



## Prayer and Suffering:

### Team Evaluation, Discovery Bible Story Set, & Resources

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#### Introduction to FPS's Prayer Strategies Discovery Bible Studies Set:

Prayer—or engagement with God—is integral to every aspect of the lives of the team members and the corporate team, as well as to the strategy and approach they use. Within this document, you will find the following: a definition and explanation to the Prayer strategy, a set of questions to help you diagnosis the status of your team's use of this strategy, a Discovery Bible Story Set to help you understand Scripture's view on this strategy, and links for further resources related to this Prayer strategy. We recommend completing the team's diagnostic first then adapt the Discovery Story Set to meet your team's needs. Feel free to use the typical DBS questions, however, in addition we've tried to suggest you ask these much deeper questions to elicit specifics regarding this strategy. The Fellowship of Prayer Strategists have a set of nineteen different prayer strategies. These are not intended to be the complete picture of this strategy but a glimpse at the use for this strategy. You can find more strategies at [www.prayer-strategists.net](http://www.prayer-strategists.net). We hope these tools will prove helpful in considering ways you and your team can increase your capacity for extraordinary prayer for the sake of the King and His Kingdom.

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#### Prayer and Suffering

**Definition:** Suffering is an inevitable part of following Christ and a dynamic walk with God sustains us through it and testifies to the power of God at work in our lives.

**Explanation:** We are also called to be His hands and feet to a hurting, broken world that suffers under the weight of sin and destruction. The Bible tells us that as we near the end of days, troubles increase in frequency and severity. As much as we may prefer to deny the existence of suffering for believers, Jesus told us that in the world we would experience trouble or tribulation. Jesus tells us we are blessed when we suffer persecution for His Name's sake. So, whether God delivers us from trouble altogether, or strengthens us through it, or take us home on account of it, we can be sure that He uses our struggles for good and for His glory. As we are comforted, we are able to turn and comfort others. Understanding how to navigate these times can help us not only have peace even in the storms, but also guide others to Jesus who is Our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble.

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#### Diagnostic Questions for You & Your Team:

1. How successfully are you and your team ministering to each other and to those to whom you are called that may be going through crises that threaten to undermine faith

and endurance? How are you and your team growing in the grace of withstanding suffering?

2. What strategies in prayer do you have to help guide yourselves and others through devastating events and circumstances? Are you and your team spiritually prepared for whatever challenges may come (whether persecution, opposition, unexpected changes) by hiding the Word and the song of the Lord in your heart?
3. How are you and your team helping new believers expect suffering and prepare for it?
4. Are you and your team prepared spiritually and emotionally for laboring together in an environment of threat and pain? How will you care for the member health needs of your team in such circumstances?

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### Discovery Bible Story Set:

1. “In the last days terrible times...” – **2 Timothy 3:1-17**
  - A. **Pray** as a group before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
  - B. **Read** the entire passage aloud at least 2 times or listen to an audio version twice through. If your group uses storying, present the scripture in this way. Then, have the group practice re-telling the story together.
  - C. **Discussion questions:**
    - What do you like about the story? What is difficult or what don’t you like?
    - What do you learn about people from this story? What do you learn about God?
    - What principles do you see in this story about hearing God and enduring suffering?
    - How is the Word of God a resource in times of difficulty?
  - D. Take a few minutes to **quietly listen** to God. What is He instructing you to do from what you’re hearing? Share with each other what you’re sensing. Are some of His instructions quite different than you might have imagined? How?
  - E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
  - F. What key principles about prayer and suffering can you draw from this passage?

In this hour, we can expect difficult times but God has given us the resource of His Word to help us overcome.

2. “We wrestle...” – **Ephesians 6:10-20**
  - A. **Pray** before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
  - B. **Read** the entire passage completely through.
  - C. **Discussion questions:**
    - What do you like about the story? What is difficult or what don’t you like?
    - What do you learn about people from this story? What do you learn about God?
    - What is the battle we face? With what weapons are we told to fight it?
  - D. Take a few minutes to quietly **listen to God**. What is He instructing you to do from what you’re hearing? Share with each other what you’re sensing. Are some of His instructions quite different than you might have imagined? How?
  - E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
  - F. What key principles about prayer can you draw from this passage?

Prayer is the battle and prayer maintains the victory. Prayer is our lifeline to our Heavenly Father; He will always direct us when we listen and obey Him.

3. “Treasure in Clay Jars” – **2 Corinthians 4:7-12**

- A. **Pray** before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
- B. **Read** the entire passage completely through.
- C. **Discussion questions:**
  - What do you like about the section? What is difficult or what don't you like?
  - What do you learn about people from this section? What do you learn about God?
  - What is God's purpose in storing treasure in clay jars?
  - What, then, is something that suffering can accomplish through us?
- D. Take a few minutes to quietly **listen to God**. What is He instructing you to do from what you're hearing? Share with each other what you're sensing. Are some of His instructions quite different than you might have imagined? How?
- E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
- F. What key principles about prayer can you draw from this passage?

Persevering through suffering reveals the power of God at work in our lives. Let's see what else God shows us that suffering can accomplish in us.

4. “Consider it pure joy...” – **James 1:2-8**

- A. **Pray** before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
- B. **Read** the entire passage completely through.
- C. **Discussion questions:**
  - What do you like about the section? What is difficult or what don't you like?
  - What do you learn about people from this section? What do you learn about God?
  - What things do we see that God uses trouble to accomplish in us?
  - Where do we see prayer in this section?
- D. Take a few minutes to quietly **listen to God**. What is He instructing you to do from what you're hearing? Share with each other what you're sensing.
- E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
- F. What key principles about prayer can you draw from this passage?

God does not leave us alone in our challenges and struggles but He offers us instruction and guidance. As we receive His comfort, we are equipped to comfort others in turn.

5. “Comforted to comfort” – **2 Corinthians 1:3-11**

- A. **Pray** before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
- B. **Read** the entire passage completely through.
- C. **Discussion questions:**
  - What do you like about the passage(s)? What is difficult or what don't you like?
  - What do you learn about people from this section? What do you learn about God?
  - What resource do we gain in receiving comfort?
  - How is prayer related to suffering in this section?
- D. Take a few minutes to quietly **listen to God**. What is He instructing you to do from what you're hearing? Share with each other what you're sensing.
- E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
- F. What key principles about prayer can you draw from this passage?

We know Jesus experienced suffering as He bought our salvation. What does the Bible say about our sufferings?

6. “Sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings...” – **Philippians 3:7-14**
- A. **Pray** before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
  - B. **Read** the entire passage completely through.
  - C. **Discussion questions:**
    - What do you like about the section? What is difficult or what don't you like?
    - What do you learn about people from this section? What do you learn about God?
    - How would sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings draw us closer to Him?
    - What posture are we to take according to this section as we experience suffering?
  - D. Take a few minutes to quietly **listen to God**. What is He instructing you to do from what you're hearing? Share with each other what you're sensing.
  - E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
  - F. What key principles about prayer can you draw from this passage?
7. “About midnight praying and singing hymns to God...” – **Acts 16:16-40**
- A. **Pray** before beginning that God would speak to us and open our hearts to hear Him.
  - B. **Read** the entire passage completely through.
  - C. **Discussion questions:**
    - What do you like about the story? What is difficult or what don't you like?
    - What do you learn about people from this story? What do you learn about God?
    - What resources did Paul and Silas draw on to endure their suffering?
    - What fruit came as a result of their faithfulness through suffering?
  - D. Take a few minutes to quietly **listen to God**. What is He instructing you to do from what you're hearing? Share with each other what you're sensing.
  - E. Who is God asking you to **share** this story with? When will you do it? Share with the group.
  - F. What key principles about prayer can you draw from this passage?

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### Further Resources on Prayer and Suffering:

- Video **Louie Giglio “HOPE When Life Hurts Most”** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIXEryBRu6Q&list=PL5cFALyXLCD5us1PGelJslDg-nGJZ925x>
- Video **Louie Giglio “Fruitcake and Ice Cream”** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjOyul2R9bY&list=PL5cFALyXLCD5us1PGelJslDg-nGJZ925x&index=6>
- Powerpoint: “Why God Uses Problems”
- Powerpoint: “Cost of Discipleship”

### Bibliography:

- **A Path Through Suffering—Discovering the Relationship Between God's Mercy and Our Pain**, Elisabeth Elliot, 1990: Gospel Light, Ventura, California. Suffering is not for nothing. Elliot plots the treacherous passage through pain, grief, and loss, a journey most of us will make many times in our lives. Through it all, she says, there is only one reliable path, and if you walk it, you will see the transformation of all your losses, heart-breaks, and tragedies into something strong and purposeful.
- **Dealing with the Rejection and Praise of Man**, Bob Sorge, 2000: Oasis House, Lee's Summit, Missouri. Learn how to hold your heart before God in a way that pleases Him in the midst of both rejection and praise from people.
- **Destined for the Cross—Spiritual Warfare**, Paul E. Billheimer, 1986: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois. Through the cross is the throne of the universe, not

only for Christ Himself, but also the pathway to power, authority, and rulership for every believer.

- **Destined to Overcome—The Technique of Spiritual Warfare**, Paul E. Billheimer, 1982: Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The author shares the secrets of spiritual authority discovered from his own life and ministry. Learn how to exercise spiritual authority so you can overcome instead of buckling under the pressures of sin and satan.
- **Destined for the Throne—A Remarkable New Perspective on the Eternal Destiny of the Bride of Christ**, Paul E. Billheimer, 1975: Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The preparation and training of an eternal companion for His Son, the Bride of Christ, takes place through spiritual warfare and through the exercise of believing prayer. God does not need His childrens' prayers in order to work in the world; Christians need prayer in order to practice for their heavenly destiny.
- **Facing Danger: A Guide Through Risk**, Dr. Anna E. Hampton, 2016: Zendagi Press, New Prague, Minnesota. *Facing Danger* guides cross-cultural workers through a biblical discussion on risk, providing a spiritual and practical framework for working through cross-cultural risk assessment and management.
- **In the Eye of the Storm—A Day in the Life of Jesus**, Max Lucado, 1991: Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas. Max Lucado paints a picture of Christ's calm in what he calls "the second most stressful day in the life of our Savior." How did Jesus do it? Learn the secret of transforming panic into peace, stress into serenity, and chaos into control.
- **Living with Confidence in a Chaotic World—What on earth should we do now?**, Dr. David Jeremiah, 2009: Thomas Nelson Publishing, Nashville, TN. Confidence can be hard to come by these days. People are losing their jobs, their houses, and their life savings at an unprecedented rate. Violence, natural disasters, and moral depravity seem to be skyrocketing. In the midst of all this chaos, we need to know what on earth should we do now? Dr. Jeremiah brings a message of hope and confidence from the priceless counsel of the Word of God and shows us all that with the power and love of Almighty God, we can live with confidence in this age of turmoil.
- **Missions in Contexts of Violence**, Keith E. Eitel, editor, Evangelical Missiological Society Series Number 15, 2008: William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA. In an age of increasing concern for this type of missionary work, the missions community needs to hear from those that have reflected on the multifaceted elements involved in understanding the phenomenon of martyrdom-persecution-violence as it relates to telling the age-old Gospel story.
- **One Thousand Gifts—Finding Joy in What Really Matters**, Ann Voskamp, 2012: Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Ann shares her journey facing her own hard, dark days and hidden fears, and stumbling straight into the answer of life's great riddle: How do you discover joy—right here and now?
- **Pain, Perplexity, and Promotion—A Prophetic Interpretation of the Book of Job**, Bob Sorge, 1999: Oasis House, Greenwood, Missouri. The essential theme of the book of Job is to reveal how God takes a man who is blameless and upright, with a passion for God and a willing spirit, and promotes him to a higher spiritual plane than he could have ever imagined. Those who persevere in the pain and perplexity of the Job crucible are being prepared for renewed intimacy with God, and will be raised up to equip the end-time bride of Christ.
- **Prayers for Difficult Times—When You Don't Know What to Pray**, Ellyn Sanna, 2012: Barbour Publishing, Inc., Ulrichsville, Ohio. Prayer can transform the meaning of our circumstances, so that what had been a crisis can become an opportunity for God's creative work. Prayer can bring us peace even in the midst of the most difficult times.
- **Rewards of Being Reviled**, Bill Gothard, 2004: Institute in Basic Life Principles, Oakbrook, Illinois. Only as we understand the rewards that come from being reviled will

we be able to have the response Jesus called for when He said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake, Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” (Matt. 5:11-12)

- **The Fire of Delayed Answers—Are you waiting for your prayers to be answered?**, Bob Sorge, 2001: Oasis House, Greenwood, Missouri. Sometimes God delays the answers to our prayers in order to produce a greater maturity and fruitfulness in us. This book can help us clarify why the answers to our prayers may be delayed and gives practical advice for walking in faith and hope until God’s answers come.
- **The Insanity of God—A True Story of Faith Resurrected**, Nik Ripken with Gregg Lewis, 2013: B & H Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee. How does faith survive, let alone flourish in the places of life that are overcome with the darkness of sin, despair, and hopelessness? Nik shares what he learned from believers in persecution “how to follow Jesus, how to love Jesus, and how to walk with Him day by day.”
- **The Insanity of Obedience—Walking with Jesus in Tough Places**, Nik Ripken with Barry Stricker, 2014: B & H Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee. A bold challenge to global discipleship, as persecution becomes the norm for most believers, Ripken explores how we respond in the face of potentially overpowering circumstances with the level of faith and obedience that overcomes.
- **The Problem of Pain**, C. S. Lewis, 1996: Harper Collins, San Francisco, California. Why must we suffer? Find hope and wisdom to help heal a world hungering for a true understanding of human nature and the problem of pain.
- **Unto Death: Martyrdom, Missions, and the Maturity of the Church**, Dalton Thomas, 2018: FAI Mission.org, Israel. Thomas explores the implications of the resurrection, the imperatives of costly discipleship, and invites those who love and confess the Lordship of Jesus to invest their limited life in this age for an abundant life in the next—driven by the apostolic “blessed hope” befitting those who worship a crucified King and the slain Lamb.
- **Why God Calls Us to Dangerous Places**, Kate McCord, 2015: Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL. Why God Calls Us to Dangerous Places is about what is lost and what is gained when we follow God at any cost.

Further resources and connection with other prayer strategists are available through the Fellowship of Prayer Strategists and their website [www.prayerstrategists.net](http://www.prayerstrategists.net).