

Free to Suffer

Philippians 1:12-30

“Group Check-In:”

- Before we begin, please share any stories or experiences from Pastor Dave’s teaching from Week 1 regarding *True Freedom: Free to Encourage*:
 - Were you able to use Pastor Dave’s examples as models to modify your prayer life or to encourage others, applying the three steps of *Thankfulness, Affection, and Optimism*?
 - **Did you complete the “Live It Out” Mission Challenge?** How did the Holy Spirit convict you this week to make a change? What did you do, and what was the outcome? How did it influence you personally; and how did it affect others?

“Current Status” Questions: Get your group talking by asking both questions:

1. Are you currently feeling trapped by the circumstances of your life, and would you categorize those circumstances as *suffering*? Share specific examples.
2. What is your typical response to your suffering? Would you say that your conflict is actually a deep spiritual conflict rather than an external, temporal issues?

Paul’s Example: Read Philippians 1:12-30, then choose 3-4 of the following questions to discuss:

3. Paul uses the word *Agon*, which references athletic struggles. How does comparing suffering to an athletic struggle change your perception of the *Purpose of Suffering*? How can suffering be productive (Verse 12)?
4. **Read verses 13-14.** What was Paul’s focus and priority in his suffering? Think about the situations God has “put” you in. Where do you find yourself afraid to speak the Word? What does that reveal about your priorities in the situation? How could our Paul-inspired response to suffering provide evidence that God uses good and bad events for His purpose?
5. **Read verses 15, 18 and 28.** What was Paul’s response to the “perpetrators” of his suffering? We all have people who cause us suffering. How can we follow Paul’s direction in our responses? What is the result of such unexpected Godly actions? How does benefit us emotionally and spiritually?
6. What are the negative outcomes of anger and hatred? Can you share some personal experiences? How can we overcome those negative outcomes?
7. **Read verses 21 and 23.** What is the *Pinnacle of our Suffering*? How should these verses eliminate those fears for the believer? What would need to change in your life for you to be able to quote Philippians 1:21 as true for you?
8. Pastor Dave’s said the idea of death without Christ is the *worst suffering imaginable*. His example of the woman dying of cancer is in stark contrast to the atheist’s view of life and death. How does this dying woman’s testimony dramatically illustrate the power of suffering and *True Freedom* in Christ even in the *prison* of her body and hospital bed?

9. Would you say that Professor Smedes' discussion regarding death and heaven is the typical position of most people? How does Philippians support the importance of a Biblical view of suffering to achieve *True Freedom* in our lives?

“LIVE IT OUT”: Encourage your group members to complete the “Live It Out” Mission challenge; then choose 1 additional question to end your group time:

10. In the week ahead, complete **“Live It Out” Mission # 2** (found on The Chapel’s Small Groups page). Next time you meet, check-in and hold each other accountable by sharing your stories!
11. Paul sets an example for us to follow. From the midst of a prison cell, he shared the Gospel, as did the dying woman dying of cancer (in Pastor Dave’s sermon). What are some specific things we can do to prevent our outward circumstances from controlling us inside? Pray to live out this type of “true freedom” no matter what your circumstances may be.
12. Ask God to show you where you need to make changes, so that your life would demonstrate your commitment (and priority) to advancing the gospel message. Commit to making those changes, and share with a trusted friend/family member.