



Week 1, Day 5: The Experience of Pain and Suffering

Though common, human experiences of pain and suffering are individual and personal.

It's impossible to make it through life without experiencing pain and suffering. Although we don't all deal with the same type or severity of hurt, we all have some experience with it. Pain can be physical, psychological, social, or spiritual. It may be acute, as in the sudden onset of illness, loss of employment, death of a loved one, natural disasters, or violent acts. It can also be chronic when multiple losses occur or when there is no relief from physical, psychological, social, or spiritual pain.

We must remember that pain and suffering are individualistic experiences. Pain and suffering are subjective in nature, meaning that we don't all undergo the same events in the same way. Age, experience with loss, personality, culture, support systems, and available methods of coping are just some of the factors that make pain and suffering individualistic. When we understand how these factors influence us, we may become better able to understand our personal reaction to tough times.

Consider This:

- *What is your story of pain and suffering?*
- *In what ways is your pain physical, psychological, social, spiritual, or a combination of these?*
- *In your life, do you have supportive individuals who are able to respond empathetically to your pain and suffering?*

John 11:1-6 New Living Translation (NLT)

A man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his sisters, Mary and Martha. This is the Mary who later poured the expensive perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair. Her brother, Lazarus, was sick. So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling him, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."

But when Jesus heard about it he said, "Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this." So although Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, he stayed where he was for the next two days.

John 11:35-37 New Living Translation (NLT)

Then Jesus wept. The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

Lazarus, the one that Jesus loved, was sick. When Jesus was told, He did not rush to the scene. He waited two days. Lazarus died. Yet we see Jesus respond in a very emotional way. In John 11:35 we see that Jesus wept. As we move throughout this series we pray you come to know God personally in a way you have never known him before; God is not absent or dismissive of your pain but weeps alongside of you in it. You can believe these truths:

- I can be happy again.
- Something good can come from this.
- God loves me.

Prayer:

God, thank you for loving me! Despite my circumstances, despite how I feel, despite what I have done. Thank you for accepting me as I am. Help me feel your love, comfort and peace in this Now What season of life. Help me to know you personally in a way that I have never known you before.