



WITNESS Sermon Study Guide

Week 4: Sticks and Stones Allan Demond

Visit the NewHope Teaching page to watch or listen to the sermon

Last week, we reflected on our role as salt and light, and what it means to represent God's covenant relationship to the world. This week, we turn to the theme of sticks and stones, and explore the *why*, *what* and *how* of suffering for Christ. This is the core of witnessing. In fact, effective witness cannot happen without it.

Why Do I Need to Suffer?

Suffering is not a popular topic, but it is a common experience. From small inconveniences like traffic jams, to significant hardships like illness; we all know what it's like to be human in a broken world and to deal with the consequences of sin.

And yet, not all suffering is necessarily bad. There is a kind of suffering which is purposeful. Think about running a marathon, building a business or investing in a relationship. When the goal is important enough, we embrace suffering to get there. We are wired to pursue things that matter, even when it costs us, and the Kingdom of God matters. It is worth suffering for.

1. What was your initial reaction to this week's topic of suffering?
2. Share about a time when you chose to endure suffering for a goal that mattered to you.
3. Why do you think we sometimes resist suffering for our faith?

Read Acts 9:1-23

God calls Paul his chosen instrument. This man, who was once a source of pain and persecution for the followers of Jesus, will now bear witness to His name, but it won't be an easy road.



What Will I Suffer?

Verses 15 and 16 say: But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. *I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.*”

Consider the word *show*. If we infuse this word with Christ-like love and patience, it no longer feels like a vindictive statement. Instead, we can see these words as an invitation from a Saviour who longs to walk the road of suffering with us and show us the way.

Each person’s path is different and shaped by God’s unique call. For Paul, suffering looked like beatings, shipwrecks, hunger, and more (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). For Stephen it was martyrdom (Acts 7). Peter went to prison only to be miraculously set free by God (Acts 12:1-19), and Barnabas suffered relational pain after a disagreement with Paul (Acts 15:36-41).

As you trust in Jesus, He will show you the unique race that is yours to run, and help you persevere for His name’s sake.

1. Does seeing your suffering for Christ as an invitation rather than a punishment impact your perspective?
2. For Louis, hearing someone else’s testimony of suffering had a profound impact on his faith and his willingness to embrace discomfort for the gospel. What stood out to you as you listened to Louis’ story?
3. Can you think of a time when someone else’s testimony has inspired and encouraged you? Can you think of a time when comparing your story to someone else’s was unhelpful?
4. Each person’s call to suffer is unique. How can you discern what God might be calling you to endure for His Kingdom?

How Should I Suffer?

Read Philippians 3:10-11

When we suffer, we are not alone; we are united with Jesus in a profound way, participating in His suffering, and bearing witness to His death and resurrection.

So, how should we suffer? With grace and perseverance, knowing that our suffering is not in vain but is part of God’s redemptive plan. There is no witness without a choice to suffer, but with Christ, we can find joy even in the midst of hardship, because our eternal goal is assured! Hallelujah!



1. How does the idea of participating in Christ's suffering change the way you view your current challenges?
2. Suffering in partnership with Christ is purposeful and redemptive, but suffering brought on by foolish decisions and selfish motivations can be destructive. How can you create space in your daily routine to listen to the whispers of the Spirit and respond to God's guidance?
3. Where might you experience suffering or sacrifice as you seek to bear witness to Christ? What steps can you take this week to invite Jesus' help, embrace the discomfort and respond to the call?