

Follow Jesus Under Pressure

A Psycho-Social-Spiritual Discipleship Module



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WELCOME NOTE

'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and eliminate death entirely. No one will mourn or weep any longer. The pain of wounds will no longer exist, for the old order has ceased.'" Revelation 21:4

Life with Jesus is often not free from pressure. For many of us, faith has come with loss, misunderstanding, and lots of suffering. We have scars on the in and outside. We are living lives littered with trauma and the constant pressure are taking its toll on us. Yet the Lord says that pressure can become a place of promise — where wounds are healed, hope is rekindled, and love grows stronger.

Follow Jesus Under Pressure invites you on a journey of renewal. It brings together insights from psychology, social connection, and spiritual formation to help you understand how trauma and hardship affect us — and how God's grace restores the whole person: body, mind, and spirit.

Through ten lessons, you will explore how to:

- recognise the impact of pain and trauma in your own life,
- bring your struggles honestly before God,
- find reconnection through community and faith,
- rebuild a sense of identity and belonging, and
- persevere with faith and hope when life is difficult.

Each lesson combines **biblical reflection**, **psychological insight**, and **practical application**. You will read Scripture, reflect on questions, and take part in activities that connect truth to everyday life.

Every session includes:

1. A short **Devotion** to open your heart to God's presence.
2. A **Teaching** section that explores biblical and psycho-spiritual understanding.
3. Opportunities to **Reflect, Share, and Pray** with others.

They are designed for **small-group gatherings** or **one-on-one conversations**, where trust and honesty create a safe space. As you journey together, you will find that lament is a tool from God, pain can lead to compassion, and pressure can shape a deeper connection with the Lord.

You can follow the lessons at your own pace. There's no rush. Growth happens over time. Read the Scriptures slowly, listen deeply to God's Spirit, and honour one another's stories. Some lessons may touch tender areas—allow space for silence, tears, or encouragement. This journey is not about having the right answers, but about walking together in faith, love, and hope.

The aim of this discipleship module is to reiterate that He meets us in our weakness, teaches us resilience, and reminds us that even in the darkest places, His love balms our wounds.

If you want, keep a **journal** to note what stands out to you, what God is teaching you, and where you sense change taking place. Return to earlier lessons whenever you need to—each one builds on the others, but all are connected by the same truth: **Jesus meets us under pressure, in our brokenness.**

*"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."
Psalm 34:18*

Facilitator's Note

If you are leading a group through this module, your role is not to teach every answer, but to create a safe space where people can encounter God and one another in truth. Discipleship happens in the context of trust, gentleness, and honesty. Some participants may carry deep wounds or memories of loss. Honour each person's pace. Listen more than you speak. Allow silence when needed and remind everyone that God is present even in the quiet.

Encourage sharing without pressure and protect confidentiality—what is shared in the group stays in the group. Begin and end each session with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide, comfort, and restore. Use the Scripture readings as an anchor and let discussions grow naturally around them. Your posture as a facilitator should reflect Christ's heart: compassionate, humble, patient, and full of hope.

Here are particularly important 'DO NO HARM' principles to practice:

1. **Prioritize Emotional and Spiritual Safety** – Ensure that the group is a safe space emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. Avoid language, activities, or behaviours that could re-traumatize participants.
Application: Encourage open sharing but set boundaries on sensitive topics. Avoid forcing anyone to share personal trauma unless they are comfortable. Provide spiritual care that is sensitive to various levels of spiritual maturity.
2. **Avoid Re-traumatization** – Be mindful of group discussions and activities that could bring up unresolved trauma or painful memories.
Application: Plan discussions carefully to avoid topics that could trigger trauma. If a difficult subject arises, guide the conversation with empathy and care, and offer follow-up support if needed. Romans 12:15 – "*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*"
3. **Empower Rather than Fix** – Empower group members to make their own decisions rather than trying to fix their problems or dictate what they should do.
Application: Focus on building resilience and encouraging personal growth rather than offering quick solutions. Allow individuals to own their healing journey while providing spiritual guidance.
4. **Respect Individual Experiences and Perspectives** – Understand that each group member's experience is unique. Avoid comparing one person's pain to another's or suggesting that their suffering is lesser or greater.
Application: Listen without judgment and validate each person's story. Recognize that everyone is at a different point in their spiritual, emotional, and healing journey.
5. **Do Not Overburden Participants** – Recognise the capacity of each group member and avoid overloading them with expectations, roles, or emotional burdens.
Application: Keep group sessions manageable in length and intensity. Allow participants to rest and process their emotions between meetings. Provide outlets for relaxation and debriefing after heavy discussions. Matthew 11:28-30 – "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*"

6. **Maintain Confidentiality** – Protect the privacy of all group members by ensuring that their personal information and stories are not shared outside the group.
Application: Establish confidentiality as a non-negotiable ground rule. Remind the group frequently about the importance of not sharing sensitive information. Proverbs 11:13 – "*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.*"
7. **Be Aware of Power Dynamics** – Ensure that power dynamics between facilitators and participants, or among participants, do not create an unhealthy or controlling environment.
Application: Facilitate discussions so that all voices are heard equally. Avoid favouritism or allowing one person to dominate the group. Create a balanced, shared space where everyone feels valued.
8. **Practice Active Listening** – Listen actively and attentively to group members, without interrupting or trying to fix things too quickly.
Application: Use active listening techniques such as reflective feedback, non-verbal encouragement, and focusing fully on the speaker. Show empathy and understanding, ensuring participants feel truly heard. James 1:19 – "*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*"
9. **Provide Spiritual Guidance, Not Manipulation** – Offer spiritual support and guidance that helps individuals connect with God and grow in their faith but avoid coercive tactics or making them feel guilty for their struggles.
Application: Share Scripture and pray with participants, encouraging them to rely on God in their healing process. However, avoid suggesting that lack of faith or spiritual weakness is the cause of their trauma.
10. **Take Care of Yourself** – Be mindful of your own emotional, psychological, and spiritual health as a facilitator or participant. You cannot pour from an empty cup.
Application: Practice self-care regularly and seek support if you feel overwhelmed by the emotional weight of the group. Model self-care to participants. Mark 6:31 – "*Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'*"
11. **Monitor for Compassion Fatigue** – Be aware of signs of compassion fatigue within yourself and others and address it promptly.
Application: Create space for debriefing and reflection to prevent burnout. Encourage group members to seek rest, prayer, and external support when needed. 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.*"

The questions and activities were design not to confront, but to create some distance in order not to re-traumatise.

Remember: you are not here to fix people, but to **walk with them** as they follow Jesus under pressure. Trust that God Himself is the true Healer, and that His Spirit is busy perfecting each of our faith.

God blesses you and keeps you safe to His side! Amen!

LESSON 1: TRAUMA AWARENESS

DEVOTION: LORD, WHY HAVE YOU MADE THE WORLD THIS WAY?

The book of Job is a superb book about the world's most difficult subject – suffering. Few other books of the Bible soar to such heights of wonder at God's creation, and few others plumb the depths of despair at the unfairness of life. It is full of anger, sorrow, fear, and pleading, as well as joy, delight, amazement, and gratitude.

Above all, it is full of questions, first of all from Job as to why he is experiencing such undeserved suffering, and secondly from God to Job as he challenges Job to explain the mysteries of the universe.

The book teaches us that we can bring our raw pain to God and that he can handle it. And in that he engages with us to give us a Bigger God.

But in the midst of grief, this is not easy. On this weekly journey with Job, we suggest that each day you...

-  Read the suggested passages.
-  Watch to the presentation.
-  Reflect on the questions.

The whole exercise is designed to last about fifteen minutes each time.

“Lord, in your grace, come and build our resilience to live for You. Amen”

 **Read: Job 1:1-20; 3:11**

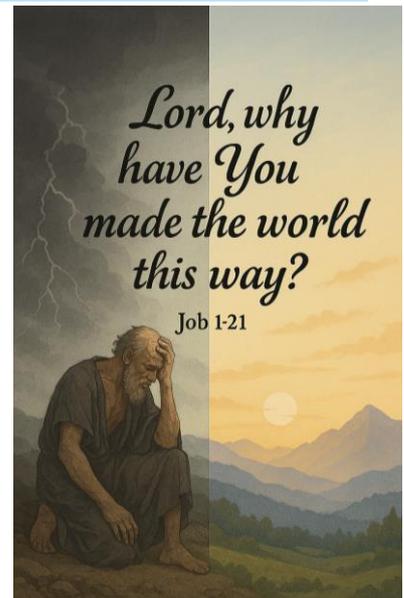
 **Watch: Monday: The Question video**

<https://vimeo.com/735723856>

 **Questions for reflection:**

Was Minhee right to ask a question like that? Do believers think ordinary humans have a right to accuse God like that?

How has the unjust suffering of the world touched us?



 **Share with one another how we can identify with Job & Minhee? Take some time to pray for one another.**

TEACHING: WHAT IS TRAUMA?

 **Question: What do we know about trauma?**

What is Trauma?

Trauma is the emotional, psychological, and physical response to an event or series of events that are deeply distressing, overwhelming, or threatening. These events often exceed an individual's ability to cope, leaving a lasting impact on their sense of safety, identity, and well-being.

Definition of Trauma

According to the American Psychological Association (APA):

"Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms."

"When our ability to respond to threat is overwhelmed." Peter Levine

 **Questions: What do we understand from these definitions? Have we been overwhelmed?**

The **Bible also** recognises the reality of human suffering and brokenness. Throughout Scripture, we see people experiencing deep anguish, such as David's cries in the Psalms, Job's loss and grief, or Jesus' own agony in Gethsemane. The Bible shows that trauma is not the end of the story—God enters into our suffering with compassion and healing.

Types of Traumas

1. Acute Trauma



Results from a single overwhelming event (e.g., car accident, assault, natural disaster).

2. Chronic Trauma



Occurs from repeated and prolonged exposure to distressing events (e.g., domestic violence, abuse, living in war zones).

3. Complex Trauma



Involves exposure to multiple traumatic events, often starting in early life and involving interpersonal harm (e.g., childhood neglect, long-term abuse).

4. Secondary (Vicarious) Trauma



Affects those who are exposed to the trauma of others, such as caregivers, counsellors, pastors, or humanitarian workers.

5. Collective Trauma



Experienced by a community, society, or group, such as in war, genocide, natural disasters, or persecution.

6. Transgenerational Trauma



Trauma that is passed from one generation to the next, affecting children and grandchildren of those who experienced traumatic events.

 **Question:** Can you identify some of these traumas in our community?

Common Symptoms of Trauma

Physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and spiritual symptoms.

These **symptoms that occur are normal reactions to abnormal situations.**



Emotional: anxiety, fear, sadness, anger, emotional numbness



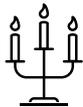
Cognitive: confusion, trouble concentrating, intrusive thoughts or flashbacks



Physical: fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, muscle tension



Behavioural: withdrawal, avoidance, difficulty trusting others, risk-taking behaviours



Spiritual: feelings of abandonment, questioning faith or purpose, spiritual dryness

Key Insights into Trauma

1. Trauma Is Subjective

What is traumatic for one person may not be for another. Trauma is defined not only by the event itself but by the individual's experience of it. This means that God wants us to extend grace to everyone, and don't use our own experience as the norm.

2. Trauma Affects the Whole Person

Trauma impacts the mind, body, emotions, relationships, and spirit. Healing must address all these areas.

3. Trauma Can Be Invisible

While some trauma results in visible wounds or life disruptions, others suffer quietly. Trauma is often hidden beneath surface behaviour, like emotional numbness or always being on the edge.

4. Unhealed Trauma Can Lead to Long-Term Consequences

If not addressed, trauma can contribute to depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, substance abuse, and relational problems.

5. Trauma Can Be Healed

With the right support—psychological care, spiritual guidance, safe community, and time—people can heal and recover their sense of safety, identity, and purpose.

6. Faith and Community Play a Key Role

For many, faith is a powerful resource in healing from trauma. Prayer, Scripture, and supportive faith communities offer hope, comfort, and a sense of belonging.

7. Trauma-Informed Care is Essential

Any work with people—especially in ministry, counselling, or caregiving—should be trauma-informed, meaning it recognises the signs of trauma and responds with compassion and safety.

 **Question:** Which of the key insights stand out?

When Do We Know It's Trauma?

We recognise something as trauma when an event or experience **overwhelms a person's ability to cope**, causes intense emotional distress, and leaves a lasting negative impact on their sense of safety, identity, and well-being.

Trauma is not just about what happened, but how the person experiences what happened.

Key Signs That Indicate Trauma

1. Overwhelming Emotions

- The person feels intense fear, helplessness, horror, sadness, or anger.
- Their emotions feel too big to manage and do not seem to fade with time.



2. Lasting Impact

- The effects of the experience don't go away after a few days or weeks.
- The person continues to struggle with fear, anxiety, or other strong emotions long after the event.



3. Disruption in Daily Life

- The person has trouble sleeping, concentrating, trusting others, or functioning at school, work, or in relationships.
- They may avoid people, places, or activities that remind them of the experience.



4. Re-experiencing the Event

- They may have flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, or nightmares.
- They might feel as if the traumatic event is happening again (even though it isn't).



5. Physical Symptoms Without Clear Cause

- Headaches, stomach problems, fatigue, rapid heartbeat, or muscle tension with no medical explanation.



6. Emotional Numbness or Disconnection

- The person may feel emotionally shut down, disconnected from others, or from their own feelings.
- Sometimes, they say “I feel nothing” or “like I’m not really here.”



7. Change in Behaviour

- Increased irritability, withdrawal from loved ones, risk-taking, or sudden silence and isolation.



Trauma Is About the Person’s Perception, Not Just the Event

Two people can go through the same event—such as a car accident or witnessing violence—but one may be traumatised while the other is not. Why?

Because trauma depends on:

- *Personal history (especially past trauma)* – Past traumatic experiences can amplify the emotional impact, causing someone to feel overwhelmed more easily than another without such a history.
- *Support system* – A strong network of family and friends helps buffer the emotional shock, while feeling isolated or unsupported can deepen trauma.
- *Sense of control during the event* – Feeling powerless or unable to influence the situation increases the likelihood that an event will become traumatic.
- *Age and development stage* – Children and adolescents process events differently, often being more vulnerable to trauma due to their developing brains and limited coping skills.
- *Spiritual and emotional resources* – Personal beliefs, faith, or inner resilience can help someone find meaning and comfort during difficult experiences, reducing trauma’s long-term effects.

 **Question: What new insights have we learned and how will this impact us?**

SHARE

Considering all you are learning about trauma, share with each other what is shaping your mind the most.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.
Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 2: FOLLOW JESUS UNDER PRESSURE

DEVOTION: THE DARKNESS OF LIFE

 **Read: Job 3:1-26**

 **Watch: Tuesday: The Darkness of Life video**

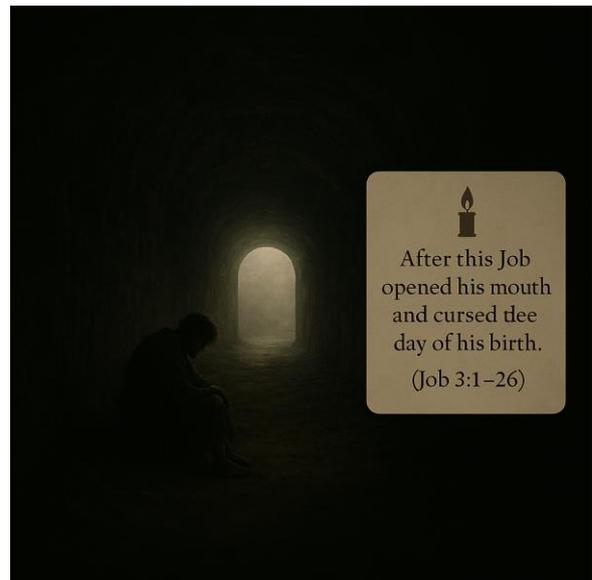
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Questions for reflection

In the light of all that Job has lost, was his reaction justified?

How does grief and pain distort the way we think?

Have we ever experienced a time when we struggled to find the meaning in life? Does Job's description help in this experience?



What we see Job and Minhee are doing is called: Lament. Lamentation is the expression of deep sorrow, grief, or regret. Biblically, it often involves crying out to God in pain while seeking His presence and comfort.

Lamentation is an act of faith and worship. When we lament, we embody trust in God's presence, even in pain. It's not just about expressing sorrow but about clinging to the hope that God will meet us, heal us, and lead us through.

It is important to distinguish lament from mere complaint: Lament turns to God in faith, complaint often turns away in doubt. For example, In the Book of Lamentations Jeremiah mourns the fall of Jerusalem but maintains a Godward focus.

By understanding lamentation, we equip ourselves to embrace lament as a tool for emotional and spiritual resilience.

THE SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK OF LAMENTATION - A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Examples of Lament in Scripture:

- a. Psalms (e.g., Psalm 13: "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?") Many biblical laments follow a pattern:



- b. Lamentations 3:19-24 (Jeremiah's honest grief yet hope in God's faithfulness).
- c. Jesus' lament: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

2. Key Characteristics of Lament:

- a. **Honesty:** Raw and real expression of pain.
- b. **Faith:** Turning to God as the source of comfort and resolution.
- c. **Hope:** Acknowledging God's sovereignty and promises even in despair.

3. Spiritual Benefits of Lament:

- a. **Connection to God:** Encourages an authentic relationship with God.
- b. **Renewed Hope:** Aligns our focus on God's faithfulness and ultimate redemption.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LAMENTATION & GRIEVING

The terms **grieving** and **lament** are related but distinct, especially in their emotional and spiritual dimensions.

Grieving and lament often overlap, especially in faith contexts. Grieving may lead to lament as individuals turn to God to process their pain and seek hope. Conversely, lament acknowledges grief while also reframing it within a faith-filled perspective of hope, trust, and restoration.

As with persecuted believers, lament can be a powerful tool to guide individuals and communities through grief while anchoring them in their faith amidst suffering.

Grieving

Definition: Grieving is the emotional response to loss, pain, or suffering. It is a natural and universal human reaction to events such as death, trauma, or significant life changes. **ACTING IN**



Focus: Primarily internal and emotional.



Expression: Can involve crying, silence, withdrawal, anger, or other personal ways of processing loss.



Lament

Definition: Lament is a structured or intentional expression of grief, often directed toward God or a higher power. It typically involves articulating pain, seeking understanding, and expressing trust or hope. **ACTING OUT**



Focus: Outward and relational—often directed toward God.



Expression: Found in prayer, song, poetry, or liturgy. Lament includes voicing specific complaints, asking questions, and calling on God for help or intervention.



Context: Often individualistic, although it may also occur collectively (e.g., mourning as a community).



Context: Often communal as well as individual, with a deeper focus on spiritual connection and acknowledgment of divine sovereignty.



Spiritual Dimension: Grief may or may not have a spiritual or faith-based aspect. It can exist outside of religious or theological frameworks.



Spiritual Dimension: Deeply rooted in faith traditions. In the Christian context, lament reflects a belief in God's presence and care, even in suffering. The Psalms are a prime example of biblical lament (e.g., Psalm 22).



Example: After losing a loved one, a person experiences deep sorrow, sadness, and perhaps feelings of emptiness or numbness.



Example: Someone experiencing persecution might cry out to God, saying, "Why, Lord, do you allow this to happen? Do not be far from me! Come to my aid."



 **Share with one another how what we are learning is shaping our minds.**

BIBLE STUDY: BIBLICAL MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP UNDER PRESSURE – IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

1. The Reality of Trauma in the Discipleship Journey

Biblical Recognition

Scripture is honest about suffering. The Psalms and Lamentations give voice to emotional and spiritual trauma: despair, abandonment, injustice, and cries for deliverance. David, Jeremiah, Elijah, Job, and others show that faith and pain often walk hand in hand. Christ was remarkably familiar with all of these.

Contemporary Insight

Modern research confirms that persecuted believers face trauma not just in the body but in the soul—leading to anxiety, emotional shutdown, and even loss of spiritual identity. When churches ignore these wounds, they risk silencing the very people they aim to disciple.

Biblical Example Jesus' Trauma:

Jesus was not untouched by trauma. From the moment of His birth, He was under threat—fleeing with His family to Egypt to escape Herod's massacre (Matthew 2:13–18). That uprooted them and they became refugees for many years in Egypt. Then later in ministry, He experienced brutal betrayal by his friend, Judas (Matthew 26:47–50), abandonment by his disciples in his darkest hour at Gethsemane (Mark 14:50).

Furthermore, Jesus knew rejection by his own people in Nazareth, false accusations, physical torture, and death by crucifixion (Matthew 27:26–31; Luke 23:33–34). On the cross it reached the climax. His cry of “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46) echoes the deep anguish of Psalm 22. This lament reflects both raw pain and profound intimacy with God in suffering.

Trauma Insights:

Jesus models for us that suffering is not a sign of spiritual failure. Instead, it is part of the human journey, even for the sinless Son of God. In Christ, trauma is neither hidden nor minimised but entered into fully. His life affirms that God is present in trauma, and that emotional wounds are not barriers to holiness—they are *places* where *grace* can abound.

 **Take some time and worship the Lord Jesus that He was willing to face trauma to communicate his love and care to us!**

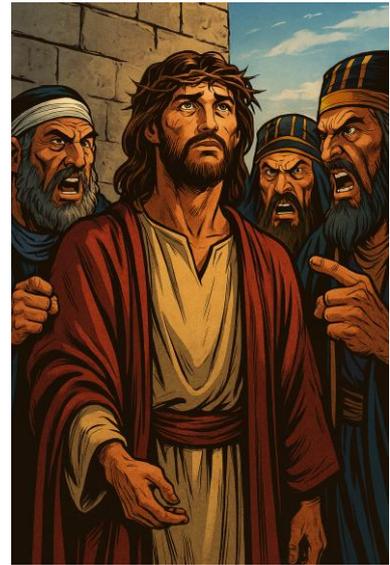
2. The Uniqueness of Persecution Trauma in Jesus' Life

A. Targeted Identity Wounds

Believers suffer because of their faith, because when you are in Christ you have a target on your back. This can distort their understanding of self-worth, belonging, or God's presence.

Jesus was not just hurt—He was targeted because of who He claimed to be: the Son of God and the Messiah. *John 10:30–33; Mark 14:61–64*. This is all on the identity level. His identity, in fact, got him into deep trouble!

He endured mocking over His identity (e.g. “King of the Jews”) and was crucified for speaking truth about Himself. *Matthew 27:37; John 19:7* Jesus must have felt that he doesn’t belong in his own creation. Just with his triumphant entry into the great Jerusalem, Jesus wept because they didn’t recognise him. (Luke 19:41-44)

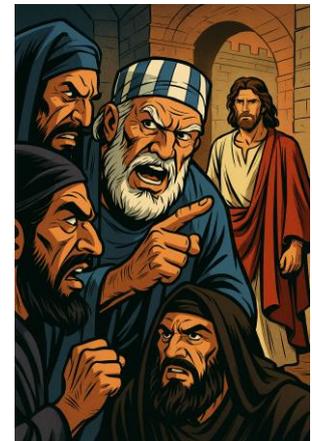


 **Share with one another how the enemy has targeted our identity.**

B. Chronic and Repeated

Persecution is rarely a one-time event. It leads to long-term fear, emotional depletion, and survival-mode thinking.

Opposition followed Jesus everywhere—from Nazareth to Jerusalem. The religious leaders continually tried to trap, discredit, or kill Him. *Mark 3:6; John 7:1; John 11:53*. When you read through the Gospel of John, you would notice the phrase over and over: *because his time had not yet come*. From early on, his enemies wanted to eliminate him, but they couldn’t because his time had not yet come. Animosity followed him.



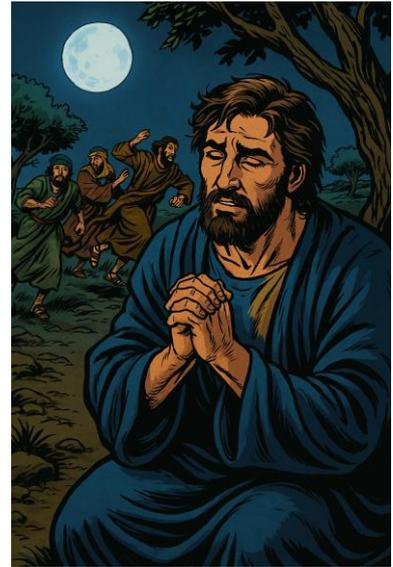
 **Question: What about constant trouble is the most difficult?**

C. Isolation and Betrayal

Many experiences betrayal by neighbours, communities, or even fellow believers. This fractures trust and deepens trauma.

His hometown, Nazareth took offense at him, asking: *Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't he the son of Mary?* Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. (Mark 6:1-6) Coming closer to home, his own blood did not believe in him. (John 7:5)

At His moment of greatest need, His friends fell asleep (Matthew 26:40), fled (Mark 14:50), or denied Him (Luke 22:57). *Isaiah 53:3 – “He was despised and rejected...”* Isolation was very real and well-known to Jesus. People just didn't get him!



Question: *Why is isolation so dangerous for our well-being, and how are we dealing with it?*

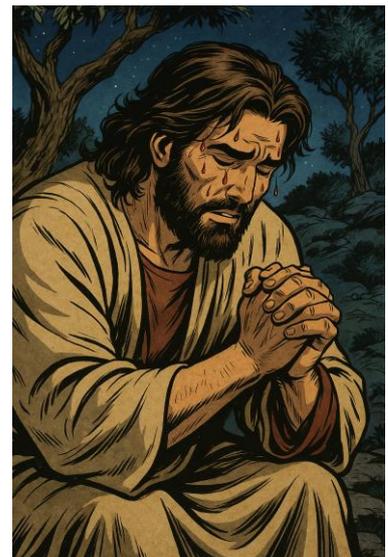
D. Spiritual Crisis and Endurance

Suffering can shake the foundations of faith, producing silence, doubt, or withdrawal. But it can also refine and deepen faith through perseverance and divine encounter.

Though sinless, Jesus bore the weight of human sin and divine wrath—an experience of cosmic loneliness. (*2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 27:46*) In the garden, we see the very real struggle of Jesus' soul, to the point of sweetening blood.

Yet, through suffering, He learned obedience and became our High Priest who empathises with all our weaknesses. (*Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:7-9*) In fact, there was meaning in his suffering, because that's God's way to conquer evil. (*Romans 12:14, 17, 19-21*)

Share with one another how we find meaning in our struggles.



3. Trauma-Informed Discipleship in Jesus' Ministry

A trauma-informed approach sees healing not as separate from discipleship but part of it. It's imperative to make this part of your fellowship DNA. It includes:

- **Emotional wounds are real** – Faith doesn't erase pain.

Jesus never hid His emotions. He wept (*John 11:35*), groaned (*Mark 7:34*), felt sorrow (*Matthew 26:38*), and longed for connection (*Luke 22:15*).

- **Recovery and growth are intertwined** – Restoration deepens maturity.

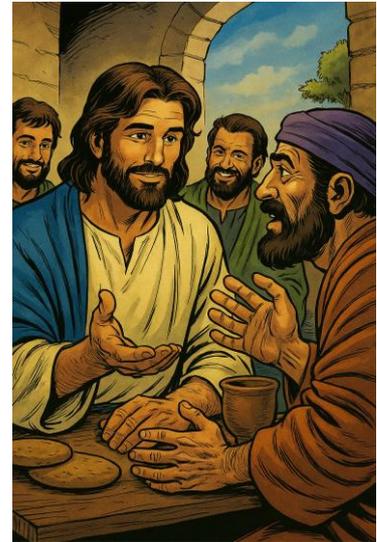
After the resurrection, Jesus ministered to His wounded disciples—restoring Peter, comforting Mary, healing doubt in Thomas. *John 20–21*

- **Safe space matters** – Trust needs time and grace.

Jesus created safe, trusting relationships—whether with the Twelve (*John 13:1*), the woman at the well (*John 4:1–26*), or with Zacchaeus (*Luke 19:1–10*). Jesus created a safe environment even for the despised among the disciples to make space for Levi, the tax collector.

- **Support is crucial** – No one heals alone.

Even Jesus sought companionship and prayer support from His disciples in Gethsemane. *Matthew 26:36–38*. The Father sent angels to support his Son in the wilderness and in his darkest hour, Gethsemane. *Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43*



 **Question:** *In which of these areas do we need to grow? What steps can we take today, this week?*

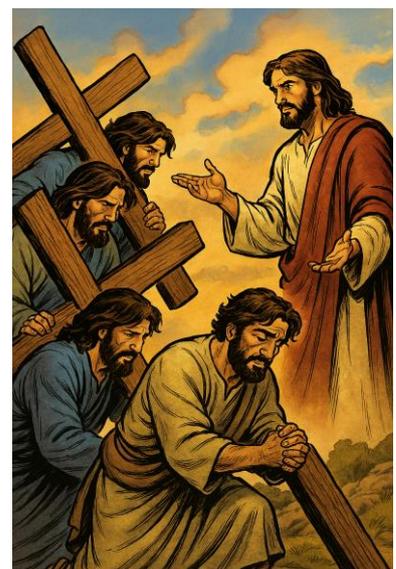
4. Core Discipleship Principles in Jesus' Life

A. Honesty About Cost

As Jesus warned, discipleship involves sacrifice. A trauma-informed perspective does not shy away from the cost but also provides compassionate care when wounds appear.

Jesus was transparent: *"In this world, you will have trouble"* (*John 16:33*). Discipleship is costly. That is just a fact. Jesus clearly warned: *"Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross..."* *Luke 9:23; John 15:18–20*

But He also offers His presence and peace as we walk through trials. That is also a fact! *"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (*Matthew 28:20*)

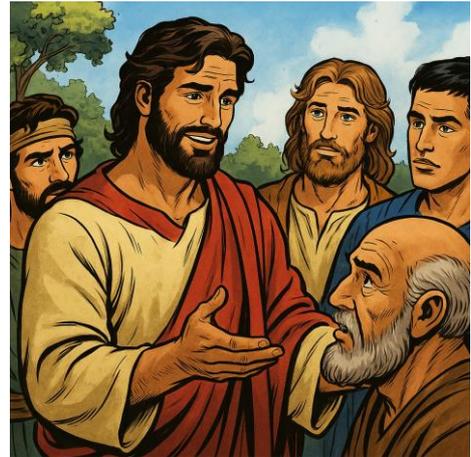


B. Safe and Relational Community

Just as early believers supported one another in Acts, modern discipleship groups should be communities where individuals can share their pain and find healing through accountability, prayer, and mutual support.

The early church supported one another in homes, prisons, and catacombs. Biblical discipleship happens in *koinonia*—deep fellowship where burdens are shared (Galatians 6:2).

Jesus invited His followers into deep relationship. He called them *friends* (John 15:15), washed their feet (John 13:1–17), and showed that leadership flows from love, not dominance.



 **Question:** How can we make our friendships/fellowship an even safer place?

C. Empathetic Discipleship

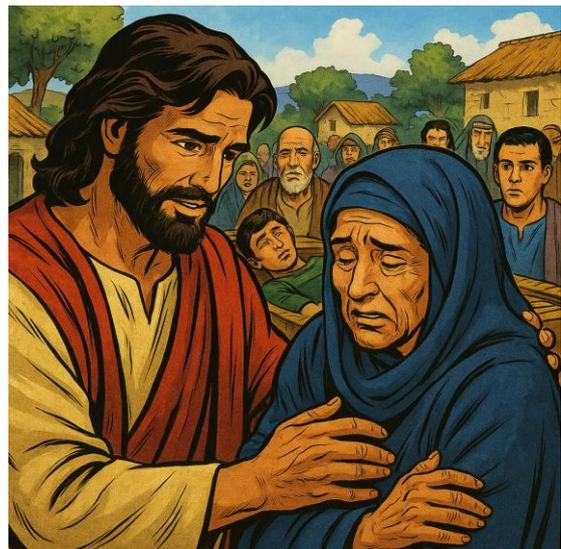
Disciples are called not only to teach the Word (as in 2 Timothy 3:16–17) but also to be sensitive to the emotional scars that persecution can produce. Training disciples to recognise signs of trauma and respond with empathy is essential.

Trauma-aware disciples are not just skilled—they are *compassionate*. They recognise silent pain and offer *presence*, not *pressure*.

Jesus noticed suffering and responded with compassion:

- The widow of Nain – *Luke 7:11–15* – Jesus’ heart went out to her, because he knew how difficult and traumatising life is for widows.
- The bleeding woman – *Luke 8:43–48* – Jesus’ presence brought an end of 12 painful years of suffering and disgrace.
- The paralysed man – *Mark 2:1–12* – Jesus gave him back his dignity, standing in society and future.

He never rushed healing. He met people where they were emotionally, spiritually, and physically.



 **Question:** Where today do we need the touch of the Lord in your life?

D. Holistic Application of Scripture

Biblical truth must be applied both to our spiritual formation and to our understanding of our inner lives. Practices such as confession, lament, prayer, and meditation on Scripture (seen in the Psalms) can help believers process and overcome trauma.

Jesus used Scripture to comfort, challenge, and heal:

- In the wilderness – *Matthew 4:1–11* – The Word gave Jesus tools to deal with the enemy.
- In the synagogue – *Luke 4:16–21* – Jesus’ ministry was holistic, the soul, the mind and the body got healed. All of life is a priority for the Lord.
- On the cross – *Psalm 22 in Matthew 27:46* – Lamentation on the cross gave Jesus a way to express what is in his heart.

After the resurrection, He interpreted Scripture to help His disciples make sense of their trauma. *Luke 24:25–27* It is vital for every believer to have a good understanding of the theology of suffering. Without it, one struggles to survive and thrive in this dark world.

 **Question: How have we made sense of our own suffering?**

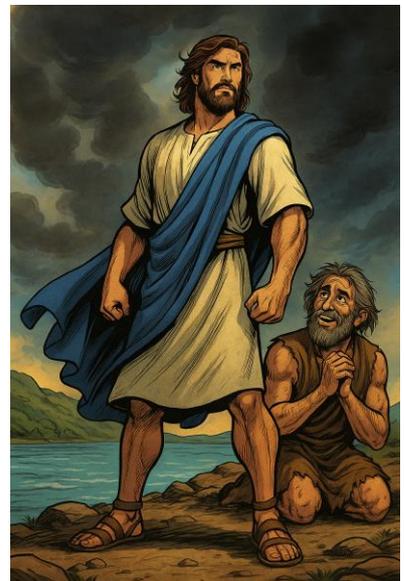
E. Multiplication Through Restoration

The goal is not simply to withstand pressure but to use personal testimony of healing as a powerful witness, thereby inspiring and equipping others to follow Jesus despite adversity.

Jesus restored broken people and entrusted them with mission:

- Peter after denial – *John 21:15–19* – Jesus reestablish Peter in his role. With God, there are always second chances.
- The demoniac in Gerasa – *Mark 5:1–20* – This gentleman became a great preacher in 10 cities, Decapolis, and prepared the way when Jesus later arrived.
- Mary Magdalene – *John 20:11–18* – Mary had the first honour to encounter the Lord, and go and tell the disciples that he is risen. Also, Mary’s restoration filled her heart to the brim that she took her servings and prepared Jesus body for burial.

Their healing became the foundation of their testimony.



 **Share with one another how God is using our healing in helping others.**

5. Practical Strategies in Jesus' Approach

Establish Safe Spaces

Create small groups or counselling sessions within the church where honesty about struggle is welcomed. Emphasise confidentiality, active listening, and empathetic sharing.

Jesus built intimate friendships with His disciples. Even after the resurrection, He appeared to them privately in their fear and gave them peace. *John 20:19–22*

Integrate Lament and Prayer

Encourage believers to bring their pain before God in prayer, using lament as a spiritual tool to articulate grief and find hope.

Jesus practised and taught honest prayer:

- In Gethsemane: *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow...” Matthew 26:36–44*
- On the Cross: *“My God, my God...” (Psalm 22) Matthew 27:46*

Model Vulnerability

Disciples should share, when appropriate, their personal experiences of struggle and recovery. This models authentic discipleship that does not hide its wounds.

Jesus showed weakness, dependence on the Father, and deep sorrow. His wounds were not hidden—even in His resurrected body. *John 20:27* His wounds became our healing!

 **Question: *In a culture where vulnerability is not valued, how can we embrace it wholeheartedly in our life?***

Provide Access to Support

While the Church is called to minister spiritually, sometimes professional help is also needed. Establish referral networks or collaborate with Christian counselling centres.

Jesus sat at the foot of rabbis and Luke says that Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and in favour with God and men. (2:51)

Contextualise Scripture for Healing

Teach how passages like Psalm 34:18 (“*The Lord is close to the broken-hearted*”) and Jeremiah 2 (which reflects on love and loss) can speak into the pain of trauma, offering hope and restoration.

Jesus applied Scripture with relevance and sensitivity:

- To the woman caught in adultery – *John 8:1–11*
- To the disciples on the road to Emmaus – *Luke 24:13–35*
- To the hurting and marginalised – *Luke 4:18–19 (quoting Isaiah 61)*

 **Question:** *How can we build out these strategies in your fellowship with others?*

6. Conclusion: Jesus, the Wounded Healer

Jesus, “*a man of sorrows, familiar with grief*” (Isaiah 53:3), modelled the ultimate trauma-informed discipleship. He did not avoid suffering—He entered it. He did not discard the wounded—He healed and empowered them. And He showed that true discipleship does not bypass trauma but transforms it into a story of resurrection and hope.

SHARE

Share with one another what you are learning from this model and how it will impact your understanding and life.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.
Or divide the group into twos or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

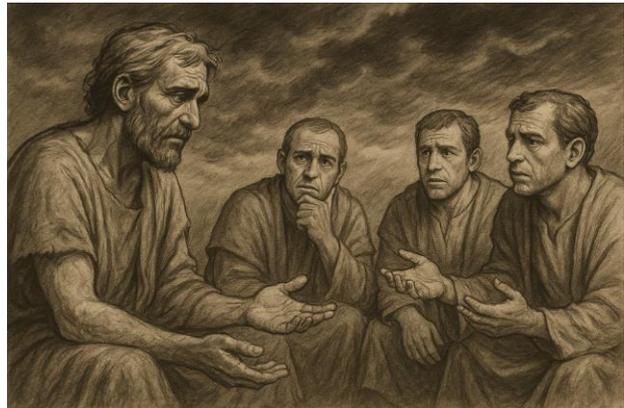
LESSON 3: THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA ON YOU

DEVOTION: THE TWO PROBLEMS OF SUFFERING

 **Read: Job 2:11-13; 4:17; 8:1-6.**

 **Watch: Wednesday: The Two Problems of Suffering video**

<https://vimeo.com/735722768>



 **Questions for reflection:**

What did Job's friends do right and do wrong in their attempt to comfort him?

Why is it that we tend to blame ourselves or others for suffering that is undeserved?

How can we ensure that churches are safe places to share about one's suffering?

THE ROLE OF LAMENT IN MENTAL HEALTH

1. Emotional Catharsis:

Lamentation allows for the release of suppressed emotions, reducing psychological burden. Research shows that verbalising emotions can diminish their intensity.

2. Cognitive Reframing:

Lament shifts focus from “*I am alone in my pain*” to “*God is with me in my pain.*” It helps replacing negative thought patterns with faith-based truths.

3. Validation of Pain:

Lament acknowledges the reality of suffering without minimising it. Validating emotions fosters self-compassion and resilience.

Healing Through Community Lament

1. Biblical Basis for Communal Lament:

The Israelites lamented together (Joel 1:13-14). Shared grieving strengthens bonds and fosters mutual support.

2. Psychological Insights:

Sharing pain in a safe community reduces feelings of isolation and shame. Group therapy and collective prayer as models of communal lament.

Integrating Spiritual & Psychological Lament (God as the Centre of Healing)

1. Theological Assurance:

God hears our cries (Psalm 34:17). And God enters into our suffering through Christ (Hebrews 4:15).

2. Psychological and Spiritual Integration:

Balance emotional honesty with spiritual hope. Engage practices like prayer, meditation on Scripture, and counselling for holistic healing.

 **Share with one another how we can lament as a group and make sure that we will not be like Job's friends.**

TEACHING: THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL & SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Trauma affects the whole person — **mind, body, soul,** and **relationships**.

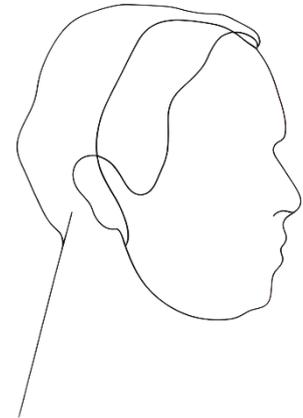
It's not just an emotional wound; it leaves deep marks on how people think, feel, relate to others, and even how they experience God and themselves. Understanding the **psycho-social and spiritual impacts** of trauma helps us respond with care, compassion, and hope.

1. Psychological (Mental & Emotional) Impact

Trauma can overwhelm the brain's normal ways of coping, leading to a wide range of emotional and cognitive effects:

Emotional Effects:

- Intense fear, anxiety, sadness, or anger
- Guilt or shame (“Why didn’t I do more?” “It was my fault”)
- Emotional numbness or difficulty feeling anything at all.
- Mood swings or uncontrollable crying
- Loss of interest in life or joy



Cognitive Effects:

- Confusion, memory loss, or difficulty concentrating.
- Intrusive thoughts or flashbacks
- Negative self-image or identity crisis (“I am broken,” “I am worthless”)
- Difficulty making decisions.
- Sense of helplessness or hopelessness

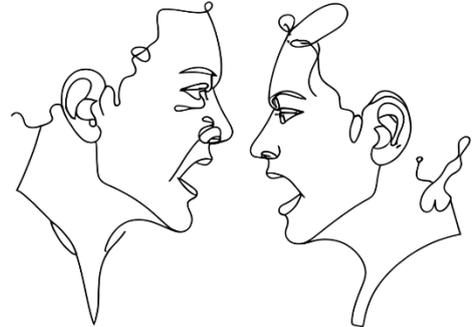


 **Question:** *How does understanding trauma's cognitive effects help foster greater empathy within our communities?*

2. Social Impact

Trauma also affects how a person relates to others and functions in their community:

- **Withdrawal** from relationships – feeling isolated or disconnected.
- **Loss of trust** – in people, leaders, or institutions
- **Increased conflict** – irritability, aggression, or fear of others
- **Stigma or shame** – especially in cultures where trauma is misunderstood.
- **Disruption of roles** – as parent, spouse, friend, or community member
- **Difficulty engaging** in daily responsibilities – work, education, caregiving.



In group settings (such as war, displacement, or persecution), entire communities may experience **collective trauma**, leading to broken trust, disunity, or social paralysis.

 **Question:** *Again, have a close look at these effects; how does trauma effect our faith community?*

3. Spiritual Impact

Trauma often shakes a person's spiritual foundations — their beliefs, worldview, and relationship with God.

Common Spiritual Effects:

- Feeling abandoned by God (“Where was God when this happened?”)
- Doubting God's love, power, or justice
- Spiritual numbness or inability to pray or read Scripture.
- Guilt or shame that affects the sense of worth before God.
- Loss of purpose or hope
- Questioning the meaning of suffering and life



But... trauma can also open the door to **spiritual growth**, as people cry out to God in their pain and discover His healing presence.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me...” Psalm 23:4

 **Question: It is sometimes hard to admit that our faith is struggling, but we can learn from Bible personalities that it is ok. God has a great understanding for what we are going through. Share with one another how the constant stress impacts our spiritual walk?**

Why This Matters?

Understanding the psycho-social and spiritual impacts of trauma helps caregivers, churches, counsellors, and support groups to:

- Respond with compassion instead of judgment.
- Offer safe spaces for healing and expression.
- Integrate faith and emotional support.
- Help people rebuild identity, hope, and relationships.

It is important to know that Healing is Possible

Healing from trauma takes time, safety, and connection. Through **trauma-informed care**, **loving community**, and the **restoring power of God**, individuals and communities can recover joy, rebuild trust, and find new purpose.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives...” Isaiah 61:1

SHARE

Share with one another what you need from the group in dealing with the effects of trauma.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 4: PAUL: FOLLOW JESUS UNDER PRESSURE

DEVOTION: A STRANGE SPEECH

 **Read: Job 38:1-21**

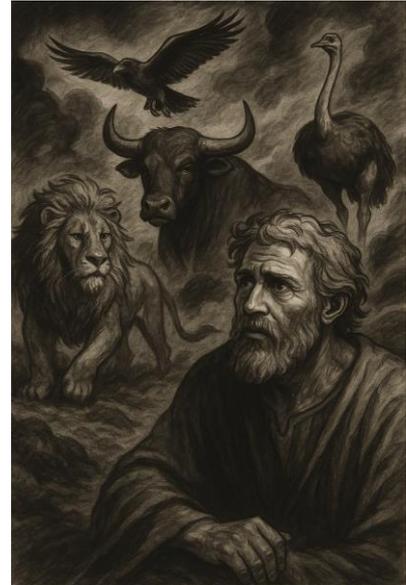
 **Watch: Thursday: A Strange Speech video**

<https://vimeo.com/735724325>

Questions for reflection

Can we come up with a way to understand how this speech of God might address Job's deepest need?

Can we think of times in our lives when God's response (or lack of it) has baffled us? How did we cope?



BIBLE STUDY: BIBLICAL MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP UNDER PRESSURE – IN THE LIFE OF PAUL

 **Read: 2 Cor. 1:1-8; 4:7-18; 11:23-33**

1. Recognising Trauma in the Life of Paul

Biblical Examples of Paul's Trauma

Early Rejection and Suspicion by Believers

After his conversion, Paul faced fear and suspicion from the very community he sought to join. Acts 9:26-27

Constant Threats and Violence

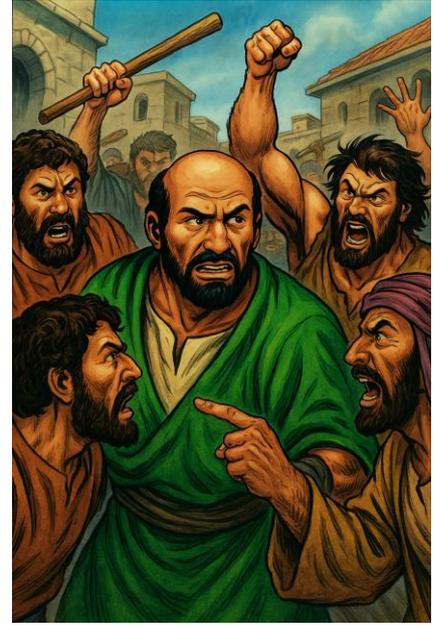
Paul lived his life on the edge – remarkably familiar to danger and trauma. He was stoned, flogged, imprisoned, shipwrecked, and in danger from every side. *2 Corinthians 11:23–28; Acts 14:19–20 (stoned and left for dead); Acts 16:22–24 (beaten and jailed in Philippi)*. In *2 Corinthians 1*, he said that they were in so much danger that he thought they would die.

Betrayal and Abandonment by Coworkers

Paul had his own Judas's. He was often left alone or opposed by those close to him. *In 2 Timothy 4:10 he writes: "Demas has deserted me"; and in 2 Timothy 4:16 shares: "At my first defence, no one came to my support."*

Ongoing Physical or Mental Distress ("Thorn in the Flesh")

2 Corinthians 12:7–9 – Possibly a physical ailment, psychological burden, or spiritual oppression—Paul pleaded for its removal, but God's grace sustained him. Let alone, he has received 5 times, the Jewish, 39 lashes. When one reads his letters, one clearly sees his mental distress for his disciples.



 **Question: How is this encouraging us in our walk with the Lord?**

2. The Uniqueness of Persecution Trauma in Paul's Life

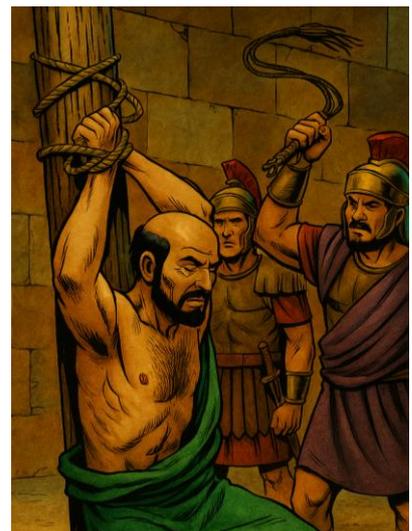
A. Targeted Identity Wounds

Paul was persecuted *because* of his identity in Christ. He bore the stigma of a traitor among Jews and a threat among Gentiles. *Galatians 6:17* – “*I bear on my body the marks of Jesus;*” *Acts 21:27–36* – *Mob violence in Jerusalem*

Paul's identity also changed. He declared this about himself: “*I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ.*” (*Ephesians 3:1*)

B. Chronic and Repeated

Danger was ever present. Paul lived in a continuous cycle of mission and persecution. There was rarely peace, and he often moved in secrecy or haste. *Acts 17:10* – *Escaped at night from Berea; Acts 23:12–24* – *Forty men vowed to kill him.*



C. Isolation and Betrayal

Paul knew the inside of a prison, and isolation is the whole point of prison. He also was rejected by many Jewish leaders and faced opposition within the church. *2 Corinthians 1:8* – “We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure”; *2 Timothy 1:15* – “Everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me.”

D. Spiritual Crisis and Resilience

Paul’s conversion and his three years of study under Gamaliel must have been a great time of spiritual crisis. *Romans 7* is an encouragement to all disciples. It clearly shows his spiritual struggles and fight. Paul wrestled with despair—yet experienced comfort from God. *2 Corinthians 7:5–6* – “Conflicts on the outside, fears within... but God, who comforts the downcast...”; *Philippians 4:12–13* – “I have learned the secret of being content...”

 **Question:** What becomes clear to us when we are reading this about Paul?

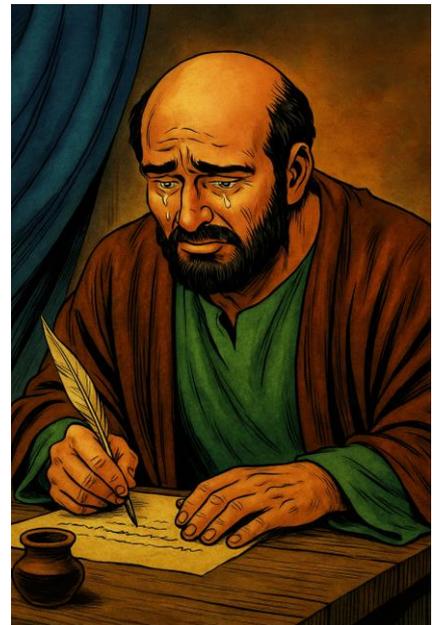
3. Trauma-Informed Discipleship in Paul’s Ministry

- **Emotional wounds are real.**

Paul wrote with vulnerability: “I served the Lord with great humility and with tears” (*Acts 20:19*).

He openly shared sorrow, grief, and fear. *Romans 9:2* – “I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart;” *2 Corinthians 2:4* – “Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears.” How deep was the love of our brother, Paul! With great love and joy, comes hurt. When the heart is open and loving, it is vulnerable to pain.

 **Question:** How does this make us think of our pain because of following Jesus?



- **Recovery and growth are intertwined.**

Paul’s conversion (*Acts 9*) was followed by three years of spiritual formation before launching his public ministry (*Galatians 1:17–18*). And healing must have been a constant process for him. Healing and development inevitably shaped his message of grace and endurance. (*Romans 8*)

- **Safe space matters**

Barnabas welcomed him when others feared him (Acts 9:27), and communities like Antioch supported him during ministry and hardship. *Acts 11:25–26; Acts 13:1–3*
As travelling siblings, they must have created this trusted, space for each other.

- **Support is crucial.**

Paul never ministered alone. He valued companionship: Timothy, Silas, Luke, Priscilla, and Aquila. *Romans 16; Philippians 2:20–22; 2 Timothy 4:11*

 **Question: Why are trusted brothers and sisters so important?**

4. Core Discipleship Principles in Paul’s Life

A. Honesty About Cost

Paul never sugar-coated discipleship. He warned believers that hardship is part of the journey. But he also gave them courage to endure it.

Acts 14:22 – “We must go through many hardships...”;

2 Timothy 3:12 – “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

B. Safe and Relational Community

He taught that the church is a body where every part is needed (1 Corinthians 12).

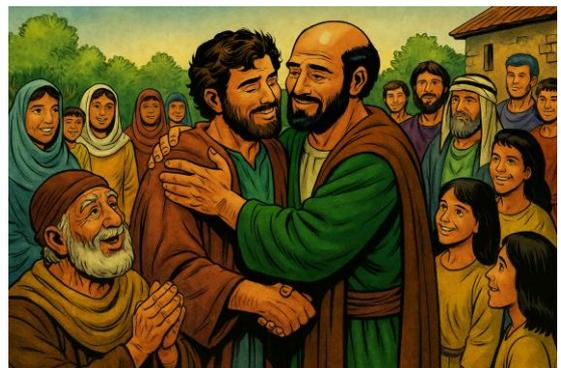
He called believers to bear one another’s burdens and restore one another gently (Galatians 6:1–2).

C. Empathetic Discipleship

Paul didn’t just teach truth—he loved deeply. He led like a spiritual parent, with tenderness and emotional openness.

1 Thessalonians 2:7–8 – “We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother caring for her children”

2 Corinthians 6:11 – “We have spoken freely... our hearts are wide open”



D. Holistic Application of Scripture

Paul applied God’s Word not just to teach doctrine, but to heal wounds, strengthen identity, and inspire hope.

Romans 8 – “Nothing can separate us...”

2 Corinthians 4:7–10 – “Treasure in jars of clay... struck down, but not destroyed”

E. Multiplication Through Restoration

Paul didn’t give up on those who failed. He gave second chances, restored the wounded, and turned his own pain into lessons for others. John Mark is an example of this. He had once abandoned the mission (*Acts 13:13; 15:37–39*), but Paul wrote later in *2 Timothy 4:11*: “Get Mark and bring him with you... he is helpful to me.”

 **Question:** How can we make these principles more part of your fellowship/ministry?

5. Practical Strategies in Paul’s Approach

Establish Safe Spaces

Paul encouraged gatherings where encouragement, prophecy, and mutual strengthening happened. *1 Corinthians 14:3; Acts 20:1–2*

For Paul, this is the whole purpose of the Body of Christ.

Integrate Lament and Prayer

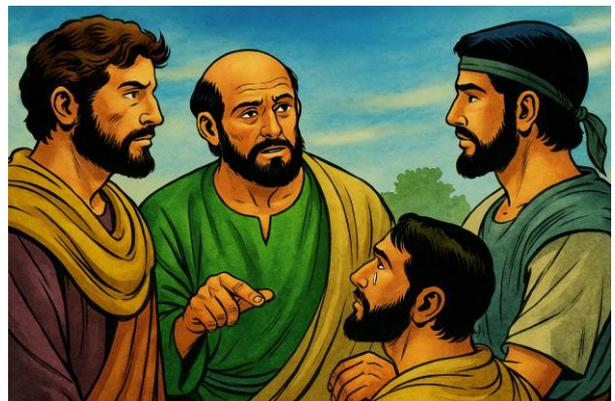
The whole chapter in *Romans 7* is a lament. Paul also taught believers to cry out to God (*Romans 8:26–27*) and modelled prayer in every circumstance. *Philippians 4:6–7; Ephesians 6:18*

Model Vulnerability

He shared weakness, fear, and failure—not for sympathy but for solidarity. *2 Corinthians 12:9–10 – “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses...”* How pastoral has *2 Corinthians 12–13* been for believers over the past 2000 years, *weakness = strength*.

Provide Access to Support

He travelled with companions and sent believers to one another for encouragement and support. *Acts*



15:36–41; Romans 16:1–15. Paul shows us how important fellowship is for the faith journey.

Contextualise Scripture for Healing

Paul applied the Gospel to every kind of suffering:

- “*The God of all comfort...*” – 2 Corinthians 1:3–5 – He used his comfort to comfort others in their distress.
- “*We are more than conquerors...*” – Romans 8:37 – A strong rootedness in our identity is needed for our faith walk.
- “*The old has gone, the new is here!*” – 2 Corinthians 5:17 – Paul reminds us of the pass doesn’t define us, but our newfound identity in Christ. Christ makes us and our future new!

 **Question: What do we learn from these strategies in Paul’s life?**

6. Conclusion: From Wound to Witness

St. Paul’s life is a profound embodiment of trauma-informed discipleship. He was not shaped by comfort, but by suffering transformed through grace. His wounds became his witness. Through him, we learn that discipleship under pressure is not just about endurance—but about becoming a vessel of comfort, courage, and healing to others.

SHARE

Share with one another how suffering has given Paul purpose, drive and meaning in his life.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 5: HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

DEVOTION: GIFTS OF QUESTIONING & MYSTERY

 **Read: Job 38:1; 42:6**

 **Watch: Friday: Gifts of Questioning & Mystery video**

<https://vimeo.com/735722012>



Questions for reflection:

When is questioning the ways of God healthy in the spiritual life and when it is unhealthy?

What characters in the Bible, or passages in the Bible, could we find that also encourage the act of questioning God? (See for example, Exodus 32:9-14; Ps 80:3-7; Jn9:1-7)

Have you ever felt God address you personally?

LAMENT IS SUPPORTING PSYCHOLOGICAL & SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Lamenting is a God-given practice that integrates our psychological need for expression and validation with our spiritual need for connection and hope. By lamenting, we not only process our pain but also deepen our faith, grow in resilience, and draw closer to God, who promises to redeem and restore all things.

Lamenting is vital for both our psychological and spiritual growth because it allows us to process pain in a way that leads to healing, fosters a deeper connection with God, and builds resilience. Here's why:

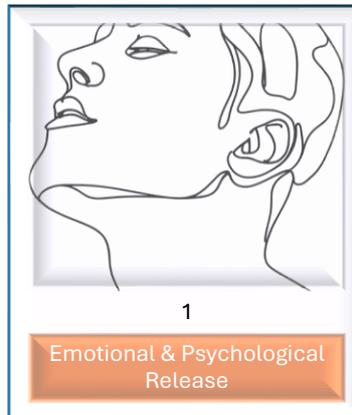
1. Emotional and Psychological Release

Why It's Important:

Pain and grief, when unexpressed, can fester and lead to emotional distress, such as anxiety, depression, or burnout. Lamenting provides a safe outlet to release intense emotions like anger, sadness, or confusion.

Psychological Benefit:

It helps to reduce emotional burdens by verbalising feelings, which is cathartic and lightens the psychological load. Research shows expressing emotions, even through writing or prayer, can lower stress and improve mental clarity.



Question: What practise might work for us to facilitate an emotional release?

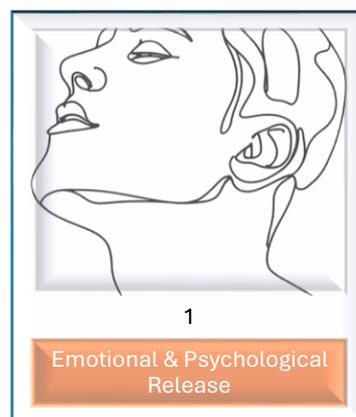
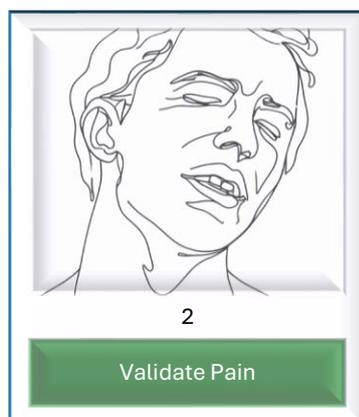
2. Validation of Pain

Why It's Important:

Lament acknowledges the reality of suffering rather than suppressing or denying it. It gives permission to feel hurt and admit vulnerability, counteracting the stigma around pain and weakness.

Psychological Benefit:

Validating emotions helps individuals feel seen and heard, reducing feelings of isolation or shame. It prevents the accumulation of unresolved grief, which can hinder emotional well-being.



 **Question: What cultural mindset is preventing people to acknowledge their pain?**

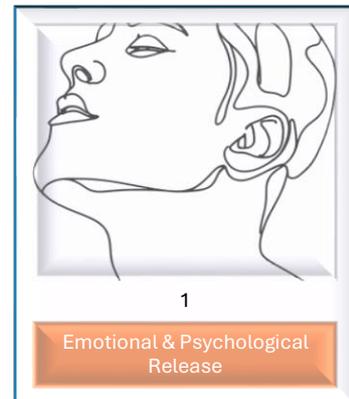
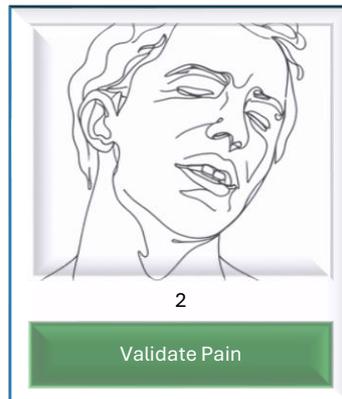
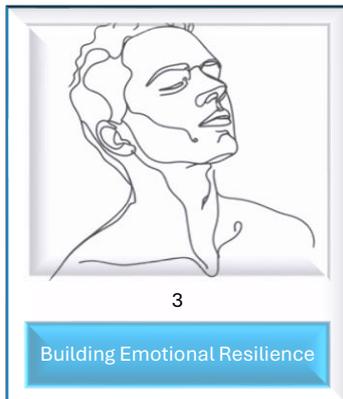
3. **Building Emotional Resilience**

Why It's Important:

Through lament, we learn to face pain head-on rather than avoiding or numbing it. Lament equips us with the tools to navigate future suffering with faith and perseverance.

Psychological Benefit:

By processing emotions constructively, we become more resilient, able to bounce back from adversity. Lament develops emotional maturity and the ability to find meaning even in hardship.



 **Question: How has lament helped Job to be emotional resilience?**

4. **Strengthening Spiritual Relationship with God**

Why It's Important:

Lament deepens our dependence on God by inviting Him into our pain. It's an act of faith, acknowledging that God is present and sovereign even in suffering.

Spiritual Benefit:

It nurtures trust in God's goodness, even when life feels overwhelming. Lamenting openly with God leads to a more authentic relationship, as we bring every part of ourselves to Him.



Question: Do we think we can be open with God about our pain? If not, why not?

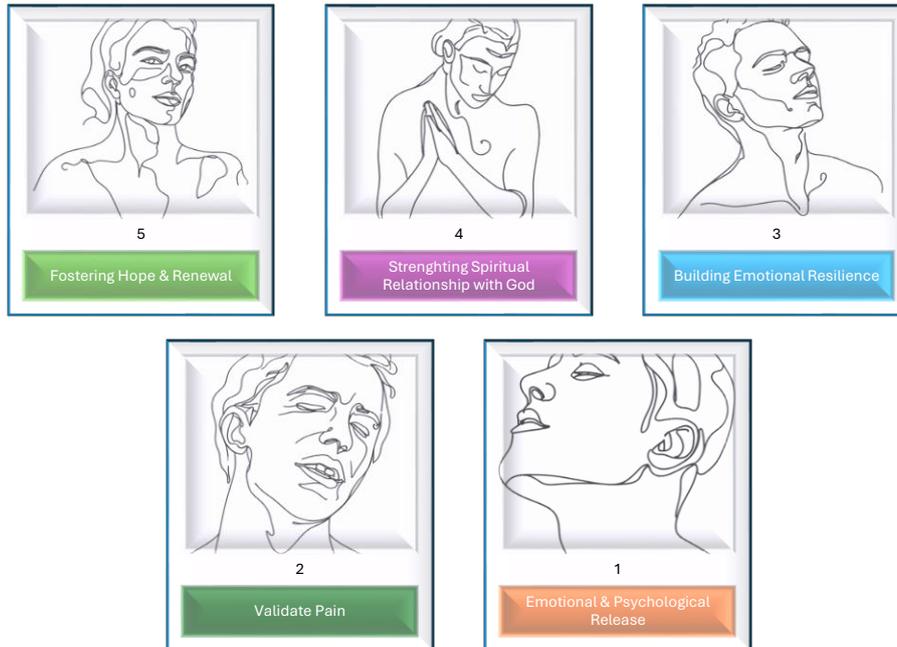
5. **Fostering Hope and Renewal**

Why It's Important:

Lament doesn't end with despair but moves toward hope in God's promises. It shifts our focus from the immediate pain to the assurance of God's ultimate redemption.

Spiritual Benefit:

It cultivates hope and strengthens faith by anchoring us in God's Word and His faithfulness. It aligns our perspective with eternal truths, helping us endure present challenges.



Question: How do we think lament has fosters hope in Job's life?

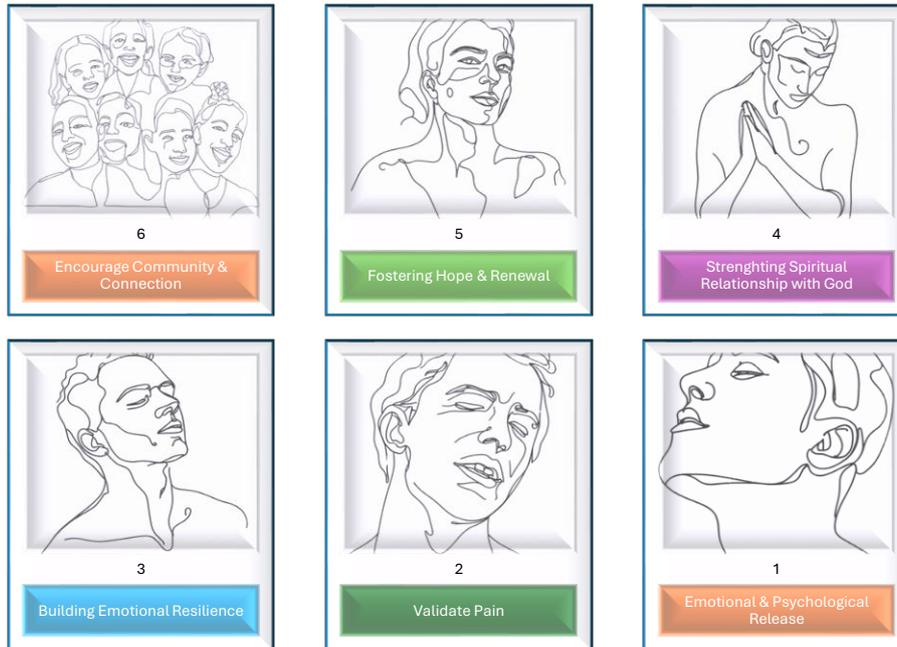
6. Encouraging Community and Connection

Why It's Important:

Lament, whether individual or communal, fosters connection with others who share in suffering. It creates space for collective healing and mutual encouragement.

Psychological and Spiritual Benefit:

Sharing burdens in a supportive community reduces feelings of isolation. Communal lament strengthens the body of Christ, reminding us that we are not alone in our struggles.



Question: Do we think our faith community will be open to lament together?

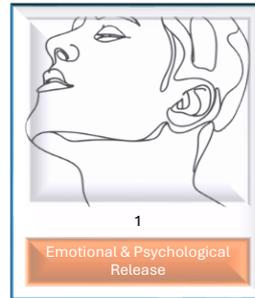
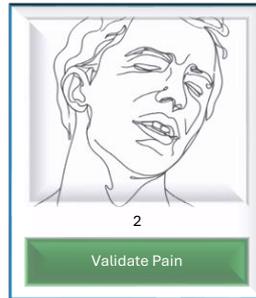
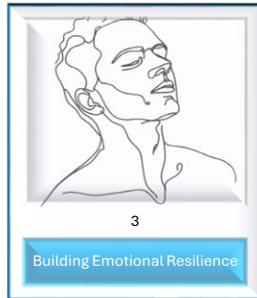
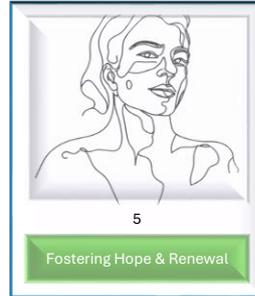
7. Reframing Suffering

Why It's Important:

Lament enables us to process suffering in light of God's greater purpose and plan. It turns suffering into a pathway for spiritual growth and character development.

Spiritual Benefit:

Lament helps us see trials as opportunities for God's refining work in our lives (Romans 5:3-5). It draws us closer to Christ, who Himself lamented and is intimately familiar with our pain.



 **Question: How can we reframe the suffering we are going through right now?**

TEACHING: COMPASSION FATIGUE & SELF-CARE

 **Question: What do we think Compassion Fatigue is?**

What Is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion fatigue is often called “*the cost of caring.*” It’s the emotional, physical, and spiritual toll that occurs when caregivers continually engage with others’ pain and suffering without adequate rest, support, or replenishment. Unlike burnout, which is caused by work overload, compassion fatigue is specifically linked to the empathy we extend toward others in distress.

Why Does It Happen?

- *Empathy Overload* – Continually entering into the emotional world of those who suffer, without processing or setting healthy boundaries. We get overloaded when we don’t intentionally

acknowledge, expressing, and working through the emotional impact of experiencing someone else's suffering. We do this by talking with someone about your feelings, reflecting through journaling, prayer, or meditation.

- *Vicarious Trauma* – Internalising the trauma stories of others. Sometimes we unconsciously taking on and deeply absorbing someone else's trauma as if it were our own experience.
- *Unrealistic Expectations* – Feeling responsible for fixing or healing others completely. When we feel obligated to eliminate suffering entirely, we may experience deep frustration and guilt, as no one can fully control another's healing process.
- *Lack of Self-Care* – Neglecting rest, boundaries, spiritual practices, or community. Without proper self-care routines, our internal resources become depleted, leaving us vulnerable to emotional exhaustion and reduced resilience.
- *Prolonged Exposure to Suffering* – Working in high-trauma contexts like war zones, persecution, or humanitarian crises. Constantly facing intense human suffering over an extended period without adequate breaks or emotional support can significantly heighten our vulnerability to compassion fatigue.

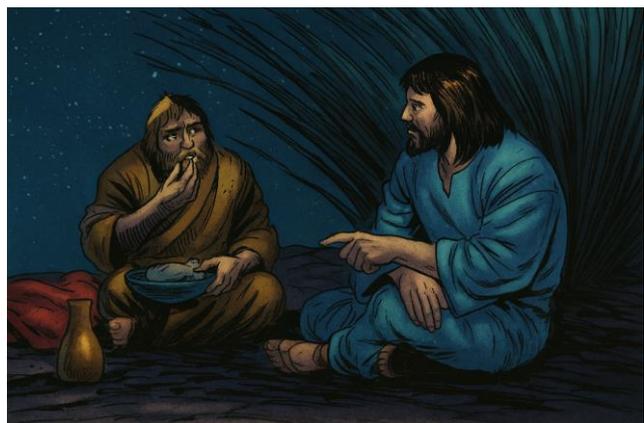
 **Question: Do we think our faith community is suffering from compassion fatigue?**

Biblical Examples and Reflections

The Bible does not use the term “compassion fatigue,” but it does address the emotional and spiritual weight of caregiving and ministry.

1. Elijah – Read: 1 Kings 19:1–18

After a great victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah flees in fear, exhausted, and overwhelmed. He even prays to die, saying, “I have had enough, Lord.” God responds not with rebuke, but with rest, nourishment, and gentle presence—highlighting the importance of holistic renewal for weary servants.



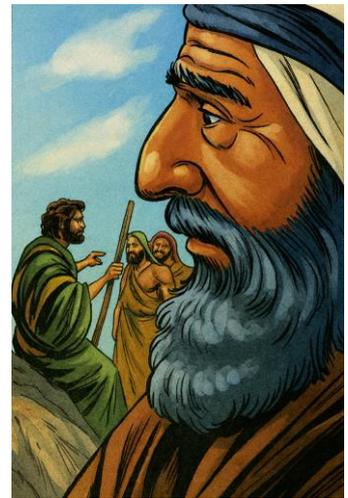
2. Jesus – Read: Mark 6:31

Jesus tells His disciples, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” Even the Savior recognised the human need for rest and retreat after intense ministry and compassion work.



3. Moses – Read: Exodus 18:13-24

Moses was trying to carry the burdens of an entire people alone. Jethro, his father-in-law, wisely counsels him to delegate and not wear himself out. This reminds us that God does not ask us to bear others' burdens alone.



4. Paul – 2 Corinthians 11:16 – 12:10

Paul lists his sufferings in ministry—beatings, sleepless nights, concern for all the churches. Yet he learns to depend on God’s strength in weakness: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9)

 **Question: What do we make of these examples?**

Key Biblical Principles for Resilience

1. **Rest is Holy** – Sabbath and rhythms of rest are God’s provision for renewal.
2. **We Are Not the Messiah** – Only Christ can heal and save; we are vessels, not saviours.
3. **Healthy Boundaries Are Biblical** – Jesus often withdrew from crowds to pray and restore.
4. **Community Support Matters** – Ministry was designed to be shared (see Jesus’ disciples, Paul’s team).
5. **Ongoing Communion with God** – Strength for compassionate ministry comes through abiding in Christ (John 15:5).

 **Question: Which of these need more attention in our life?**

Spiritual Responses to Compassion Fatigue

- 😞 **Lament** – Pour out your weariness honestly before God (Psalm 62:8).
- 😊 **Solitude & Silence** – Create space to hear God's voice and receive His peace.
- 🙏 **Prayer of Surrender** – Give the people you serve into God's hands.
- 😊 **Receiving Care** – Seek support from others—mentors, counsellors, trusted friends.
- 😊 **Meditating on God's Compassion** – Let His compassion for *you* refills your heart (Lamentations 3:22–23).

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

Choose one of these and practise it the coming week.

Yes, God calls us to love deeply, but He also calls us to rest, receive, and rely on Him. Compassion fatigue is not a sign of failure—it's a sign that your heart has been engaged in sacred, costly work. But even Jesus rested. So can you.

The Importance of Self-Care

What Is Self-Care?

Self-care is the intentional practice of tending to your physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual needs in a way that sustains your well-being and enables you to live and serve from a place of health, not depletion.

It's not selfish. It's stewardship.

Why Is Self-Care Important?

1. Prevents Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

Without consistent self-care, the demands of caring for others can lead to emotional exhaustion, disconnection, and even physical illness.

2. Sustains Long-Term Ministry or Service

Caring for yourself is not about surviving a season—it’s about building resilience so you can serve faithfully over the long haul.

3. Models Healthy Living for Others

Leaders who care for themselves give others permission to do the same. It sets an example of humility, balance, and wisdom.

4. Honors the Whole Person

God created us as integrated beings—body, mind, soul, and spirit. Self-care reflects a holistic respect for the way God made us.

5. Creates Space for God to Minister to You

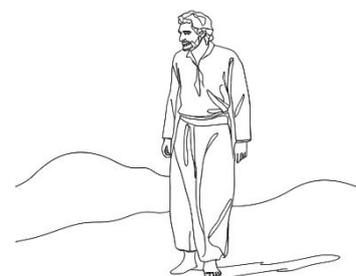
When we slow down, we create space to be still, listen, and receive from the Lord.

 **Question:** *How has fatigue kept us away from God?*

Biblical Foundations for Self-Care

1. Jesus Practiced It

- “*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*” Luke 5:16
- Jesus stepped away from the crowds, not because He didn’t care, but because He knew the value of rest and renewal.



2. God Commands Rest

- Sabbath is not a suggestion; it’s a command. It is a rhythm God wove into creation for our good (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 20:8–11).
- Even the land was given rest in the seventh year (Leviticus 25:4).

3. You Are Not God

- “*It is in vain that you rise early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for He gives to His beloved sleep.*” — Psalm 127:2
- Self-care acknowledges our limits and trusts God to work even when we rest.

4. Love Your Neighbour as Yourself

- “The second is, Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other command greater than these.” Mark 12:31
- This implies that healthy self-love and care are part of what enables us to love others well.

 **Question: Why do we think God feels so strong about self-care?**

What Does Self-Care Look Like Practically?

Physical

- Adequate sleep, nutrition, exercise, medical care
- Time in nature or engaging your senses in calming ways, like listening to soothing music or look at beautiful art.



 **Question: Name a few things we can do to look better after our physique.**

Emotional/Mental

- Journaling your thoughts and emotions, counselling, talking with a trusted friend
- Setting boundaries with work and relationships.



 **Question: Where do we need boundaries and how would it look like in our life?**

Spiritual

- Regular prayer, Scripture reading, silence, worship
- Retreats, Sabbath-keeping, time alone with God



 **Question: What spiritual disciplines help us best to be rejuvenated, and how can we make more space for it?**

Relational

- Time with life-giving people
- Seeking community, accountability, and joy-filled relationships



Question: *The enemy wants to isolate us from others for when we are isolated, we are a lot weaker. What changes can we make to have more contact with our brothers and sisters?*

Encouragement

“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23

You matter. Your soul, body, and spirit matter—not only for your own health but for the sake of those you serve. Taking care of yourself is not a detour from your calling; it is part of faithfully living it out.

SHARE

Share what you have learned and the steps you will take to look after yourself.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 6: FOLLOW JESUS UNDER PRESSURE

DEVOTION: LEARNING TO LOVE MYSTERY

 **Read: Job 42:1-6**

 **Watch: Saturday – Learning to Love Mystery video**

<https://vimeo.com/735718989>

 **Questions for reflection:**

How might God be inviting us to see grace and beauty beyond our suffering today?

What had Job “seen” that he had not seen before as a result of the speeches of God?



 **Share with one another how we can find rest in God’s mystery.**

BIBLE STUDY: BIBLICAL MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP UNDER PRESSURE – IN THE LIFE OF JOHN

 **Read: John 15:18-16:4**

1. Recognising Trauma in the Life of St. John

Biblical Examples:

John's life was not free from suffering. Although often remembered as the "beloved disciple," his discipleship journey was marked by grief, loneliness, loss, and long-term perseverance.

He witnessed Jesus' crucifixion firsthand, standing near the cross as Jesus was publicly humiliated and brutally executed. This traumatic event would have left a deep emotional and spiritual impact. *John 19:25–27*



He experienced the early persecution of the Church, including the martyrdom of his brother James—the first of the apostles to be killed. *Acts 12:1–2*

He endured exile on the island of Patmos, separated from his Christian community, because of his faithful preaching of the Gospel. *Revelation 1:9*

He carried the burden of church division and opposition, including rejection by church leaders like Diotrephes, who refused his authority and disrupted fellowship. *3 John 9–10*

These events represent both acute trauma (like the crucifixion and James' death) and chronic, ongoing distress (like isolation, opposition, and exile). John's trauma was personal, relational, and spiritual.

2. The Uniqueness of Persecution Trauma in John's Life

A. Targeted Identity Wounds

John's suffering was not accidental—it was directly linked to his identity as a faithful follower of Jesus. He suffered *because* of his testimony, his loyalty, and his teaching.

Revelation 1:9 – “On account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

B. Chronic and Repeated

John's trauma didn't occur in a single moment—it spanned years. He lived through the persecution of the Church, the loss of friends and family, and the long isolation of exile. *John 21:22–23 (hints at a prolonged life and unique suffering)*

It is one thing to be the only apostle not to be martyred, but John must have had secondary trauma because all the others were killed.

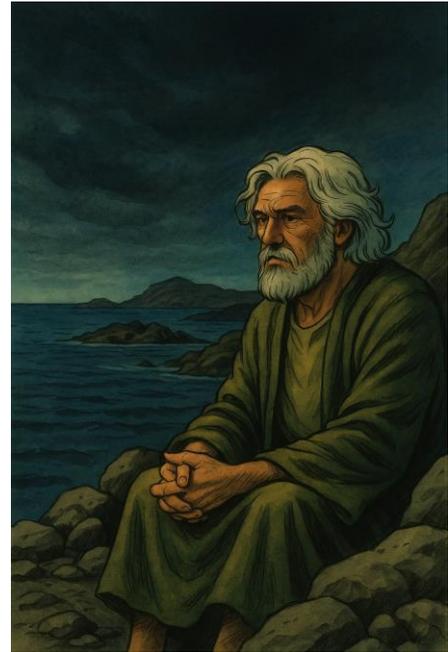
C. Isolation and Betrayal

John was not only physically isolated on Patmos but also relationally hurt by opposition within the church.¹ Diotrophes publicly rejected John's authority and created division in the community. *3 John 9–10*

D. Spiritual Crisis and Resilience

While John does not express doubt in the same way others do, he endured a profound spiritual challenge: maintaining hope, clarity, and faith over a lifetime of grief and pressure. His vision in Revelation reflects a soul that wrestled with deep questions of justice, endurance, and ultimate hope. *Revelation 6:10* – “How long, O Lord...?”

It must have been incredibly challenging for John, having experience so much persecution and loss, to write the book of Revelation, which is filled with blood and gore. It might have brought him also healing and closure.



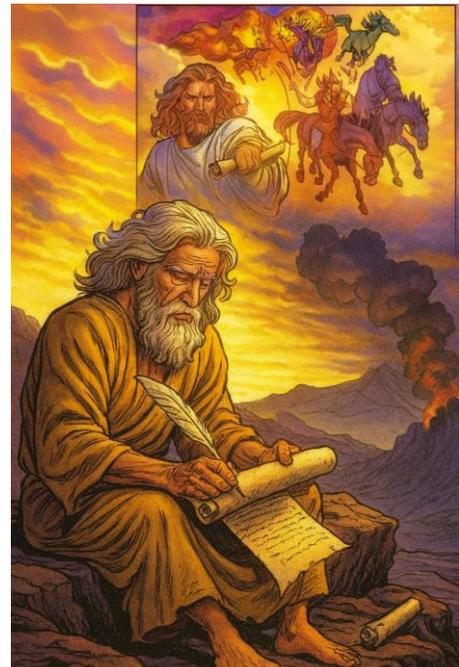
Question: Can we identify with John who has seen so many people suffer for Christ? What in particular is difficult about it?

3. Trauma-Informed Discipleship in John's Life and Ministry

John didn't only endure trauma—he transformed it into wisdom, hope, and healing for others. His writings reveal a deep understanding of the emotional and spiritual wounds believers face and offer a pastoral model of how to disciple others gently and truthfully under pressure.

- **Emotional wounds are real.**

John's grief over Jesus' death, his brother's execution, and betrayal within the church were not ignored or hidden. He expressed his pastoral concern with tender words and repeated calls to remain in love and truth. *1 John 3:11–18* – *A call to love with action in the face of hate and betrayal*



¹ Most scholars believe John was writing from Ephesus, a major city in Asia Minor (modern-day western Turkey). His letters were addressed to churches in or around Asia Minor, where John was an elder or overseeing leader in his later years.

- **Recovery and growth are intertwined.**

John must have done a lot of recovering himself enduring so much loss and trauma. His Gospel, letters, and Revelation were written later in life, shaped by long years of following Jesus through adversity. His discipleship deepened *because* of what he endured.

- **Safe space matters**

Jesus entrusted His own mother to John at the cross—an act of creating family in a moment of unimaginable pain. Later, John’s epistles model that same spirit: offering safety, love, and clear boundaries for a church struggling with truth and division. *John 19:26–27; 1 John 4:18*
John was very blunt. *Don’t tell me you love God, show me by loving your brother.*

- **Support is crucial.**

Even while isolated on Patmos, John remained spiritually connected to the wider Church, writing to encourage and instruct them. His sense of belonging to the body of Christ sustained him. *Revelation 1:4, 11 – Letters to the seven churches.*

 **Share with one another what is standing out for you about John’s endurance.**

4. Core Discipleship Principles in the Life of St. John

A. **Honesty About Cost**

John made it clear that following Jesus involves sacrifice. His Gospel records Jesus’ warnings about persecution, and his own life bore witness to that cost—from the cross to exile.

John 15:18–20 – “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first.”

Revelation 1:9 – “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering...”

B. **Safe and Relational Community**

John calls the Church to be a community marked by love and truth. His language is full of warmth—he addresses believers as “little children” and “beloved”—yet he also challenges them to remain faithful.

1 John 4:7 – “Let us love one another, for love comes from God.”

2 John 5–6 – “Walk in obedience to His commands... love one another.”

 **Question: In what way does love to change the DNA of a group or a relationship? Why do you think it is so important for John?**

C. Empathetic Discipleship

John led not as a distant authority but as a spiritual father. He disciplined gently, appealing rather than commanding, and repeatedly affirmed the love of God as the foundation for life and growth.

1 John 2:1 – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.”

3 John 4 – “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

🔗 Activity: We have learned that trauma tells us lies about ourselves. It is interesting that John puts a great emphasis on the truth. Think of what lies are plaguing our faith community at this moment.

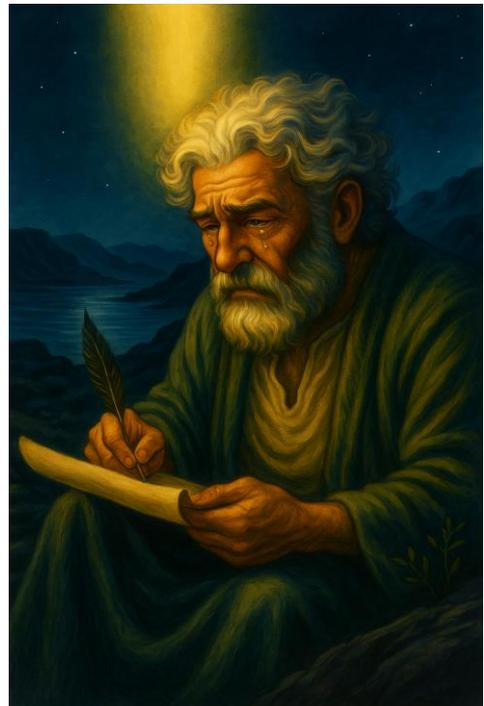
D. Holistic Application of Scripture

John applied the Word of God to the emotional, spiritual, and relational lives of believers. His writings deal not just with belief but with identity, fear, hope, and perseverance.

1 John 3:1 – “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God...”

Revelation 21:4 – “He will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

Lots of John’s writings give us a deeper understanding why we are suffering (John 3:118-19), and perspective how God has conquered evil. (Revelation 12)



E. Multiplication Through Restoration

John’s writings were not private reflections—they were passed on to strengthen the Church. His personal pain became a foundation for communal hope. He mentored a generation through his writings and showed that suffering can lead to greater ministry.

John 20:31 – “These are written that you may believe...”

Revelation 12:11 – “They overcame... by the word of their testimony.”

🔗 Activity: Share some scriptures from the Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John and Revelation to encourage one another to persevere.

5. Practical Strategies in John's Approach

Establish Safe Spaces

John created a culture of openness through his warm tone and honest teaching. He acknowledged pain and conflict while pointing toward restoration.

1 John 1:7 – “If we walk in the light... we have fellowship with one another.” This is essential for creating a safe space for everyone. Darkness creates distrust and distance.

Integrate Lament and Prayer

John captured both the cry of the persecuted (e.g., “How long, O Lord?”) and the worship of heaven. His writing makes space for grief and praise to coexist.

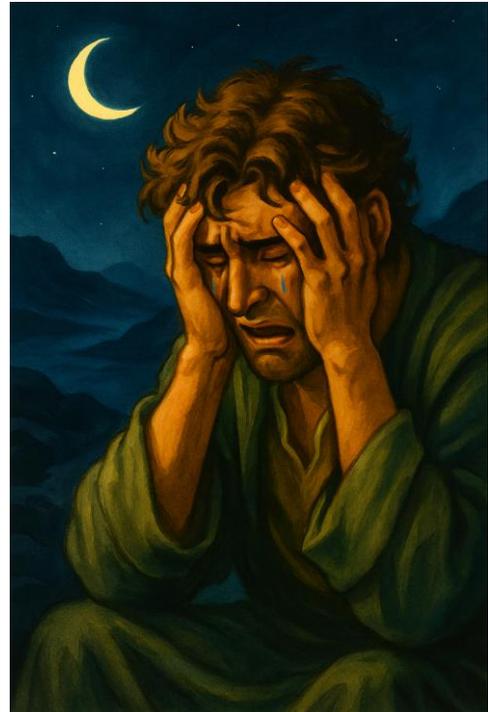
Revelation 6:10 – “How long, Sovereign Lord...?”

Revelation 5:9 – A new song of worship to the Lamb

Model Vulnerability

In 1 John 2:19, he writes about his painful experience of people leaving their community. This couldn't be easy for an apostle to deal with. He shows his struggle.

In Revelation 5:4 we read how he has wept and wept, because there were no one to open the scroll. This shows that John wasn't afraid to share what has happened to him.



Provide Access to Support

In John's letters, one can clearly see his connectedness with the faith family, and how invested he is in their well-being.

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” (3 John 2)

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” (3 John 4)

Contextualise Scripture for Healing

John consistently applied God's Word to comfort, guide, and renew identity. His writings offer a vision of Jesus that heals the broken and calls for endurance.

1 John 4:18 – “There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.”

Revelation 21:5 – “I am making everything new!”

Revelation 22:12 – “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me...

 **Question: John's writings are drenched in the Love of God. How is love the key to stay faithful to God in times of pressure?**

6. Conclusion: A Gentle Voice for Wounded Hearts

St. John teaches us that spiritual maturity doesn't always look like outward success—it often grows through deep wounds, long waiting, and persistent love. He disciplined others from a place of trauma-transformed-into-testimony. His gentle authority, shaped by grief and grounded in Christ's love, gives us a model for discipling others under pressure—with empathy, clarity, and enduring hope.

SHARE

Share with one another how the love of God has sustained you through tough times.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.
Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 7: TRAUMA STEELS MY IDENTITY

DEVOTION: MINHEE'S COMFORT

 **Read:** Luke 22:39-44; Mark 15:34; Hebrews 12:1-2

 **Watch:** Sunday – Minhee's Comfort video

<https://vimeo.com/735708139>



Questions for reflection:

What difference does the person of Jesus Christ make to our suffering – that Job could not experience in his lifetime?

Where are we going to see God today and feel his grace even if life's circumstances are tough?

Have a “gratitude” party for all the facets of life and the world God has made that you are grateful for.

TEACHING: BELONGING: WHO AM I? (HYBRID IDENTITY)²

1. The Quest for Identity

 **Question:** Do you know what a hybrid identity is?

² Main resource for this teaching is from “Beyond the C-Spectrum? A Search for New Models,” by Tim Green published in the journal: *Evangelical Review of Theology* 37, no. 4 (2013): 361–380.

 **Read: Isaiah 43:1-3**

Many of us who follow Jesus from a Muslim background find ourselves asking deep and personal questions about identity. We no longer fully belong to the world we came from, but we may not feel fully at home in the Christian world either. The journey of discipleship is not only about learning truth and growing in faith; it is also about discovering who we are now—and who we are becoming in Christ.

Before we believed, our identity was largely shaped by our birth: our name, our culture, our religious community. In many Muslim societies, being Muslim is not just a matter of belief; it is part of national identity, family honour, and daily life. Turning to Christ may feel like turning away from all of that. But in reality, it is the beginning of a deeper journey of discovering who we truly are.

This journey can be both joyful and confusing. On one hand, we experience peace, purpose, and love in Christ. On the other, we face loss, misunderstanding, and rejection. We become, in a sense, "spiritual migrants"—people who leave one world behind and are still adjusting to life in another. The question of identity is not a one-time issue we settle quickly; it is a process we walk through, step by step, in the company of Jesus.



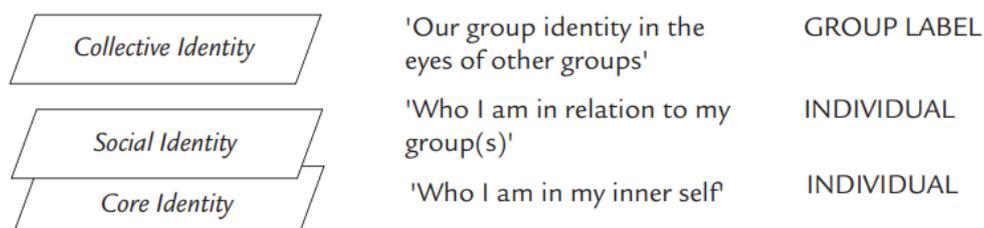
2. What Is My Identity?

 **Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-20**

To understand the identity journey, it's helpful to break it down into three layers:

- **Core identity:** Our innermost self, where our values, beliefs, and relationship with God live.
- **Social identity:** How we relate to the people around us—our family, neighbours, and community.
- **Collective identity:** The labels society puts on us, such as our nationality, ethnicity, or religion.

Figure 1. Identity at three levels: a simplified model



All three levels shape how we see ourselves and how others see us. And when we begin to follow Jesus, each layer is affected.

At the core level, something beautiful happens we are made new in Christ. Our inner self begins to reflect His truth, love, and values. Yet even here, the transformation is gradual. We often carry internal struggles and old thought patterns that take time to heal.

At the social level, things can become more complicated. We may lose relationships or be treated differently by family and friends. Some of us are accepted with caution; others are rejected completely. We may need to learn new ways of relating, speaking, and even thinking.

At the collective level, we are often labelled either as traitors or outsiders. Society may still see us as Muslim, or it may push us away completely. These labels may not reflect our heart, but they still affect our lives.

Understanding these layers helps us give ourselves grace. Identity is complex, and Jesus is patient with us as we grow.

 **Reflect on each of these identities in life. How do we see ourselves on each level?**

3. The Identity Struggles of Spiritual Migrants

 **Read: Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16**

Leaving behind the faith and community of our upbringing can feel like migrating to a new land. Like physical migrants, we must learn a new "language" of faith, navigate new social structures, and build new relationships. This is exciting—but it can also be exhausting.

Conversion may bring a deep sense of clarity about who God is, but it can raise new questions about who we are. We might ask:

- Can I still be part of my family?
- What should I call myself?
- Where will I be buried?

These are not just questions of faith but of belonging, honour, and identity. The journey can feel long, and the loss of community can be deeply painful. We may long for the comfort of the familiar, even as we move forward in truth.



Spiritual migration is not a sign of confusion. It is part of the process of real discipleship. Like Abraham, who left his country to follow God's call, or Ruth, who joined a new people and a new faith, we are walking in the footsteps of others who have made the same courageous choice.

 **Question: Is a spiritual migrant a good description of you?**

4. Making Sense of Muslim Identity at Every Level

 **Read: Philippians 3:4-8**

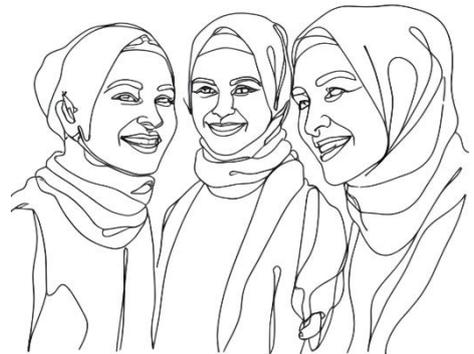
In many Muslim cultures, Islam touches every part of life. It is not only a personal belief system but also a social and collective identity. From birth rituals to funeral rites, Islam is woven into daily routines, family customs, and national laws.

At the **collective** level, we may still be identified as Muslim by society, even if our faith has changed. On legal documents, we might still be listed under Islam. Our nationality may be tied to our former religion. This creates external pressures and misunderstandings.

At the **social** level, our family and community may still expect us to participate in Islamic customs. These could include attending mosque events, observe religious holidays, or use traditional greetings. Navigating these situations requires wisdom and discernment.

At the **core** level, we may experience lingering beliefs, feelings of guilt, or questions about what to keep and what to leave behind. It takes time to fully embrace the values and mindset of Christ.

We should not be surprised that these tensions exist. We are learning to live in a new way, and this takes patience. The process of separating faith in Jesus from cultural Muslim identity is not easy—but it is possible.



 **Share with one another how we have started to live in a new way and on which level it is still a challenge to figure out how our identity should look like.**

5. Conversion as an Identity Transformation

 **Read: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18**

Conversion is not just a change in belief; it is a transformation of the whole self. It is the beginning of a lifelong process where the Holy Spirit is reshaping our heart, mind, and character.

At the **core** level, we begin to live by new values: *love* over pride, *grace* over shame, *forgiveness* over revenge. These are not just ideas—they are *ways of life*. Some of us feel this change quickly; for others, it happens slowly. But this transformation also brings a challenge. Deep-seated habits, ingrained ways of thinking, and emotional attachments to old values do not disappear overnight. The struggle between the old self and the new identity in Christ can be intense. Feelings of guilt, fear, or unworthiness may rise. We may also experience confusion when the values of our past culture clash with the teaching of Jesus. Conversion begins a process of inner conflict, but also deep healing as the Holy Spirit reshapes our hearts over time.



Question: What bit of our core being is the Holy Spirit changing at this moment?

At the **social** level, we may lose relationships but also find new ones. The faith community can become a new family—though it may take time to find where we fit. And we may still feel connected to our old community, leading to both opportunities and tensions. Yet this shift also brings challenges. We may be misunderstood, excluded from family gatherings, or treated with suspicion. Navigating conversations about faith with loved ones can be emotionally draining. The sense of honour and obligation we feel toward our parents, relatives, and neighbours may conflict with the expectations of our new community. We may also face social isolation, struggling to find believers who truly understand our background and experience. This *social dislocation* can be painful, but it can also drive us deeper into dependence on Christ and strengthen our love for those who remain in our hearts.



Question: At this stage where we are, what is the hardest aspect to deal with regarding our social identity? What wisdom has others for us?

At the **collective** level, society may reject us. We may face hostility or even danger. Religious institutions, government systems, or local communities may view our conversion as betrayal. We may lose legal protections, educational opportunities, or even the right to marry or inherit. In some cases, our names may remain listed as Muslim in official documents, while our true faith is hidden or denied by law. This level of rejection can be both public and painful, especially when it affects our families or children. Some

converts are not only rejected by society, but also face legal persecution, surveillance, or even imprisonment. False accusations of blasphemy, loss of citizenship rights, or denial of access to jobs and housing may follow. The risk of forced reconversion, blackmail, and societal pressure makes embracing a new identity in Christ not only spiritual, but deeply public and political. This pressure doesn't just affect the individual—it reaches their family, their livelihood, and their community standing.

A powerful example comes from Saudi Arabia. Fatima al-Mutairi, a young Saudi woman who came to faith in Christ, posted online about her love for Jesus and her desire to follow Him. In a poem she wrote shortly before her death, she declared, “*We are proud to be Saudis... Be content to leave us to ourselves to be believers in Jesus.*” For this public expression of faith, her own brother murdered her. Her story is tragic, but it reveals the extreme pressure believers may face when they are seen as rejecting not only their religion, but their entire nation and family.



Holding on to a new identity in Christ may feel like standing alone—but it is in this solitude that Christ often draws near with power and intimacy. Yet even in this place of vulnerability, we hold onto a truth greater than any label: in Christ, we are given a new identity that the world cannot take away. We are children of God, citizens of heaven, members of His body.

Transformation is not the same as instant change. It is the journey of becoming who we already are in Christ.

 **Question:** *How can we as a Christ community create a new sense of national identity?*

6. Can I Belong to Both Worlds?

Read: *1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

Many of us wonder if it is possible to belong to both our old community and our new faith. We don't want to reject our families or cultures, but we also want to be faithful to Jesus. *Is there a way to hold both loyalties in a way that honours God?*

Some believers find a way to stay connected to their Muslim community while following Jesus. Others are forced to break ties. And some live in between, adjusting how they speak and act depending on where they are. This can be wise, but it can also become exhausting.



Belonging to both worlds is not always possible in the long term.

But for a time, it may allow space for witness, growth, and bridge-building. The key is integrity: not pretending, not lying, but being wise, gracious, and faithful.

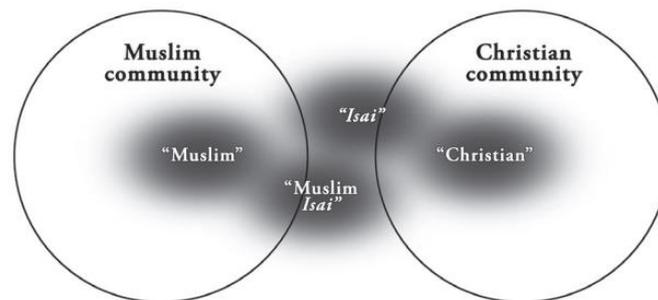
Paul said, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." Like him, we can be flexible in culture while firm in faith.

🗣️ Share with one another how belonging to both worlds is exhausting. And share what we need from each other.

7. When Identity Splits — The Stress of Living Between Worlds

📖 Read: Psalm 86:11-13

In places like Bangladesh, where many Muslims have come to faith in Christ, new collective identities are emerging. These are not always rigid or clear-cut. Instead, they often exist in the grey space between the Muslim and Christian communities. The diagram below illustrates this blurred boundary. Some believers are still seen by others as 'Muslim,' while some are labelled 'Isai' (a term for Christians in South Asia). Others embrace a hybrid identity: 'Muslim Isai.'



This space of overlap allows for a degree of shared belonging, but it also comes with its own *stress*. People living in this overlap must constantly negotiate their language, behaviour, and public expression of faith. They are often misunderstood by both sides: *too Christian for Muslims, too Muslim for Christians*.

These 'fuzzy' collective identities reflect real spiritual journeys. They offer a space where some can remain connected to their cultural and familial roots while growing in Christ. But the emotional and spiritual cost can be high. These communities need time, space, and maturity to clarify who they are and how they want to be known.

Rather than seeing these blended identities as a problem, we can recognise them as a transitional space where new expressions of following Jesus are being born. Over time, with the help of the Holy Spirit and wise leadership, such communities can develop a stable and Christ-centred identity that reflects both truth and grace.

💭 Question: When we are hearing this, what are going through our minds and hearts?

Living between two worlds can create deep stress. We may feel like we are *hiding* part of ourselves. We may use different language in different settings or avoid hard conversations. Over time, this can lead to burnout, anxiety, or even walking away from faith. Many believers from a Muslim background speak of experiencing *hypervigilance*, always watching who might be listening or watching. The emotional cost of secrecy and fear leads to exhaustion, anxiety, and even depression. Some experience burnout or compassion fatigue, especially those who are also caring for others in similar situations. This emotional exhaustion can make it harder to pray, to focus on Scripture, or even to feel God's presence. Without healing, the burden of secrecy can slowly wear down even the strongest faith.



Some believers retreat into secrecy. Others cut ties completely with their past. Both paths come with loss. The healthiest way forward is integration: becoming whole, honest, and consistent.

This does not mean sharing everything with everyone. But it means living with peace inside. It means not needing to pretend. It means allowing our identity in Christ to be the same wherever we are.

Jesus calls us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. That wisdom comes from walking with Him day by day.

Question: What wisdom has Christ already given this group to live authentically without pretence?

8. Towards New Communities of Believers

 **Read: 1 Peter 2:4-10**

We are not just individuals on a private journey. Across the Muslim world, God is calling many to Himself. New communities of believers are forming—sometimes hidden, sometimes public. They are growing in local soil.

These communities may look different. They may use familiar language, cultural forms, or ways of meeting that feel natural. As they grow, they develop their own identity—a new expression of faith rooted in Jesus and shaped by their context.

Some of these communities are clear and separate; others have fuzzy boundaries. Some become more structured over time; others remain informal. All need space to grow, learn, and mature.

God is doing something new. We are part of that. And our shared experience can help shape the future of the church in our region.

🔗 Take a moment to celebrate the fact that Christ is also creating new communities in our country and society!

9. Questions for the Journey

📖 Read: Romans 8:15-18, 26-28

The journey of identity in Christ is not simple or quick. It is full of tough questions:

- Who am I now?
- Where do I belong?
- How do I honour my past and stay faithful to Jesus?
- What do I want my children to inherit?

These are not questions to rush through. They are part of the journey. God is not afraid of our questions. He walks with us as we ask them.

For many, the trauma of persecution leaves invisible wounds—wounds that don't only affect the convert but are also passed on to their children. This transgenerational trauma can shape how the next generation sees faith, family, and their own identity. Children may grow up confused about who they are, caught between a cultural heritage that rejects them and a Christian community that doesn't fully understand them. Without healing, trauma that is not transformed may be transferred. Recognising this long-term impact helps us take the healing journey seriously—not only for ourselves but for those who come after us.

Our stories are not finished. We are still becoming. And as we walk this road, we do so together, with Christ at the centre.

What is encouraging is to realise that we are not the only ones living or dealing with a hybrid identity, in a sense, every follower of Christ has to wrestle with this reality. Christ changes every believer's core, social and collective identities!

🔗 Application: Begin a weekly identity journal: Reflect on how we are growing in Christ, where we feel tension, and how God is meeting us.

SHARE

Share with one another how you as a group can support each other on this journey of identity.

PRAY

Take turns in the group *to pray* to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 8: STAY CONNECTED

DEVOTION: LAMENT SHAKES THINGS UP

HOW DO WE BEHAVE WHEN WE LAMENT?

 **Read: Acts 16:22-34**

When we lament, our behaviour is characterised by honesty, vulnerability, and faith. It involves engaging with our pain in a way that acknowledges its reality while turning toward God for help and hope.

Here's how we behave when we lament:

1. Expressing Honest Emotions

What It Looks Like:

Pouring out raw feelings without sugarcoating them.
Crying, mourning, or even shouting to God about your pain, confusion, or frustration.

Example: David in Psalm 22:1 – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Why It Matters:

Lament gives permission to feel deeply and acknowledge the weight of suffering. Suppressing emotions can lead to mental and spiritual exhaustion, while expressing them fosters healing.



2. Turning Toward God

What It Looks Like:

Instead of withdrawing in isolation or blaming God, we bring our grief to Him. Praying, journaling, or meditating on Scripture to seek His presence.



Example: Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:19-24 acknowledges despair but places hope in God's faithfulness.

*'Remember my affliction and my homelessness,
the wormwood and the poison.
I continually remember them
and have become depressed.
Yet I call this to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish,
for his mercies never end.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness!
I say, "The Lord is my portion,
therefore I will put my hope in him." Lamentations 3:19-24*

Why It Matters:

Lament is an act of faith, trusting that God is big enough to handle our pain and cares enough to listen.

3. Seeking Understanding

What It Looks Like:

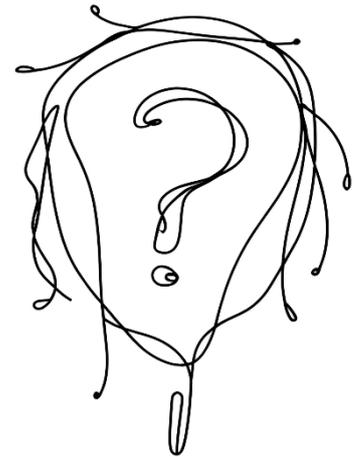
Asking honest questions: "Why, Lord?" or "How long, O Lord?"

Exploring the "why" of suffering while maintaining reverence for God.

Example: Habakkuk 1:2-3 – "How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?"

Why It Matters:

Questioning doesn't equate to doubt but demonstrates a desire for deeper relationship and understanding.



4. Confessing Trust in God

What It Looks Like:

Despite the pain, reaffirming God's character and promises. Proclaiming trust in His goodness, sovereignty, and ultimate plan for restoration.

Example: Psalm 13 moves from despair to trust: "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation."



Why It Matters:

Reaffirming trust amidst suffering strengthens our faith and reminds us of God's presence.

5. Engaging in Community

What It Looks Like:

Sharing burdens with trusted friends, family, or church members. Participating in corporate prayer or communal lament.

Example: Nehemiah 1:4-11 – Nehemiah mourned and prayed for his people in collective sorrow.



Why It Matters:

Lamenting in the community fosters mutual support, reminds us that we're not alone, and brings collective healing.

6. Anticipating Hope and Redemption

What It Looks Like:

Lament doesn't end in despair but looks forward to God's intervention and promises. Declaring hope even when circumstances haven't yet changed.

Example: Job's declaration in Job 19:25 – "I know that my Redeemer lives."



Why It Matters:

Hope fuels perseverance and keeps us anchored in God's ultimate plan for good.

 **Question: What are you making of these behaviours, how are they shaping your thinking?**

BIBLE STUDY: HEALING TOUCH - THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION

“Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:25

A PSYCHO-SOCIAL & SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

In the journey of healing—especially after trauma, loss, or prolonged suffering—**community** plays a vital, even sacred, role. While healing can begin within an individual, it **cannot be completed in isolation**. Human beings are created for connection. We are wounded in relationship—and we are often **healed through relationship**.

“Our brains are built to help us function as members of a tribe. We are part of that tribe even when we are by ourselves, whether listening to music (that other people created), watching a basketball game on television (our own muscles tensing as the players run and jump), or preparing a spreadsheet for a sales meeting (anticipating the boss’s reactions). Most of our energy is devoted to connecting with others.”

We need connection from the start. Connection is crucial when children are developing. “Kids will go to almost any length to feel seen and connected. When a child is in sync with his caregiver, his sense of joy and connection is reflected in his steady heartbeat and breathing and a low level of stress hormones. His body is calm; so are his emotions. The moment this music is disrupted—as it often is in the course of a normal day—all these physiological factors change as well. You can tell equilibrium has been restored when the physiology calms down.”



Question: Reading this about our development as children, what is it showing us about human connection?

“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives. Numerous studies of disaster response around the globe have shown that social support is the most powerful protection against becoming overwhelmed by stress and trauma. Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is **reciprocity**: being truly heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone else’s mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow we need a visceral feeling of safety.



More than anything else, being able to feel safe with other people defines mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.”

Question: Reading this from a trauma expert, it gives us another deep understanding why fellowship is a crucial aspect of the believers’ life! Again, have a good look at what RECIPROCITY is. How can we create more reciprocity in our fellowship?

Let’s explore the **importance of community** in the healing process on **psychological, social, and spiritual levels**.

1. Psychological Importance of Community

Trauma often brings emotional wounds such as fear, shame, anxiety, or numbness. Being part of a caring community can:

- **Regulate emotions:** The presence of calm, empathetic people help trauma survivors feel safe and grounded.
- **Affirm identity:** Others reflect back to us who we are—valuable, loved, and not alone.
- **Restore trust:** Trust, which is often broken by trauma, is gradually rebuilt through safe, consistent relationships.
- **Correct false beliefs:** When community members offer truth in love, it helps counter the lies trauma tells (e.g., “I’m not worthy,” “It was my fault”).



“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

Question: What does a safe space look like for you as a group?

2. Social Importance of Community

On a social level, community offers a **sense of belonging**, purpose, and support. After trauma, people often feel disconnected and isolated.

“People who cannot connect through work, friendships, or family usually find other ways of bonding, as through illnesses, lawsuits, or family feuds. Anything is preferable to that godforsaken sense of irrelevance and alienation.

People who feel safe and meaningfully connected with others have little reason to squander their lives doing drugs or staring numbly at television; they don’t feel compelled to stuff themselves with carbohydrates or assault their fellow human beings.



However, if nothing they do seems to make a difference, they feel trapped and become susceptible to the lure of pills, gang leaders, extremist religions, or violent political movements—anybody and anything that promises relief.

Recovery from trauma involves (re)connecting with our fellow human beings. This is why trauma that has occurred within relationships is generally more difficult to treat than trauma resulting from traffic accidents or natural disasters.”

A healing community:

- **Normalises the experience:** Hearing “*me too*” from others breaks the shame and silence of suffering.
- **Provides practical help:** Meals, visits, childcare, and financial support meet real needs.
- **Offers structure and routine:** Consistent gatherings, support groups, or shared rituals help re-establish stability.
- **Celebrates progress:** Small victories are recognised and celebrated, reinforcing resilience and growth.

In trauma-informed care, **group settings** (like support groups or safe church gatherings) are powerful spaces where collective healing begins.

“When we play together, we feel physically attuned and experience a sense of connection and joy. Improvisation exercises (such as those found at <http://learnimprov.com/>) also are a marvellous way to help people connect in joy and exploration. The moment you see a group of grim-faced people break out in a giggle; you know that the spell of misery has broken.”³

 **Activity: Find a play activity that would stir laughter in your group and play it together. Make sure there is lots of laughter!**

³ All the quotes in this section are from: *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk; p. 126, 127, 174, 177, 309, 315.

3. Spiritual Importance of Community

Trauma can deeply shake a person's faith, identity, and sense of meaning. A spiritual community plays a critical role in restoring what was lost:

- **Witnessing God's love through others:** Compassionate presence becomes the "healing touch" of Christ through human hands.
- **Shared faith and worship:** Praying together, singing, or reading Scripture renews hope and reminds the soul of eternal truths.
- **Restoration of spiritual identity:** The community helps the wounded remember, "You are still God's child. You are not forgotten."
- **Encouragement to keep walking:** Others stand in faith for us when we feel too weak to believe.



"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

 **Question:** *Has the enemy succeeded to break the connection between us? If so, how can we stop it?*

THE ROLE OF HEALING TOUCH

Healing touch is a compassionate, intentional act—physical, emotional, or spiritual—that helps soothe pain, restore safety, and promote healing in someone who is wounded, especially after trauma or suffering.

It is not limited to physical contact. **Healing touch** can also be expressed through presence, words, prayer, attentive listening, or supportive community—anything that communicates: "You are not alone. You are seen. You are safe. You are loved."

Key Aspects of Healing Touch:

1. **Intentional** – It comes from a place of care, empathy, and the desire to comfort or restore.
2. **Gentle and Respectful** – Especially after trauma, it honours personal boundaries and emotional sensitivity.



3. **Whole-Person Focused** – It addresses emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual needs.
4. **Relational** – It often takes place in the context of trust, presence, and human connection.

From a Christian point of view, *healing touch* reflects the compassion of Christ—who often healed through both His touch and His presence.

“Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ And immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.” Matthew 8:3

Healing touch brings the **presence of God into the wound**, reminding the person of their value, dignity, and belovedness. **Healing touch** is any loving, respectful gesture—physical or emotional—that helps a person feel safe, valued, and supported on their journey from brokenness to wholeness.

 **Activity: Find someone in the group and give him/her a long, big hug!**

SHARE

After hearing the immense importance of connection with one another, tell each other what you need from one another.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 9: ENDURE

DEVOTION: LAMENT BECOMES PROPHETIC

HOW COULD THE POWER OF LAMENT BE USED AS A PROPHETIC ACT?

The power of lament can be **deeply transformative when used as a prophetic act**. In both personal and communal contexts, lament serves not only as an expression of pain and sorrow but also as a powerful call to action, repentance, and renewal.

In a prophetic act, the power of lament lies in its ability to hold tension: it grieves brokenness while proclaiming hope. It exposes injustice, calls for repentance, inspires action, and declares God's sovereignty. Lament can be a prophetic tool to amplify the voices of the persecuted, awaken the global church, and call for alignment with God's heart for justice and restoration.

Here's how lament can amplify our prophetic acts:

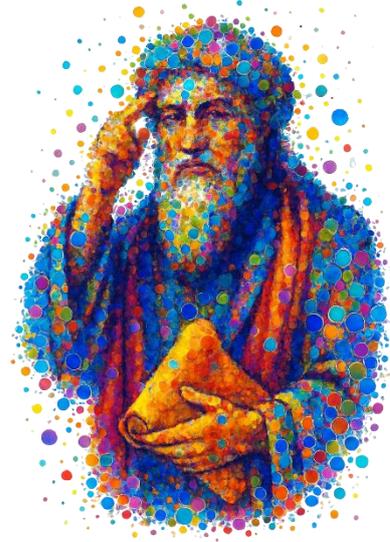
1. **Exposing Injustice**

Prophetic Role: Lament shines a light on the brokenness of the world, naming and mourning injustice, oppression, and suffering. By articulating the depth of pain, it prophetically declares, "This is not how it should be."

Biblical Example: The prophets often lamented the moral and social failures of their people. For instance, Jeremiah ("the weeping prophet") voiced his grief over Jerusalem's downfall (Lamentations 1:1–2).

Contemporary Use: Where persecution is prevalent, lament can highlight the plight of the oppressed, calling the global church and the world to recognize and respond to their suffering.

Key Power: Lament awakens awareness, compelling listeners to confront injustice.



Question: What injustices around us is God pressing on your heart lately?

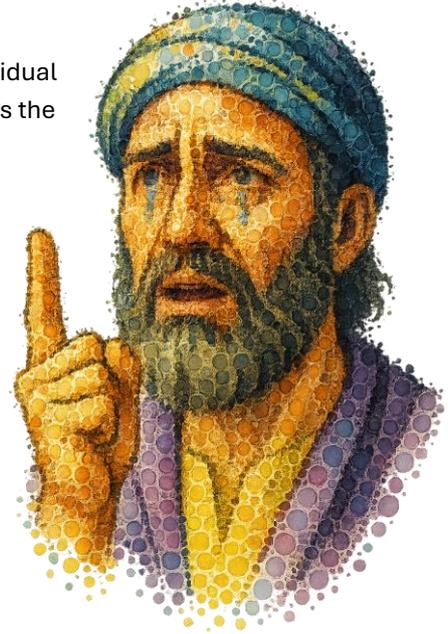
2. Calling for Repentance

Prophetic Role: Lament acknowledges collective and individual sin, expressing sorrow and inviting repentance. It recognises the connection between human brokenness and the need for restoration.

Biblical Example: Joel 2:12–13 calls for lamentation and repentance, urging people to "*return to the Lord with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning.*"

Contemporary Use: By lamenting systemic injustice, moral decay, or apathy in the church, a prophetic act can challenge communities to repent and realign with God's heart.

Key Power: Lament paves the way for transformation by calling people back to God.



🔗 Explore creative, wise ways to call the broader society to repentance about some evil going on.

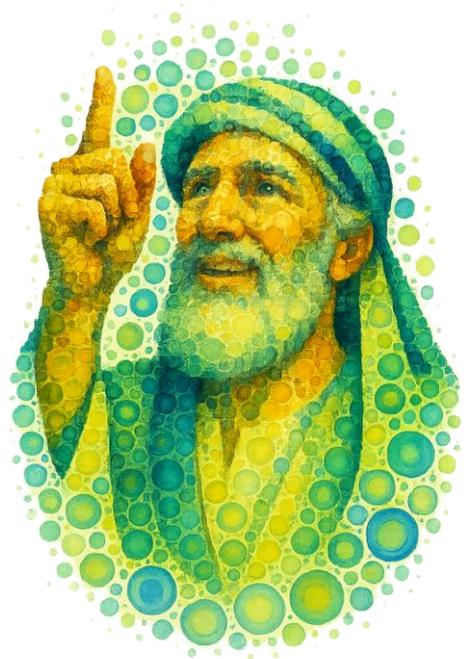
3. Expressing Hope Amid Despair

Prophetic Role: Lament doesn't end in despair—it is inherently hopeful, expressing trust in God's faithfulness. Prophetic lament declares that God's kingdom is coming, and that suffering is temporary.

Biblical Example: Psalm 13 moves from lament ("How long, Lord?") to trust ("But I trust in your unfailing love").

Contemporary Use: In a prophetic act, lament can remind persecuted communities and those in power of God's promises, pointing toward His ultimate justice and restoration.

Key Power: Lament bridges grief and hope, affirming that God is at work even in suffering.



4. Encouraging Advocacy and Action

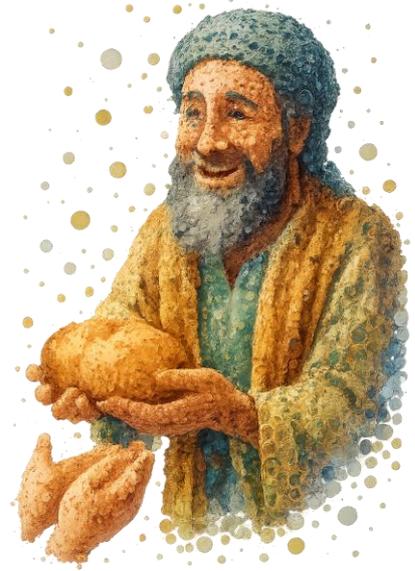
Prophetic Role: Lament is not passive; it demands action. By vocalising pain and seeking God's intervention, it also invites His people to act as agents of justice and reconciliation.

Biblical Example: Isaiah 58 links fasting, mourning, and lament with actionable justice: “*Loose the chains of injustice... share your food with the hungry.*”

Contemporary Use: A lament for persecuted believers can become a rallying cry for the global church to pray, advocate, and support them tangibly.

Key Power: Lament mobilises communities to align their actions with God’s purposes.

🔗 Activity: Pray and ask the Lord for something tangible you can do to show love and hope to suffering people.



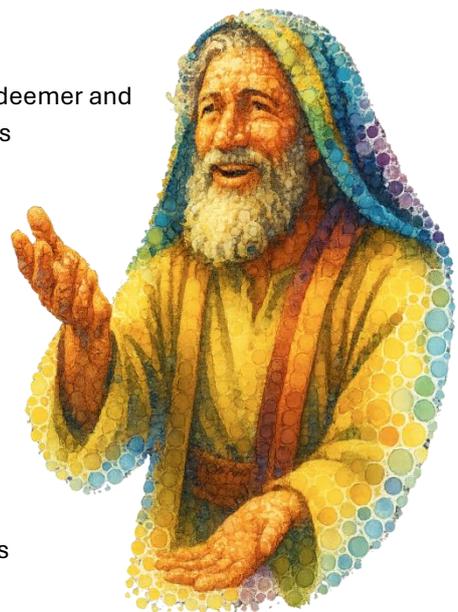
5. Providing a God-Centred Vision

Prophetic Role: Lament points to God as the ultimate redeemer and restorer. It critiques human systems while affirming God’s sovereignty and the coming renewal of all things.

Biblical Example: In Habakkuk 3, the prophet laments injustice but ends with a declaration of faith: “*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.*”

Contemporary Use: Prophetic lament can articulate a vision of God’s kingdom breaking into the present, encouraging believers to remain steadfast in their faith despite trials.

Key Power: Lament reorients focus from earthly struggles to God’s redemptive plan.



PRACTICAL WAYS TO USE LAMENT PROPHETICALLY

1. **Public Worship:** Incorporate lament into church services, prayer gatherings, or liturgies to address suffering and injustice.
2. **Advocacy Campaigns:** Use lament as a narrative tool in campaigns that highlight the suffering of persecuted believers, calling others to action.
3. **Storytelling:** Share stories of lament from those who suffer, giving them a voice while amplifying their cry for justice.

4. **Art and Media:** Create songs, poetry, or visual art rooted in lament to prophetically challenge and inspire.

 *Pray together against some of the evil around you with eyes that prophetically see what God wants to do.*

TEACHING: PERSEVERANCE – FAITH & HOPE

For to persevere and keep on loving God and people we have to practise the things we spoke about, like self-care, lamenting etc. In this teaching we want to focus on more aspects in order to persevere.

1. God Gives Perseverance

 Read: Romans 15:4-5

'For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures.

Now may the God who gives endurance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus, '

It is by grace that we endure. We need the special hand of God to help us, sustain us, hold us. It's only by grace that we can continue to follow Christ when we have compassion fatigue, trauma, or are persecuted.



 *Activity: Take a moment of prayer and pray for the gift of endurance.*

2. Perseverance Requires Faith

Faith in God's Character

One of the biggest challenges facing believers is to believe that God will look after them when they encounter trials.⁴ We learn to accept that God does delight to bless us.

- There are seven verses in the Bible that state that God delights or takes pleasure in us (Num. 14:8; Deut. 30:9; Ps. 37:23; 41:11; 147:11; 149:4; Isa. 62:4).
- three that say God delights in loving or blessing us (Deut. 28:63; 30:9; Mica 7:18), and
- one that tells us that God delights in our welfare (Ps. 35:27).

These eleven references state that we bring delight to God. Yet people who have faced rejection all their lives-whose parents or teachers or neighbours have pumped into their minds the message that they are useless-find this truth difficult to accept. They need to be convinced that they are capable of being loved and delighted in by God.

This deep understanding of God's delight in us will strengthen our bones to persevere, even in times of challenge, confusion, and deep pain. When we deeply believe that God is for us, we can look at all of life differently!

Bernard Gilpin (1517-1583) was a preacher who was taken into custody for preaching the gospel during the time when Queen Mary was persecuting Protestants. He was being taken to London to certain death, but to the amusement of the guards accompanying him he kept saying, "Everything is for the best." On the way he fell off his horse and was hurt, so they could not travel for a few days. He told the amused guards, "I have no doubt but that even this painful accident will prove to be a blessing." Finally, he was able to resume his journey. As they were nearing London later than expected, they heard the church bells ringing. They asked someone why this was so. They were told, "Queen Mary is dead, and there will be no more burning of Protestants." Gilpin looked at the guards and said, "Ah, you see, it is all for the best." God used the delay caused by his painful fall to save his life.



Activity: Use one of these verses and create a reminder that the Lord, Jesus delights in you!

Hupomons: Patience in the Midst of Trails

The Bible often refers to endurance or patience in the midst of trials. Paul says, "*We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance*" (Rom. 5:3). For such endurance we need faith

⁴ Most of the content is taken from: *The Call to Joy and Pain: Embracing Suffering in Your Ministry* by Ajith Fernando, chapter 5 called Faith & Endurance, and from chapter 11: Hope in the face of suffering from the book by Timothy Keller: *Hope in Times of Fear: The Resurrection and the Meaning of Easter*.

and hope. Paul speaks of "*endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thess. 1:3). He says, "*But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience*" (Rom. 8:25). The above three references use the Greek word *hupomons*, which is generally used for patience in the midst of trials. This is different from the word usually used for patience with individuals (*makrothumia*), often translated "long-suffering."

The word *hupomons*, used for endurance amidst trials, appears *thirty-one* times in the New Testament. It means something different than what usually comes to our minds when we think of endurance. Usually, we think of people stoically enduring hardship or accepting their unfortunate circumstances with passive resignation. But Christian patience is an active quality. It has more the idea of positive endurance than of passive resignation. Leon Morris explains, "*It is the attitude of the soldier who in the thick of the battle is not dismayed but fights on stoutly whatever the difficulties.*"

The great British Methodist preacher W. E. Sangster is a good example of Christian endurance. He was told he was dying of progressive muscular atrophy when he was in his prime as a preacher. His voice was one of the first things that he lost. He made four resolutions when he found out how serious his sickness was. They were:

1. "I will never complain;
2. I will keep the home bright;
3. I will count my blessings;
4. I will try to turn it to gain."

He kept himself busy until he died. His last book was written with two fingers and was sent to the publisher one or two days before he died. Such endurance comes as a result of faith.

 **Question: How can you keep your 'home bright?'**

Hard Things Will Lead to Best Things When Done Through Faith

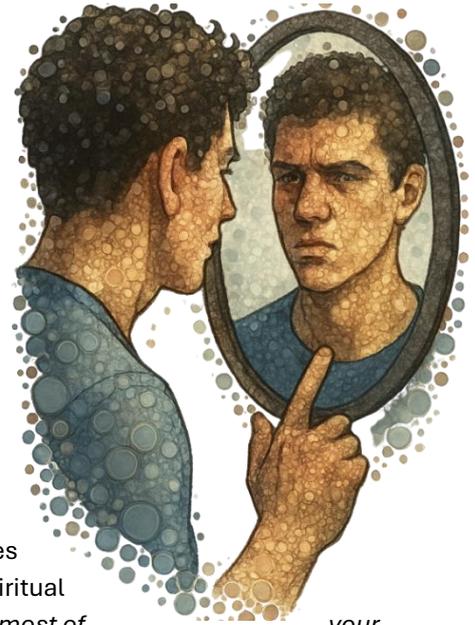
 *Read: Hebrews 13:1-2*

Good things received without God will become a curse. On the other hand, people who receive hard things with faith in God will discover that the seeming curse will turn out to be blessings. The Cross led to the joy of salvation.

Not only will many horrendous evils be made up for after this life is over but, as the principle holds, all hard things, embraced in faithfulness to the one who did the same for us, will issue in greater good and glory. Through experiences of weakness, we grow into a strength we would never have had otherwise, shedding enslaving allegiances and finding a new freedom.

Preach to Yourself

When our faith grows weak, we learn to preach to ourselves so that God's Word, which is the basis of our faith, may impact us. We see this in Psalm 42-43, which is actually one unit. It starts with the familiar words, "As deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God." Many who sing these words don't realise that they were written by a person who was in the depths of despair and to whom God seemed to be far away. In these two Psalms we find a refrain, which is actually a case of the psalmist preaching the same message to himself three times: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation, and my God" (42: 5-6a; 42: 11; 43: 5).



Because our heart is struggling with the situation, our mind preaches to the heart the truths we know from the Word. In his classic book *Spiritual Depression* Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones asks, "Have you not realised that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?" We must learn to stop listening to our self-pitying conversation and start preaching the deeper realities to ourselves.

This function of feeding our faith by reminding us of deeper truths amidst dark experiences is most effectively performed through reading the Bible. David said, "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction" (Ps. 119: 92). Martin Niemoller was a courageous German pastor who spent several years in prison because he spoke out against the unhealthy influence that Adolf Hitler's regime was having on the church in Germany. Speaking about the Bible he said, "What did this book mean to me during the long and weary years of solitary confinement and then for the last four years at Dachau [concentration camp]? The Word of God was simply everything to me—comfort and strength, guidance and hope, master of my days and companion of my nights, the bread which kept me from starvation and the water of life that refreshed my soul."

The Christian who walks by faith, hoping in God in the midst of trouble, is described well in Paul's wish for the Romans: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom. 15: 13)."

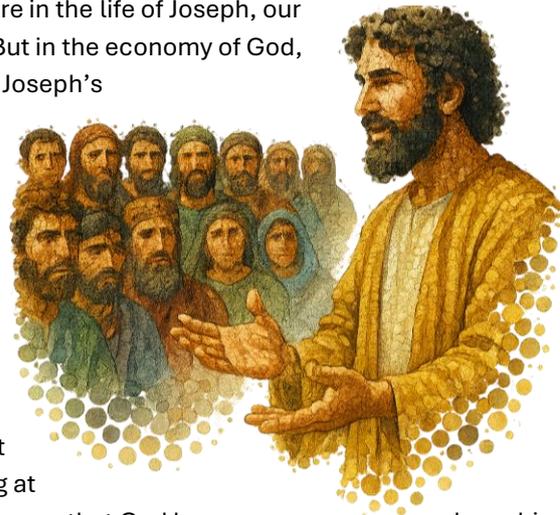
 **Question: Think about where we are now in life, what do we need to preach to yourself at this moment?**

3. Our Suffering Has Meaning, Purpose

What You Meant for Evil...

 Read: Genesis 50:19-20

Even evil can find purpose by the grace of God. It is there in the life of Joseph, our young faith hero. His brothers intended to destroy him. But in the economy of God, the harm they inflicted was actually a means for healing Joseph's ruined character and making him someone great. Their actions were also used by God to remove Joseph from Canaan and put him where he could do the most good for the world in general and for his family in particular. Like Jesus, Joseph overcame by being overcome.



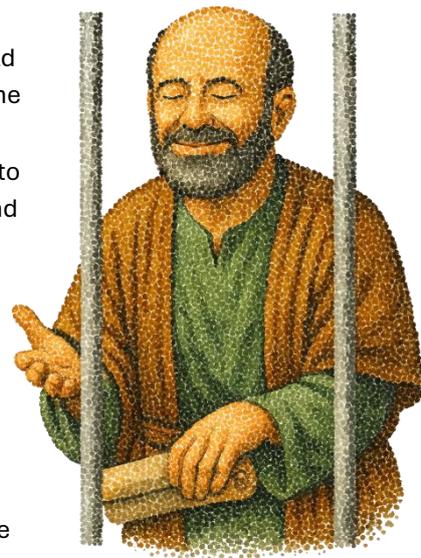
Jacob, Joseph's dad, used to say, "Everything is against me!" (Gen. 42:36) That was tantamount to saying, "All things are working together for evil for me." It seemed to him that God was behind the scenes, working at every point to hurt him and make him miserable. Now he says that God has been his shepherd "all my life to this day" (Gen. 48:15), and he even says that the Angel of the Lord "delivered me from all harm" (Gen. 48:16). This is the complete opposite of his previous statement. Now, as he remembers his sufferings (the flight from his homeland, the deception of Laban, the early death of Rachel, the loss of Joseph), he has the audacity to say that he was being "shepherded" and "kept from all harm" in every one of them. He sees that God was working behind the scenes for his good, out of love.

🔗 Activity: Remind ourselves that we don't see everything what God is doing behind the scenes. Let's declare our trust in his infinite love for us.

Our Suffering Advance the God's Kingdom

📖 Read: Phil. 1:10-12

- Suffering brought Paul to a place where he otherwise would never have been, prison. It gave him the change to share the Lord with whole prison guard.
- Suffering stirred the courage of other brothers and sisters to be more daring with their faith. It motivates. It stirs faith and courage. It disarms fear!
- Nothing like suffering communicates on such a profound level the value of the Lord Jesus. Suffering shows other His worth. Just like on the Cross, where He irrevocably communicated to us our worth.



📖 Read: 2 Cor. 4:10-12

Through the hardships of living and sharing the Gospel, we have the honour to bring Life to people. Our suffering has tremendous meaning. What greater gift can you give someone than life!

🔔 Activity: Take a time of prayer. Pray that the Lord may abound our love more and more for other people. (Phil. 1:9)

Suffering Shapes Our Character

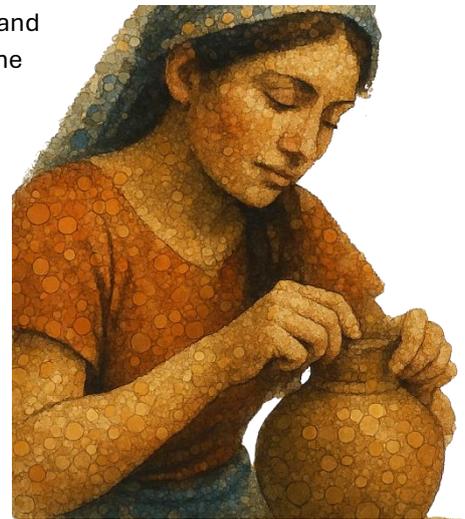
📖 Read: 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rom. 5:1-5

Paul says his sufferings for Christ renewing him. They were making him more like Christ, finding his joy in God, his peace in God's love, his meaning in God's calling. How do we intend to become like Christ if we make every effort to avoid suffering? Nothing increases the fruit of the Spirit in us more than afflictions and the self-knowledge and God-reliance they bring.

When we look to the things that are unseen, the more we wonder and adore His beauty and glory in the midst of suffering, looking not to the seen (where the evil is) but to the greatness and glory of Christ and what he has done for us, that changes us into His image. It grows a joy within not based on changing circumstances.

C.S. Lewis believes that a

principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.



🗣️ Share: How has suffering made us different people?

God Uses His Comfort to Us to Comfort Others

📖 Read: 2 Cor. 1:8-9

Our troubles can drive us to rely on God in such a way as to trigger the coming of His comfort. That comfort is the Holy Spirit bringing the declarations and promises in His Word home to the heart, so as to make God's presence, love, and power real to us (cf. John 16:12-14). But this comfort, when we receive it, is not to be kept to ourselves. *"If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort... which produces in your patient endurance of the same sufferings that we suffer."* (2 Cor. 1:6) Paul could go so far as to conclude that one

of the reasons that bad things happen to him is so that God can use him in the lives of others, helping them find the same life-changing, refining, enriching comfort of God.

4. **Future Hope Fuels Perseverance**

 *Read: Rev. 21:3-4; Rom. 12:19*

God never wanted suffering. It was never part of the design. At this moment, He is preparing a world without suffering for us. We are on our way to it. And this should give us hope. Yes, we hope, pray, and work that things this side of heaven will become less chaotic and painful. But while doing it, we know our hope is real that one day this pain will end. There is an ending!

Also, living among tyrants, we know that God will have the last laugh. There will be justice. We might not find justice now; our God is just. There will be justice. There will be judgement. They will pay for their evil. But, until then, we ask God to meet them and bring them to their knees!

 **Activity: Take a time of prayer and pray for the corrupted leaders in our region.**

SHARE

Looking at lament as a prophetic act and perseverance, what do you need to take home and how will you allow this to transform your life?

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

LESSON 10: REBUILD YOUR LIFE

DEVOTION: PSYCHO-SOCIAL & SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AFTER PAIN & SUFFERING

 **Read: Mark 5:1-20**

Pain and suffering can leave deep wounds—but they can also become the **soil for transformation**. Though trauma and loss shake the foundation of life, they do not have to define its future. With time, support, and God’s grace, we can experience renewal and begin **rebuilding** a life of meaning, strength, and hope.

1. **Acknowledging the Pain**

Transformation begins when we honestly face our pain. Grieving losses, naming fears, and expressing emotions are essential steps toward healing. Ignoring pain delays recovery but bringing it into the light opens the door to change.

“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18



 **Question: In what area of our lives do we need God’s healing touch?**

2. **Holding on to Hope**

Even when all feels lost, hope is the seed of transformation. It reminds us that our story is not over. God is still present—even in the dark—and He promises new beginnings.

*“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”
Isaiah 43:19*

Hope doesn’t always come easily, but small signs of beauty, safety, or kindness can gently restore it.



🔑 **Activity: Pause for a moment to encourage one another by listening to God's Spirit for some bread of life.**

3. Renewal from Within

Transformation after suffering is not only about changing our circumstances, but about a renewed heart and mind:

- **Letting go** of lies we believed in our pain ("I am broken forever")
- **Receiving truth** about our worth, identity, and dignity
- **Trusting God's process** of inner healing, even when we can't see results yet.

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2



🔑 **Activity: Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight lies that has crept in. And, then share and speak some truth to these lies. Remind each other who we are in Christ. Take time to declare anew God truths about us!**

4. Rebuilding Life – Step by Step

Recovery is not about returning to the "old normal." It's about creating something new, beautiful, and resilient from the ashes.

- Rebuilding **trust** in relationships
- Restoring **purpose** in daily life
- Reclaiming **joy** and moments of peace
- Reconnecting with **faith, community, and service**

"He will give a crown of beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for a spirit of despair." Isaiah 61:3



🔗 *For each of these write an action we want to take in the near future and keep one another responsible:*

Is there a relationship where trust needs to be restored? What are the steps we need to take?

Do we live with purpose or are we lacking in this regard? When will we sit with the Lord to talk about this?

What is stealing our Joy or in what can we rejoice more? Do we need to take steps?

Do we need to reconnect with faith, our community, and engage again in service? What steps do we want to take?

5. From Survivor to Overcomer

The deepest transformation often happens when pain becomes a platform for compassion, wisdom, and ministry to others.

- We become **wounded healers**.
- We find **strength in our scars**.
- We reflect **Christ's resurrection power** in our own lives.



🔗 *Activity: Think about past hurts and brainstorm how it can help others going through the same thing.*

6. A New Story Begins

Your pain is real. Your suffering matters. But it is not the end.

With God's help, what was broken can be healed. What was lost can be restored. And what was meant for harm can be used for good.

You are not alone—and you are not without hope.

“Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light.” – Micah 7:8



BIBLE STUDY: RENEWAL & REBUILDING MY LIFE

HOW TRAUMA CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO TRAUMA WISDOM?

As we said before, trauma shakes us, wounds us, and changes us. Over time, with intentional healing and support, trauma can be transformed into wisdom—a deep, compassionate, and resilient understanding of life, pain, and hope.

This transformation is not automatic. It’s a journey of courage, grace, and growth. Here’s how trauma becomes **trauma wisdom**:

1. Processing and Reflecting on the Experience

Trauma wisdom is born when we begin to ask questions like:

- What did I learn about myself through this?
- How did I survive?
- Where did I see God—even faintly?
- What lies do I need to release? What truth do I need to hold on to?

This reflection brings **clarity**, **meaning**, and **purpose**—turning raw pain into shaped insight.



2. Finding Meaning in the Suffering

While not all pain has a “reason,” God can bring meaning from it. That meaning may be:

- Greater empathy for others
- A deeper relationship with God
- New purpose in helping others heal.
- A clearer sense of what truly matters.

This doesn't justify the trauma—but it **redeems** it.



“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done...”

Genesis 50:20

3. Rebuilding Identity Through a New Lens

Trauma can shatter identity: “*I am weak,*” “*I am worthless,*” “*I am damaged.*”

Wisdom says: “*I am still standing. I am growing. I am beloved.*”

Over time, survivors begin to live not from a place of survival—but of renewed strength, dignity, and self-worth. Their scars become symbols of their journey, not just reminders of their pain.

 **Activity:** *Let’s look at some of our scars and tell each other how we are living now with renewed strength, dignity, and self-worth.*



4. Using Pain to Help Others Heal

One of the clearest signs that trauma has become wisdom is the ability to walk with others in their pain—gently, humbly, without judgment.

Trauma wisdom makes us:

- Safe listeners
- Powerful advocates
- Humble leaders
- Compassionate friends
- Wounded healers.

“Praise be to... the God of all comfort, who comforts us... so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” – 2 Corinthians 1:3–4



 **Question:** *How has our pain made us more like this?*

5. Letting God Redeem the Broken Pieces

Ultimately, trauma wisdom is not just psychological—it is **spiritual**.

It comes when we let God **enter the wound**, and slowly allow Him to:

- Bring healing where there was pain.
- Speak truth where there were lies.
- Restore hope where there was despair.

This is the work of grace. And this is the journey from **trauma to transformation**.

Trauma wisdom is the fruit of walking through pain with **truth, support, faith, and reflection**. It doesn't erase the suffering—but it reclaims it. It says:

“What hurt me will not define me.

What broke me will not destroy me.

What I've learned through the fire, I can now use to bring light.”



Activity: Declare to one another that we will walk with each other in truth, support, faith, and reflection.

SHARE

Share as group how you will keep reminding each other about the transformative power of pain and how will you make it part of your group's culture.

PRAY

Take turns in the group **to pray** to God in response to what you have learned.

Or divide the group into twos or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

END NOTE

As we come to the end of this journey, remember that pain was never meant to be the end of our story. It is part of life in a broken world—yet, in God’s hands, even pain becomes a teacher. Through hardship, He shapes in us the strength, compassion, and wisdom that easy days could never produce.

We have walked through lessons that helped us name our wounds, lament with honesty, and rediscover the healing presence of Christ. We have gained tools to face pressure on a spiritual and psychological level, not with fear or denial, but with faith, understanding, and renewed connection. What once felt like a weight can now become a place of growth—a space where God’s Spirit continues to transform our hearts.

Do not be afraid of life’s pressures. They will come, but now we have more tools and insight to meet them—with awareness, knowledge, prayer, and the companionship of others who walk beside us. Keep building life in community, where grace and truth meet, and where healing becomes a shared story.

May we go forward with peace: grounded in God’s love, resilient in hope, and confident that even in the hardest places, Jesus is forming something new and beautiful in you.

*“Those who sow with tears will reap with **songs of joy.**” — Psalm 126:5*