

A. What is the encouraging promise of verse 28?

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