

SUFFERING WELL

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We are in the midst of Holy Week. The biggest popularity shift whiplash ever known in one week's time. And the impending purpose of [The Announcement](#) which was so formidably offered 33 years prior. **Regardless of what people believe about who Jesus was, nobody argues the fact that he suffered. Greatly. And there's something in us that can relate on some level, because what every one of us have in common regardless of race, faith, culture or creed — we all face trials. We all suffer.**

I'll never forget the Sunday morning a few weeks after the shocking announcement was made that our pastor and his wife lost their 35 year old son, Greg. I won't even try to capture with words the grief they experienced and will always know because a) I can't possibly fully fathom it, b) for some grief there are not words. But that Sunday morning, as we sat among our church family, my eyes were fixed on Steve and Becky, who had somehow made it out of bed and among us. With hands extended, they worshipped God alongside their congregation in the midst of the greatest suffering they had ever known. It moved me. I had listened to this man speak and witnessed

this woman minister for several years, and never had their resolve gripped me with such power as when I watched them take hold of the hope and glory of everything they had been saying for years — regardless of the challenge to their comfort. It was profound. And they are still at it. Last week, Steve preached a sermon on genuine faith in the midst of suffering, and I assure you he spoke with authority and believability on the topic.

Not many are likely to argue that there exist in our world saboteurs of the sacred; intruders of rest. Any basking in a life bereft of dogged discomforts is certainly temporary. And in the face of an onslaught; in the midst of suffering, there seems to be a tug in our nature to roar back; to defend. And it is *revealing*. Deeply revealing. **Our actions reflect our beliefs about suffering, sovereignty and significance.** When we raise our voices against the attacker of our peace, fueled by our distaste for the disaster being unjustly shoved upon us — unwelcome, into our personal space, we proclaim something. We reveal roles. What we believe to be our job, and what we believe to be God's. And the relationship between the two.

Does your compassion hinge on a full 8 hours of sleep? How quickly do you get angry? Are you willing to abandon a quarrel when you feel misunderstood? Is prayer a "go-to" response when you are facing a difficult decision? To what do you run when you are lonely, scared, or hurt? Does the truth you claim shift with the current of our culture's stream?

The perspective you claim — really claim — on what's true; what's strong enough to sustain your grip; what's worthy of your worship is revealed when thrust under the microscope of suffering. When we live life with a temporary perspective, a trial can be traumatic, a crisis can be incapacitating. Because it ruins the now. When we live life with an eternal perspective, a trial can be refining — even necessary to mature more completely. I'm not saying we enjoy pain (that would be weird and scary), but we recognize it as something God is sovereign over, something that will not have the final say on us — something we expect. It is something even Jesus knew.

"But in secular culture the meaning of life is to be free to choose what makes you happy in this life. Suffering destroys that meaning. And so, in the secular view, suffering can have no meaning at all. It can't be a chapter in your life story — it is just the interruption or even the end of your life story." — [Tim Keller](#)

There was nothing fair about his trial and yet... he was so intentional about his response. Everything he preached about love and justice and obedience... it was upheld even as he suffered. Was he grieved? I think so. Was he surprised? Not at all. He knew suffering was going to be part of his story. It was even revealed in the prophecies about him. Just as the Bible prepares us.

"There is a big difference between grief and surprise, when facing trials. Surprise doesn't set you up well. So whenever I hear someone respond to difficulty or suffering with: 'how could this happen to me?!' I worry about them."
— Steve Moltumyr.

I would argue this: If we are going to suffer well, we must be anchored in something bigger than us. Hold on to the truth and the life that can handle our grief. If we are going to face trials that demand more from us than we knew we had in us, we must be garnering our strength from the only one who is capable of sustaining. So this week, as we celebrate that Jesus was risen; let's examine his example of suffering in order to be better prepared to embrace trials; to suffer well.