

1 PETER

MINISERIES

▶ EPISODE 4:

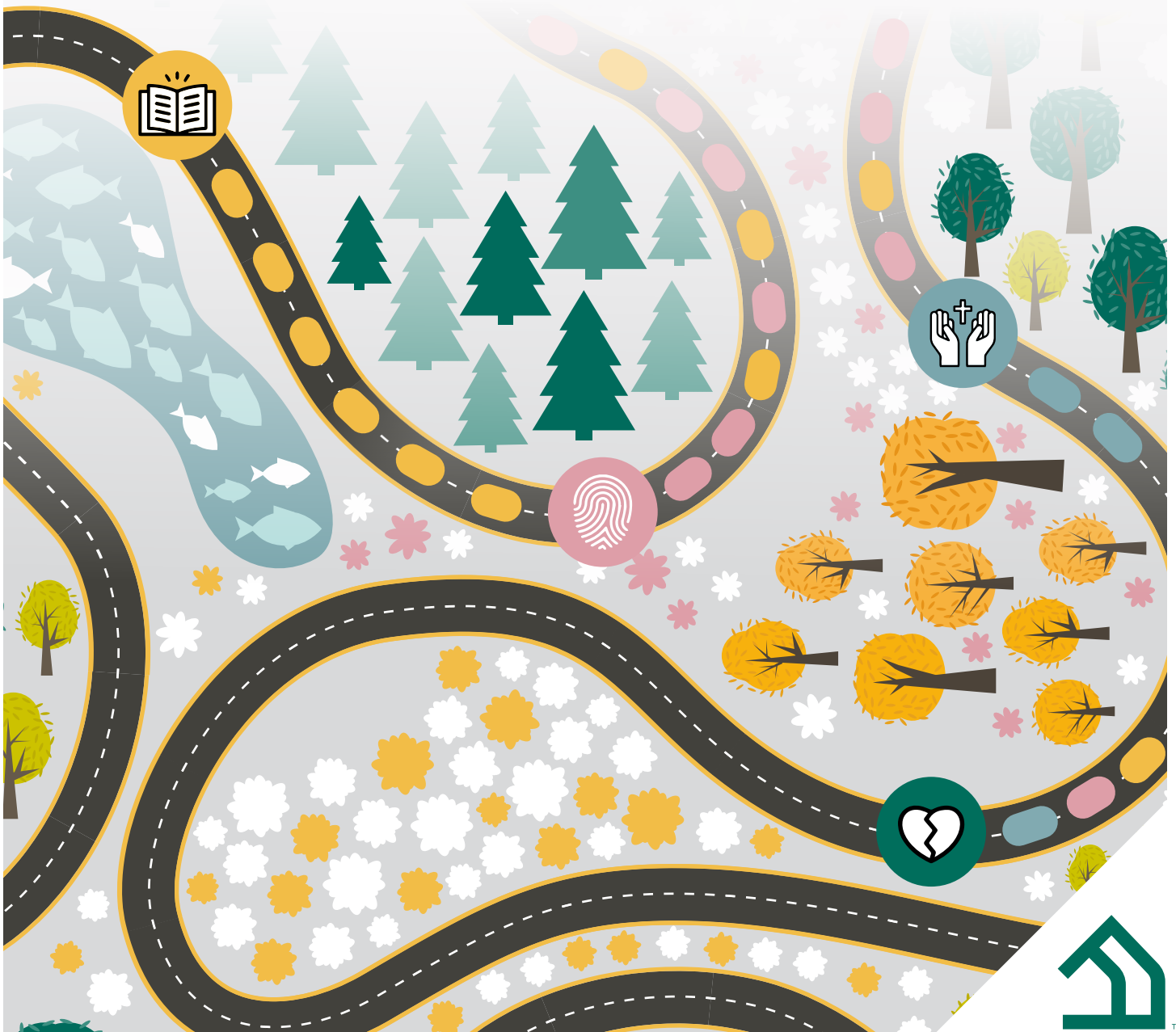
Suffering, Yamit's Story

The True Story

Identity

Hope

Suffering





Foundational Principle:

It's reasonable to expect suffering when God asks us to obey in unreasonable ways.



Read and Watch:

Read: 1 Peter 4:7–19



BibleProject

[How Does the Bible Explain Suffering?¹](#)

At some point we've probably heard the saying "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." This is a very noble perspective on suffering. Though most people don't like to talk about the pain in their lives, it's something to which we can all relate. Thoughts on the subject of suffering run the gamut from those who see it as always justified and view harsh circumstances as punishment to those who consider all suffering as pointless and illogical. Most of us settle somewhere in between.

God has taught me a lot about suffering over the past few years. Recognizing that Jesus is with me in my pain hit me fresh in 2019 when I lost my father. Even though I was devastated, my busy life and responsibilities couldn't just stop. I pressed on through my last semester in graduate school and finally completed my doctorate. By the time I finished my studies, the world was consumed with a global pandemic and its constant weight of ambiguous grief.

In the midst of all the pain and suffering swirling around me, God allowed another bomb to drop in our family. My wife Erica and I were overjoyed and shocked to learn that we were expecting our fourth child, only to find out shortly after that there was no heartbeat.

I remember the day we found out that we had lost our baby. I tried to listen as the doctor was telling us the horrible news. Everything slowed down and it was like I was in a dream! Why? Why, if He loved me, would He allow this awfulness? Then, I thought about my dad's death and wondered, did God kill two people, one born and the other unborn, just so I'd learn a lesson? My questions and anger were aimed straight at God. I began to question the Lord in ways that were uncharacteristic of me.

As we left the clinic a wave of shame came over me because I couldn't shake my sadness. I felt broken because I couldn't push through my emotions. As a father, I wanted my children and family to see me as strong. But I was not strong. As I began to read 1 Peter, I found that Peter was someone I could relate to. He had doubts, lacked faith, and wasn't always strong.

Suffering was everywhere around my family and me. I found it difficult to be honest about my agony because it felt so vulnerable. I remember going to church and singing all the songs about joy and happiness, completely aware that my reality was just the opposite I did what many men do. I stuffed my anger deep inside and kept my emotions hidden. God led me to the psalms of lament, and reminded me that He's near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The hope of Christ was real even in the midst of being mad, angry, and sad. These truths gave me great strength to carry on in the midst of our confusion and angst.



**Why does Jesus matter in the midst of our suffering?
(Check out 1 Peter 1:3-12; 2:18-24; 4:7-16)**

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I have since learned that most people are uncomfortable with sadness and tears and don't know what to do with a mysterious God who allows suffering. So they try to make sense of what appears to be senseless. At best, our friends wanted to help relieve my intense suffering by offering encouraging words and prayers, which helped maybe for a few minutes. At worst, people judged me and suggested that my circumstances of suffering were the result of my sin or were perhaps necessary for my personal growth. This community where I had often experienced safety and healing suddenly became a place where I felt unseen and lonely. These feelings spilled over into my relationship with God. Why was God allowing so many things that felt so bad all at once?

Prolonged hardship can easily lead to isolation. You don't know me well, but honestly, I consider myself a very relational person. But this stretch of sorrow and sadness made me feel like I didn't want anyone to get near me. **But what I learned from our reading group was that deep and profound restoration tends to happen in community with others.** Again, Peter spoke right to me, and I discovered that a meaningful way to encourage others is to practice hospitality and use the gifts God has given us. So, my wife Erica and I decided to invite others into our life a little more closely by creating a safe space for sharing and learning from 1 Peter. Little did we know that by providing this kind of environment for others, God was also giving me what I needed to start healing emotionally. Having a place to grieve openly helped me wrestle with my own doubts and experiences.

Peter references all kinds of relationships in his letter, but in numerous places he emphasizes the importance of our relationships with our faith family.

Jot down what you learn from these verses in 1 Peter: 1:22-23; 3:8-12; 4:7-9; 5:1-12).



As we hung out, all kinds of different views on suffering surfaced. Our sharing was sometimes raw and edgy, but it was always honest. Some people believed that suffering wasn't suffering unless it included physical pain. Others questioned the value of faith in God if there was no guarantee circumstances would change. One friend even questioned the goodness of God—"Christianity is almost dismissive because there is no sympathy" or "God is always the answer."

Throughout our study, God brought our discussions back to hopeful places. Yes, hard stuff is to be expected, but we have a living hope. We follow a Savior who endured all kinds of suffering—even death on a cross. Peter, writing from personal experience, reminds us that Jesus is our living hope and our wounded healer.

How can we understand a God who cares in the face of hardship?



The True Story and Suffering

What if, in an effort to live meaningful lives by living in obedience to God, we experience unreasonable suffering? As we put forth the effort to live as God created us, it can be really hard to reconcile strenuous circumstances. I mean, how could a loving God allow hardships in the lives of His own children? Friend, these are not new questions. They're honest questions and God doesn't want us to process them alone.

Suffering has been a part of the True Story ever since Adam and Eve's rebellion in Eden (Genesis 3). The Bible introduces us to all kinds of people who endure all kinds of trials and temptations. Sometimes challenges arise within the home. Other times people are harassed by their enemies. People living in biblical times experienced difficulties due to earthquakes, floods, and famine just like we do today. Life can get really hard. The Psalms provide for us a library of hymns, songs, laments, and poems written by people like us who endured all kinds of devastation.

These same people often express their dismay with God in a very raw and graphic way. God doesn't condemn us for this. He tells us to bring our big feelings, our hurt, and our doubts to Him. In the New Testament, there are stories about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We can read about people who were blind, lame, and sick with chronic diseases and whose circumstances did not change. Some were rich while others were poor, but their pain and sorrow gave them an opportunity to turn to the restorer of hope, Jesus.

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Reasoning with suffering is a paradox. Unwelcomed and prolonged suffering, no matter when or how it comes about, can feel overpowering. However, all of us will experience various levels of difficulty, sorrow, and grief because we live in a fallen world. Peter reminded his readers and us that Jesus endured suffering in ways we will never know. He wrote,

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed (1 PETER 2:18–24).

Jesus was tempted and tried, but He never sinned. That means that Jesus never lied, never blamed others, and never hid His emotions from His Father. He chose to trust in His Father's plan, even when it led to the agony of death and separation from God. Jesus obeyed the Father and gave Himself up as a living sacrifice. His blood was shed for us. Through His death and resurrection we can say with confidence that our hope is in Him. Jesus is our living hope.



Where do we see suffering in 1st Peter?

As I mentioned earlier, my wife and I invited a bunch of people from various social circles to read 1 Peter with us. Some were familiar with the Bible, but some were not familiar with it at all. We all agreed that our study of 1 Peter has helped us to heal. We all discovered that we are not alone in our hardship and that often God uses our community to redeem our suffering. As we gathered around a table, we bonded like a family and embraced obedience even in some of the most unreasonable places. Chapter 4 gripped my heart as I read it. Will you read 1 Peter 4:7-11 with me now?

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“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 PETER 4:7–11).

We’ve learned that Peter wrote to a community that was suffering because they were following Jesus in ways that were countercultural. Pause. Let that settle on you for a moment. They were struggling and wrestling **because** they were followers of Christ. Is this hard to understand? Yes.

Spend another moment and read this passage from 1 Peter out loud. Just take it in.

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name” (1 PETER 4:12–16).

Rejoicing in hope does not remove the emotional side of suffering.

Although Peter calls us to rejoice, he also knows that suffering is not an easy thing. In fact, he describes it as gold that’s purified by fire. Pain and suffering can feel very intense!

- Sometimes we might be tempted to wonder, what’s the point? Why does Jesus matter in the midst of life’s pressures? If someone asked you that question, how would you answer?

Shrink & Think

This “shrink and think” exercise is to help you summarize what you’ve learned about God, yourself, and others from this episode.

1. Factual Insights

This step helps you to look at the big picture and the facts in this episode

From this lesson, what do you learn about

- The one True God who allows suffering
- You in relation to God and suffering
- The world in relation to God and suffering?

2. Revealing Relevance

This step helps you to pinpoint what in the lesson has been most revealing or relevant for you

- Why is it important to keep moving toward relationships with others when you’re tempted to isolate or experiencing intense challenges?
- Why do you think we grow more through common experiences (like Yamit did?)

3. Summary Statement (10-12 words)

This steps helps you shrink your observations into a short, shareable sentence or summary

Combine the factual insights about suffering that you’ve learned from 1 Peter into a short summary in the form of a poem or psalm of lament. Or draw a picture or compose a song that expresses what you’ve learned from 1 Peter about God’s character.

4. Apply It

This last step helps you to apply what you’ve learned

Pick a question below to act on:

- How do trials cause us to take stock of our limited ability to power through difficult times?
- How might practicing the art of “being present” with someone make a difference?
- What’s one thing you could do to invite others into the “hard” of your life?

Final Reflection

John Gottman says, “Trust is built in very small moments,” and he describes these as “sliding door” moments. “In any interaction, there is a possibility of connecting or turning away.”² Don’t suffer alone. Name two or three others you trust. Invite them into this hard space with you.

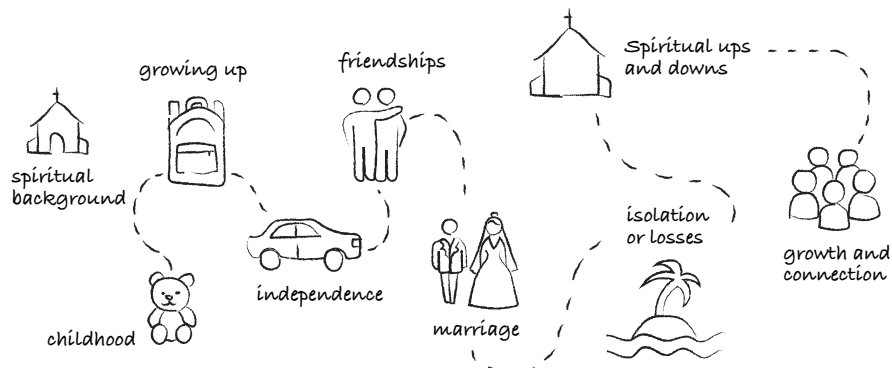
Potential Next Step: Host a dinner experience around the theme of suffering. I suggest using the adventure dinner guide as a template.

- [Adventure Dinner Guide](#)



Your Own Journey

- Take one small step toward inviting a friend to do something fun with you over a meal or in a way that’s easy on the wallet. Maybe try a new local restaurant or share a walk in the park or around your block with a couple of friends.
- Take a minute and add a marker to your LIFE MAP showing a personal commitment to welcoming community to speak into your life as a result of engaging with Yamit’s story.



Going Deeper:



Key Verses in 1 Peter on SUFFERING

Chapter 1—verses 6-10

Chapter 2 —verses 11-12, 18-20, 21-25

Chapter 3—verses 1-2, 8-16, 18-22

Chapter 4—verses 1-6, 12-19

Chapter 5—verses 6-11

- Read Paul David Tripp’s “[When Grief Enters Your Door](#),”³ an article in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* published in Winter 2005. I hope the article helps you during times of grief.
- If you like philosophical arguments, read and discuss this seven-page article by William Rowe with a friend: “[The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism](#).”⁴
- Read and listen to how Christians around the world are being persecuted for their faith: “Persecution Blog,” Voice of the Martyrs, <https://www.persecutionblog.com>.⁵



- Listen to how others in the Old Testament used poetry to express themselves in their times of suffering: <https://www.everypsalm.com/music/category/Psalm+of+Lament>⁶

Endnotes:

1. Bible Project, “How Does the Bible Explain Suffering?” Accessed January 3, 2023, <https://bibleproject.com/blog/how-does-the-bible-explain-suffering/>.
2. John Gottman, “The Deeper Meaning of Trust,” *The Gottman Institute* (Italicized), accessed October 25, 2022, <https://www.gottman.com/.blog/the-deeper-meaning-of-trust/#:~:text=Trust%20allows%20partners%20to%20experience,physical%20health%20of%20the%20partners.>
3. Paul David Tripp, “When Grief Enters Your Door,” accessed January 2, 2023, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55bfa12ae4b0ca6a13bd95f2/t/5978ae32ff7c50cc2d3def7/1501081138761/When+Grief+Enters+the+Door.pdf>.
4. William Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* (Italicized), Volume 16, No. 4, (October 1979), pp. 335-341, University of Illinois Press. Accessed January 3, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20009775>.
5. “Persecution Blog,” *Voice of the Martyrs* (Italicized), accessed January 2, 2023, <https://www.persecutionblog.com/>.
6. “Every Psalm Library,” accessed January 2, 2023, <https://www.everypsalm.com/listen>.