

Retreat Preparation Reflection
Spring Retreat: March 29-31, 2019

Try to devote 20 minutes at some point in the days leading up to the retreat to reflect on the topic we will consider, "Finding God In Our Suffering". It can be beneficial to start to think about your questions before the retreat so you can best take advantage of the discussion times.

1. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-9

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

2. Where do you look for comfort when you are having a difficult time? What do you typically go to?

3. What makes it hard to find comfort in God? What challenges do you face in seeking God when you are suffering?

4. Why should turning to God be the wisest thing you do when you suffer? What does it look like to find comfort in God? To rely on God?

5. What does it mean to "share Christ's sufferings"?

6. How does your own suffering equip you to help others when they suffer? Are there ways in which your own suffering can hinder your ability to help others? How can you help others when you don't have any experience of what they are suffering?

7. Why is it important to remember that God raises the dead (v9) when you suffer?

8. Reflect on this well known quote from CS Lewis: "Pain insists on being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world". Do you agree? What does this mean?

9. What questions are you bringing to the retreat? What do you hope to learn? What do you need to know? Do you have a particular insight you are eager to share? How do you hope Emmanuel strengthens as a church because of our weekend together?

If you want to read through the passages the teachings will be based on, they will be: Mark 4:35-41; Job 42:7-17; 1 Peter 1:3-9.