

### 3. God is Glorified

*Luke 4:18 NLT - 18 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,*

*Acts 16:29-32 NLT - 29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." 32 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household.*

When a Roman guard allowed a prisoner to escape, the guard was killed or made to serve the prisoner's sentence. So, when the prisoners remained in their cells despite the open doors, they had saved the guard's life.

*How was the guard also being set free? What Good News did he receive? Who was the audience for Paul and Silas now? Is God putting you in a circumstance to share Good News with others despite your suffering?*

#### **WRAP-UP**

God has Good News for everyone, and He can use us to bring it to people in any circumstance, even when we suffer. Paul and Silas were willing to go where God called them and they were faithful witnesses to God's power and love in every situation. We are unlikely to be jailed for our faith in our country, but in many parts of the world believers will suffer for their faith. It is when we suffer well, keeping our eyes on Jesus despite our circumstances, that God receives glory and the Good News if preached.

#### **MEMORY VERSE**

*12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*  
- *Philippians 4:12-13 ESV*

#### **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life.

*Challenge – Spend some time in silent reflection and first ask yourself- Am I willing to suffer for The Gospel? Then ask God to fill you with His Spirit so that even in suffering you will rejoice.*

### **Suffering Well** Beautiful Disruption #6

#### **INTRODUCTION**

At some point in our lives most of us ask the question, "Why does God allow good people to suffer?" But we have been warned by Jesus that in this world we will have trials and sorrows, and that we will suffer. So, the question becomes, how will we respond to suffering? Does our suffering have a purpose, can it bring God glory? It can if we keep our eyes on Jesus rather than our circumstance and broaden our perspective to see God at work in our lives even through our pain. In the book of Acts we see this at work through Paul and Silas as they suffered well in a prison cell.

#### **Ice Breaker**

When you are sick and home in bed, do you prefer to be left alone or do you want someone to stay nearby to take care of you?

#### **Key Passage**

*Acts 16:24-25 NLT - 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.*

#### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

##### **1. Go Where God Calls**

There can be many explanations for why we suffer. Sometimes it is a result of our own actions because our actions have consequences. Sometimes it is because we live in a broken and fallen world where there is sickness and disease, and evil people. But sometimes we just don't see the reason for our suffering. We are doing what we should, and bad things still happen. That is what happened to Paul and Silas.

*Acts 16:9-10 NLT - 9 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" 10 So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.*

God called to Paul in a vision and Paul responded. Where was Paul going and what was his mission there? What do you think his expectations were for this? When you have clear directions from God and you follow them, do you anticipate a clear path? Does opposition cause you to question if you heard God clearly?

*Acts 16:13-15 NLT - 13 On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. 14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. 15 She was baptized along with other members of her household, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.*

Paul went looking for a prayer meeting and he found it and shared the Gospel.

*Do you think this was how Paul expected to be used on his mission? Based on the description of Lydia's profession, what do you think it was like for Paul to stay at her home? So, things are going well for Paul in Macedonia at this point.*

During his stay, Paul continued to meet with the new believers, but he also came across a demon-possessed slave girl who harassed him for days.

*Acts 16:18-20 NLT - 18 This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her. 19 Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. 20 "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials.*

*The slave girl's divination was a source of income to her owners. This was a normal, accepted practice in the culture. What charge did her masters bring against Paul and Silas? They had become a beautiful disruption in the marketplace for doing something good. In what way had their actions also shared the Good News? Who was their audience to this Good News?*

## 2. Singing in Prison

*Acts 16:22-25 NLT - 22 A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. 23 They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.*

Very quickly Paul and Silas' circumstances had changed. They no longer had plush accommodations and a receptive audience to their preaching. They were the target of a mob and in response to the mob, the Roman officials tore off their robes, and violently beat them. Then they were locked in shackles in the prison dungeon. They were suffering, but their mission hadn't changed.

*How did Paul and Silas continue to share the Good News from their prison cell? Who was their audience now?*

Paul and Silas were confident in God their Creator, "the one who gives songs in the night" (Job 35:10). His Holy Spirit was with them. Despite their bodies being bloodied and broken, they were strengthened to sing praise to God.

*Job 35:10 NLT - 10 Yet they don't ask, 'Where is God my Creator, the one who gives songs in the night?'*

*Psalms 119:62 NLT - 62 I rise at midnight to thank you for your just regulations.*

In verse 25 the word for hymn in the Greek is *Hymneō* and it is the same word used for the hymn sung by Jesus and His disciples on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matt 26:30). It is also the word used to refer to the Hallel or the passage in Psalms 113- 118 & 136. These are songs that praise God, that remember His faithful love and deliverance of His people. They are songs of thanksgiving.

*What did Paul and Silas' singing reveal about their faith and about the God to whom they sang? With those words ringing off the prison walls, what do we think the prisoners would conclude about their supernatural release from their bonds?*

*Acts 16:26 NLT - 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!*