

# Rejoice!

The New Testament was not written in an ivory tower. Most of its authors and its first readers were people in deep suffering. Their pressures and persecutions were more severe than most of us will ever experience. Thus when the Bible tells us how to handle difficult times, it's speaking from experience. Its wisdom is thoroughly life-tested.

What do the New Testament writers consistently emphasize for those who are suffering? "Rejoice!" "Be glad!" "Consider yourselves blessed!"

Strange advice? These sufferers give us lots of reasons why rejoicing is a healthy, productive, and reasonable response to difficulties.

1. Suffering produces a whole garden of beautiful fruit within us, such as endurance, character, and hope (Romans 5:1-5). It strengthens and refines our faith—that essential connection between God and us (1 Peter 1:6-7). It produces maturity and gradually makes us complete in Christ, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4).
2. Suffering is our best chance to glorify God (1 Peter 4:16). The closer Jesus got to the Crucifixion, the more He talked about glorifying His Father. His greatest, most enduring work was accomplished on the Cross. There God's love was displayed most purely and undeniably.

It will likely be so in our lives as well. Suffering will probably be our greatest chance to glorify God in a world that desperately needs to witness God's reality in our life.

3. Suffering is part of releasing what is temporary and grasping what is eternal and of greater value. While our outer person is decaying, our inner person—the real "us" that will live forever—is growing stronger and stronger, day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).
4. When we suffer for Jesus and for the spread of the gospel, we have been granted a great privilege! We stand with the greatest saints of all the ages (Matthew 5:11-12; Hebrews 11). Far from being disgraced, we are highly honored to be counted worthy of suffering for Christ (Acts 5:40-42; 1 Peter 4:16). We have become part of His great work to save the world (1 Peter 4:13). Paul said of his own sufferings, "In my flesh I am completing what is still lacking in Christ's afflictions for his body" (Colossians 1:24, para.). As we suffer, we carry on what Jesus started.
5. Suffering helps us enjoy more intimate fellowship with Jesus (Philippians 3:7-11). The One with whom we walk face-to-face was "a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3). Suffering was a major part of His life experience. When we suffer, we share a deeper bond with Him.
6. Our present suffering can't compare, either in degree or in duration, to the joy we will know when Christ takes us to himself forever (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Rejoice! Suffering draws us closer to Jesus. As we trust Him, He turns even suffering into great blessing!

*We will suffer,  
but we need not fear suffering.*

Hymns:

[The Blood-washed Pilgrim](#)  
[I Rejoice in Your Purpose Today](#)

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