

LESSONS FROM THE RANCH
Rethinking Manure

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ... “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.” John 12:24 & 27

“We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.” Romans 5:3

- I. Intro: Manure as a metaphor...
 - A. What do we do with it?
 1. Pile it up: “Stinkn Thinkn”
 2. Burn it: “Self-medicate it”
 3. Bury it: “Hidden under the surface”
 4. Compost it: “Manure into fertilizer”

- II. Manure Happens! How do we deal with it? _____
 - *My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. Psalm 119:50*
 - A. Some suffering is _____ of life
 - B. Sometimes suffering is _____ of sin – by us or others.
 - C. Sometimes suffering _____ consequence of sin – just our bad choices.
 - D. Sometimes suffering is from _____ to teach us a lesson; to discipline us.

- III. We Need Manure to Mature!
 - *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1: 2,3,4*

- IV. Turning manure into fertilizer: _____ and _____

- V. Conclusion: Your manure management plan
 - *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*

This study guide is intended to help you learn more about suffering in the Bible and to be inspired by God's Word when you go through times of suffering, pain and despair. If you are going through a season of suffering, please let us bear the burden with you. Contact Joe Shafer at joes@tmumc.org

Monday -- Review your notes from yesterday's sermon. All of us suffer. Even Jesus suffered. Isaiah the prophet foretold this in the OT, (Isaiah 53:3) and Jesus lived it out all the way to the cross. But even Jesus had his comforters; his friends during his suffering. Likewise, Paul recounts his suffering (Romans 10, 11) that resulted in his mission. You may be suffering from illness, loneliness, finances, or death of a loved one. Don't suffer alone. This might be a time in your life when a Stephen Minister can be the friend you need right now. Give Joe a call.

Tuesday -- The apostle Paul said, *"That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."* 2 Timothy 1:12. It can a rather noble thing to suffer for Christ, but many of us suffer from other things, many of which are beyond our control. Why? It is the age old question. NT writers struggled with this question also (2 Corinthians 12:7)

Wednesday -- The Hebrews observed that the wicked would surely suffer for their evil ways (Psalm. 7:15, 16; 37:1-3; 73:12-20; 139:19), even though they might prosper for a time (Job 21:28-33). The suffering of the righteous posed a problem. It was explained variously as a way for God to gain peoples' attention (Job 33:14; 36:15), to correct sin into obedience (2 Chronicles 20:9, 10; Mal. 3:3), to develop or refine character (Job 23:10; Psalm 66:10). Ultimately, the writers consigned themselves to trust in God's sometimes hidden wisdom (Job 42:2, 3; Psalm 135:6). Into an evil world God sent His only Son. God is Himself touched by the suffering of Christ on the cross. Christian writers in the New Testament incorporated the trials of Christ into their existing Old Testament understanding of suffering. The purposefulness and necessity of suffering in the life of the Son of God (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22) aided them in coping with their own.

Thursday -- The early Christians recognized the inevitability of their suffering. As Christ suffered, so would they (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Corinthians 12:26; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12, 13). Continuing His mission, they would incur tribulation (Mark 13:12, 13; Revelations 17:6; 20:14) because the world hates the disciples as much as it did their Lord (see John 15:18; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 1 John 3:11, 12). Suffering for His sake was counted a privilege (Acts 5:41; 1 Corinthians 11:32; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8).

Friday -- New Testament writers realized there were other types of suffering than that incurred as they lived on Christian mission. These are to be endured patiently rather than rebelliously (1 Thessalonians 3:3; James 1:2-4) because God is working His purpose out in His children's lives (Romans 8:28-29). Christians can grow stronger spiritually through trials (Romans 6:4-8; 1 Peter 4:1; Hebrews 12:11) and share Christ's ultimate triumph (Mark 13:9; John 16:33; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Revelations 5:5; 20:9, 14, 15) even now as they experience daily victories (Romans 8:37; 1 John 2:13-14; 1 Peter 5:10). Therefore, sufferings give rise to hope (Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:3), for no present suffering compares with the rewards that await the faithful follower of Christ (Romans 8:17-18).