

Key Scriptures

“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 NIV

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” Phil 3:7-11 NIV

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:1-18 NIV

Build Relationships - *The goal of this time is to help your group bond together.*

- Consider starting with one of the following options:
 - Find a fun game to help people get to know each other.
 - Have some snacks and allow people to mingle. Provide an icebreaker question to help people chat as they mingle.

Start Talking - *The goal of this time is to help people ease into serious conversation with each other.*

- **Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28**
 - **Question:** How do you think it would change your view of God if you went through all of the things Paul went through?

Watch Content - *Spend the next 10-15 minutes watching the teaching video.*

Talk about Philippians 3:7-11 *Spend a few minutes helping your group reflect on the this passage of scripture.*

- **Question:** Why do you think Paul was able to stay faithful during his intense times of pain and suffering?
- **Read Phil 3:7-11**
- **Question:** Can someone summarize what we just read?
- **Question:** What do you think Paul means when he says “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord?”
 - *Paul is referring to the fact that knowing Jesus provides us with eternal life, gives us community in the church, that the presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit guides us, comforts us, provides supernatural peace. That God helps build and direct our lives in a way that is wiser than we will ever be. Additionally, there is that inexplicable reality that the God of the universe dwells in us and gives us new life.*
- **Question:** How do we develop the same type of passion for knowing Jesus that Paul had?
 - *Some answers might be; prayer, studying scripture, trying to find ways to trust him in our every day life, being a part of community, worship, serving others, etc.*
- **Group Reflection:** Ask your group members to honestly reflect on this question: In what ways are you trying to build a deep and lasting knowledge of Jesus in your life? Write down your answer on your participants guide.

Leader Guide

Leader's Lesson Notes

Talk about Romans 5:1-8 - *Spend a few minutes helping your group reflect on this passage of scripture.*

- **Read Roans 5:1-8**
- **Question:** What is most shocking to you about this passage? Why?
- **Question:** What do you think Paul means in verse 3?
- **Question:** Ask someone to try and sum up Romans 5:8 in non-religious terms.
- **Group Reflection:** Ask your group to take a minute or two and reflect on this question: do you feel like your closeness to Jesus and understanding of him is sufficient to help you stay faithful through hard times? If no, what needs to change? If yes, how can you keep it up? Have them write down their answers on their participants guide. Ask if anyone is willing to share, but don't push it.

Take Action - *Encourage your group to act on what they have learned today by taking one or more of the following steps.*

- **Say:** This week, pre-decide that you are going to be faithful, no matter what happens to you. To help you in this area, consider doing one of the following things.
 - Take a short spiritual retreat. Set aside 2-3 hours where you can read, pray, and be alone with God. Use this time specifically to help you grow in your understanding of Jesus. If you choose this option, email pastor James and ask him to send you a suggested guide for a short spiritual retreat.
 - Identify 2-3 trusted and wise Christian friends who will be people you reach out to when you are going through times of pain and suffering. Consider calling one or two of them this week just to see how they are doing.

Pray Together - *Gather prayer requests and find a way to have your group pray for each other. Either break into smaller groups or go around the circle and give everyone a chance to pray if they would like. You can close with the following prayer.*

Pray: *Father, I know that we cannot predict what will happen to us in this life. I pray that you help us develop a deep and strong enough understanding of you that we will be committed to being faithful to you, even in the hardest times. Amen.*