



**“Lord, the one you love is sick.”**  
The Significance of Suffering  
**John 11:1-3**

Introduction

**John 11** is the account of Lazarus who was sick, who’d died and was raised to life.

**John 11** is the only account in the Gospels of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

Last week we discovered the Significance of Friendship.

**Eight Qualities of a True Friend:**

- 1. True Friends Call on their Friends v.3**
- 2. True Friends Love their Friends v.5**
- 3. True Friends are Companions v.11a**
- 4. True Friends Help their Friends v.11b**
- 5. True Friends are Courageous v.16**
- 6. True Friends Communicate with their Friends vv.21-22**
- 7. True Friends Challenge their Friends vv.26-27**
- 8. True Friends Comfort their Friends vv.33-36**

Today as we continue to examine **John 11** we are going to discover the Significance of Suffering

## Scripture

Now a man was **sick**—Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

<sup>2</sup> Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick.

<sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to him: “**Lord, the one you love is sick.**”  
CSB

## Quote Of The Day

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”— Helen Keller

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of those depths.”  
— Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

In the context of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in **John 11**, there is much to learn about Suffering.

The word translated “**sick**” in **John 11:3** comes from the Greek word “**Astheneo**” meaning to suffer from a debilitating illness or disease. To experience pain or weakness, to be helpless and in dire need.

Jesus said in **John 16:33** “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.” CSB

Bob Reccord, in his book, *Forged by Fire: How God Shapes Those He Loves*, described the suffering he endured as a result of a severe spinal injury which he described as a "prison of pain." Besides the pain, there were countless sleepless nights, a dependency on narcotic drugs, the loss of 80 percent of the strength in his left arm, as well as the loss of his vocation, which he loved. In the following excerpt from the book, Bob Reccord tells a story of how God used an unexpected source to communicate comfort:

"About halfway through that experience, I found myself sitting on the screened-in porch behind our home. The day was cold and blustery, but I was committed to being outside, just for a change of scenery. Suddenly a bird landed on the railing and began to sing. On that cold, rainy day, I couldn't believe any creature had a reason to sing. I wanted to shoot that bird! But he continued to sing, and I had no choice but to listen.

The next day found me on the porch again, but this time the atmosphere was bright, sunny, and warm. As I sat there, being tempted to feel sorry for myself, suddenly the same bird returned. And he was singing again! Where was my shotgun?

Then an amazing truth hit me head on: the bird sang in the cold rain as well as the sunny warmth. His song was not altered by outward circumstances, but it was held constant by an internal condition. It was as though God quietly said to me, "You've got the same choice, Bob. You will either let external circumstances mold your attitude, or your attitude will rise above the external circumstances. You choose!"

No matter the weather, the birds still sing. That's because their singing has nothing to do with the weather, they were singing to their creator.

How do we respond when we are suffering?

### **Four Reasons To Sing When We Are suffering.**

We can sing when we are suffering because:

**God is Glorified through our Suffering**  
**Our Faith Grows Stronger through Suffering**  
**Our Suffering Has Purpose**

## **Suffering Reveals the Presence and Power of God in our life**

We can sing when we are suffering because:

### **God is Glorified through our Suffering v.4**

When Jesus heard it, he said, “This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God. CSB

The word translated “**glory**” comes from the Greek word “**doxazo**” meaning to enhance the reputation of another. To cause to have splendid greatness, to clothe in splendor, to glorify.

Sometimes God allows suffering in our life so we can experience the glory of God in our life.

Lazarus was sick, Lazarus was suffering, Lazarus was dying.

It was during this time of intense suffering Mary, Martha, dead Lazarus and the friends gathered at his tomb experienced the glory of God.

There are at least three kinds of suffering and the glory of God is revealed in all three:

**Sometimes God allows suffering—** not because of anything we have done He allows it to reveal His glory.

If we did not ask for suffering, did not want suffering, didn’t do anything to receive suffering— we can be assured God allowed suffering to happen and He is up to something in our life and He has plans for us!

**Sometimes we create our own suffering—**

Decisions and actions have consequences.

In spite of our mistakes, our failures, and our own ignorance God reveals his mercy and grace toward us— He helps us, He heals us,

## Sometimes we suffer because of God's Discipline—

Followers of Christ are called to live a life worthy of the name of Jesus. When we willfully continue in sinful behavior God will discipline His children.

**Proverbs 3:11-12** “Do not despise the Lord’s instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; <sup>12</sup>for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.” CSB

**Hebrews 12:7-11** “Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup>Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup>For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. <sup>11</sup>No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” CSB

## We can sing when we are suffering because God is Glorified through our Suffering.

We can sing when we are suffering because:

### Our Faith Grows Stronger through Suffering vv.20-23

As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, but Mary remained seated in the house. <sup>21</sup> Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died. <sup>22</sup> Yet even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” <sup>23</sup> “Your brother will rise again,” Jesus told her. CSB

Sometimes through our suffering we learn that God is greater than any circumstance in our life.

Before I went to basic training in the United States Air Force I called a friend from high school who had already been through basic training.

Joe emphatically communicated to me— Do what you are told, Do not stand out, do not raise your hand or volunteer for anything— the instructors will beat you down.

If you bring attention to yourself and you mess up you will be washed back!

When I got to basic training it was the most difficult experience in my life.

I started praying to God please do not let me get washed back. I can't handle any more of basic training than I have to.

I was doing great, I was blending in and things were going great until one day everything fell apart.

In basic training new recruits are divided by squadrons, flights and sections within the flight.

Somehow during basic training I was selected to be a section leader. One of the responsibilities was to make sure the laundry was washed, dried and dispersed properly. Once we got our clothes back we were to properly fold and place our clothing in our locker.

Because I was busy passing out clothing I was not able to properly fold and put away my clothing as fast as the other guys— before I could finish folding my clothing through the overhead speaker we were told to go to the floor above us and prepare the barracks for a new flight coming in.

While we were gone preparing the barracks unknown to us the TI's performed an inspection on our lockers. When they got to my locker my clothes were a mess.

I heard my name called over the loud speaker and I was told to report our barrack's immediately.

I thought my life was ruined . . .

## **We can sing when we are suffering because Our Faith Grows Stronger through Suffering.**

We can sing when we are suffering because:

### **Our Suffering Has Purpose vv.41-42**

So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you heard me. <sup>42</sup> I know that you always hear me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so that they may believe you sent me.” CSB

## **We can sing when we are suffering because Our Suffering Has Purpose.**

We can sing when we are suffering because:

### **Suffering Reveals the Presence and Power of God at work in our life vv.43-45**

After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and let him go.” <sup>45</sup> Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him. CSB

## **We can sing when we are suffering because our Suffering Reveals the Presence and Power of God at work in our life**

### **Suffering is a Real: How do we deal with it?**

**James 1:2-4, 12** “Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.” CSB

“Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” CSB

Suffering is a Real: How do we deal with it?

### **1. Expect Suffering v.2**

“Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, . . .” CSB

**Psalm 90:10** Our lives last seventy years or, if we are strong, eighty years. Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow; indeed, they pass quickly and we fly away. HCSB

Jesus said everyone that follows Him will face persecution— **Mark 10:28-30**

Suffering is Real: How do we deal with it?

### **2. Embrace Suffering v.3**

“because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” CSB

To embrace means to accept and support willingly and even enthusiastically.

When we embrace suffering we understand there is a purpose for our suffering and we will be better for it!

**2 Timothy 3:10-12** But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, <sup>11</sup> along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. <sup>12</sup> **In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.** HCSB

If we submit to and serve Christ we can expect and we must embrace persecution for His name’s sake!



Open Doors, a ministry working with persecuted Christians around the globe, shared the following true story about a Muslim convert to Christ. Bagus (not his real name) came to know Jesus in 2014, and was baptized the following year. Bagus remembered well the reason he followed Christ: "It was because of my long, hard, and troubled life, Ma'am." "So when you finally decided to follow him, your life wasn't troubled anymore?" "Not anymore, Ma'am." "What did you do for a living, then?" "I was a trash picker." "And what do you do now?" "I'm still a trash picker." But looking at the external circumstances of his life it would be easy to conclude that his life has not improved. The journalist asked him, "So, how did you feel after following Jesus?" "Very different. I felt happy and restful," he replied.

Bagus then quietly mentioned that he was a house church leader of 15 former Muslims in his village. The journalist also discovered that Bagus' life was far from untroubled as a follower of Christ. A villager had seen Bagus sharing the story of Jesus with a neighbor and reported him to the village authorities. The authorities dragged him and 15 others to a paddy field and threatened to kill them unless they returned to Islam. Bagus refused and remained firm in his new faith. While his life was spared, he is now forced to live apart from his wife and children, spending his days on the street. He now can only see them periodically.

"I never regretted my decision to follow Jesus," he said without a hint of doubt. "I'm following him wholeheartedly." Citation: "[Led to Christ to Lead Others.](#)" Open Doors Asia (4-7-16);

Adversity is Real: How do we deal with it?

### **3. Endure Suffering v.12**

"Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." CSB

To endure means to suffer patiently

**2 Timothy 4:7-8** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on

that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. NIV

**Galatians 6:9** Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. NIV

**How do we endure suffering?**

**Hebrews 11:6** Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him. CSB

**In times of Suffering by faith we believe:**

**God knows our name—** He has not forgotten me

**God knows where we are—**

**God knows how we feel**

**God knows what we need**

**God has the power to move the heavens and the earth to take care of those who love Him.**