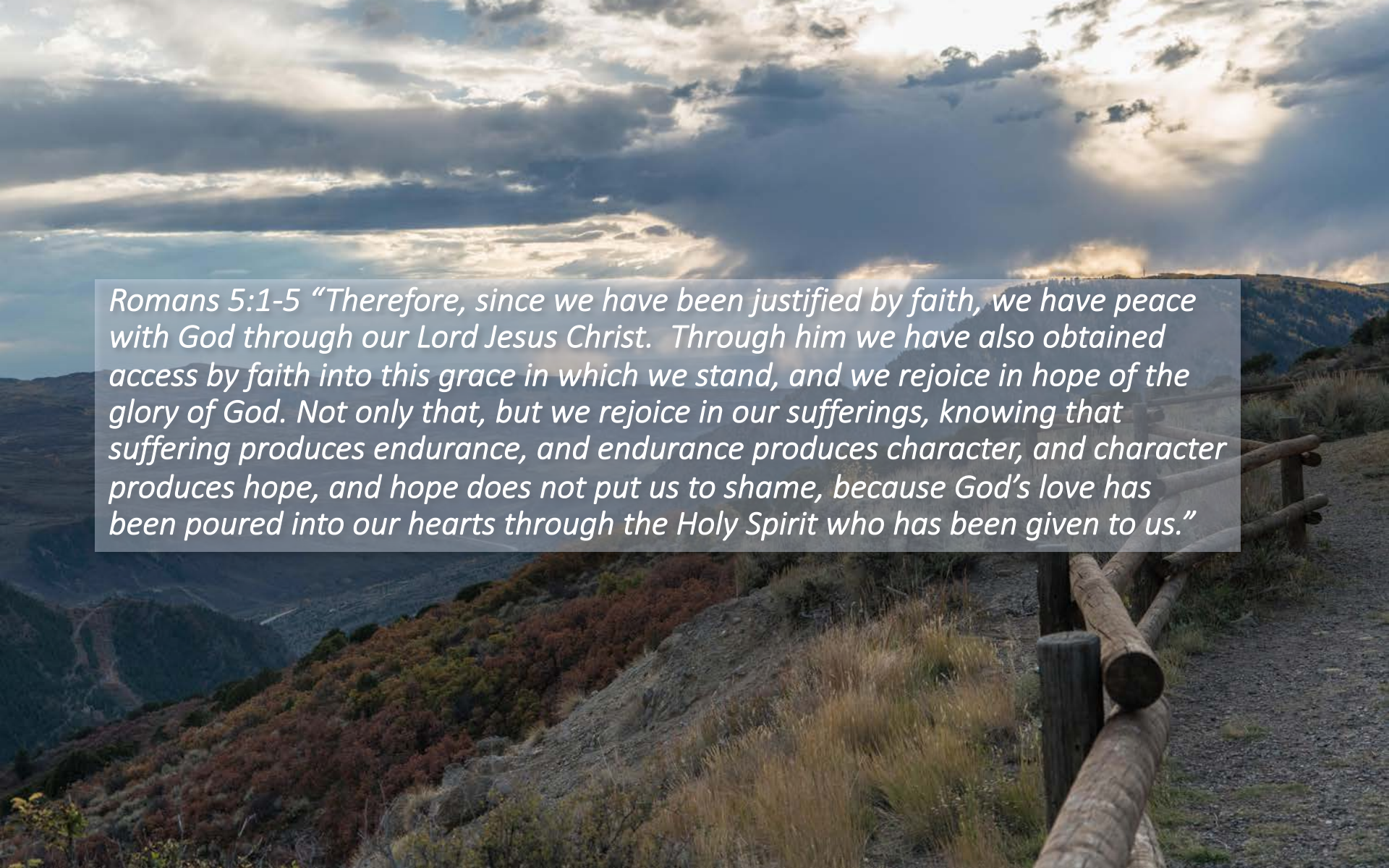
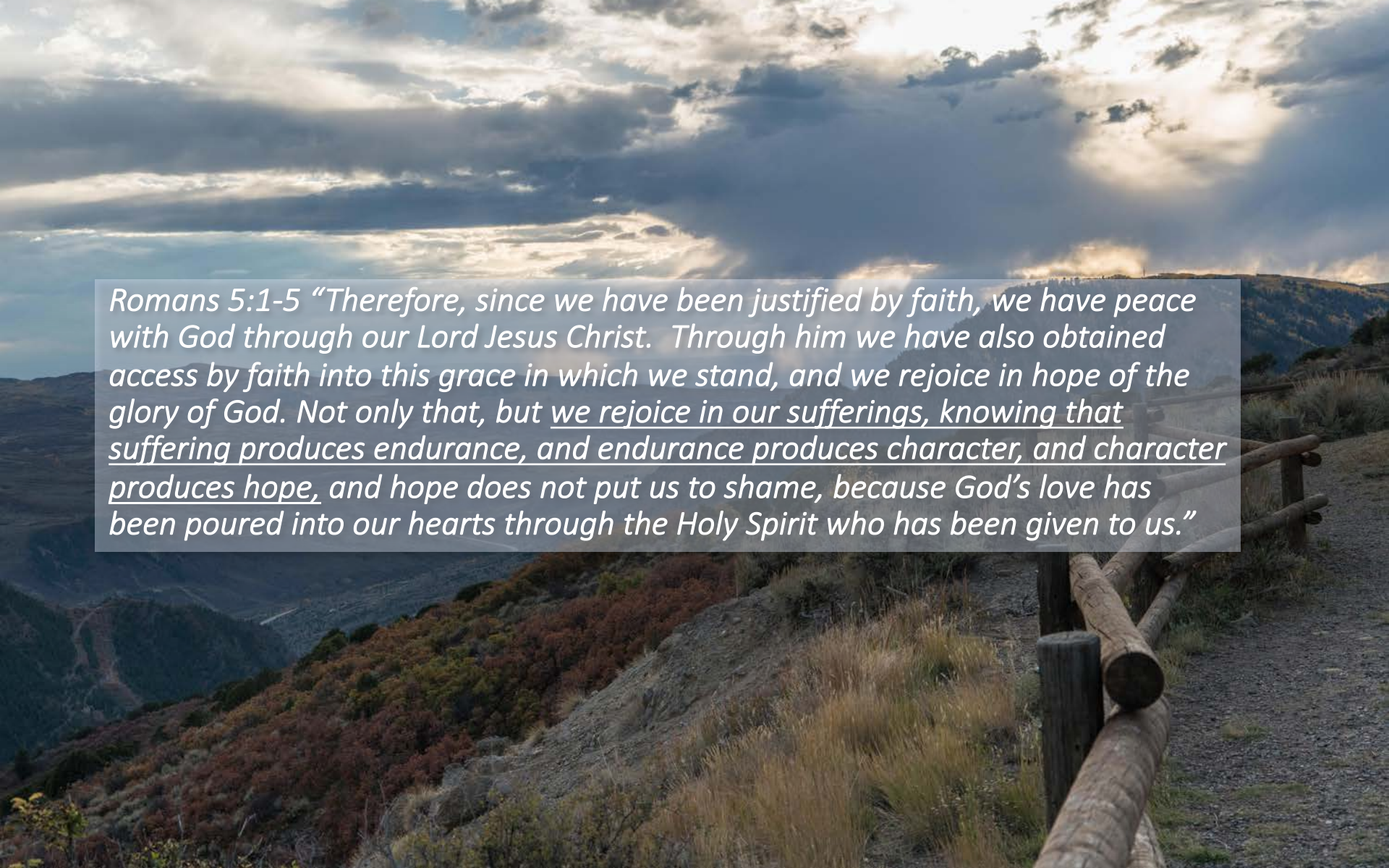




From Suffering to Hope:  
Empowered by God's Word for the Journey



*Romans 5:1-5 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*



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**Hope**

**Character**

**Perseverance/  
Endurance**

**Suffering**

*James 1: 2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*



## A Journey Together from Suffering to Hope: Four Scripturally-grounded Spiritual Steps

### **Week 1: Suffering**

- Biblical response to suffering (and its contrast)
- Spiritual practice in suffering

### **Week 2: Perseverance**

- Scriptural portrait of perseverance (and its contrast)
- Spiritual practices integral to building perseverance

### **Week 3: Character**

- Scriptural portrait of character (and its contrast)
- Scriptural practices in the development of Christ-centered character

### **Week 4: Hope**

- Scriptural portrait of hope (and its contrast)
- Scriptural practices cultivating hope (and joy)

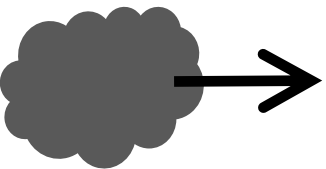


## **Week 1. Suffering**

# Suffering



*Fall → evil in us & evil around us →*



**Christ Follower**



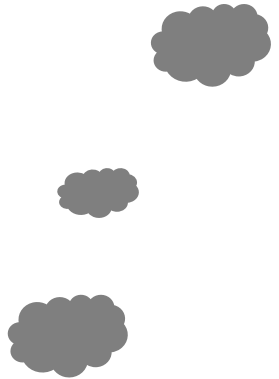
**Moment to moment choice**

*More difficult path:  
Seeing and entrusting suffering to God*

*Practices: Lament, worship (others to be discussed)*

*Easier path:  
Denying suffering, not entrust God with suffering (relying on self, running from God)*

*Practices: Avoidance, withdrawal...*



## Point 1: The First Step from Suffering to Hope is Seeing and Entrusting God with Suffering

- We are called to SEE (i.e., not avoid) and ENTRUST God with suffering.
  - 1Peter 5:7 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."
  - Matthew 16:24 "Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
- Seeing suffering is seeing it as it really is – evil. "Rejoicing in suffering" is NOT feigned happiness, denying there is evil and/or pain, or being stoic. Entrusting suffering to God is declaring what is good DESPITE the evil of suffering:
  - God hates evil and the suffering it causes. He has overcome all evil through the death of Jesus. When Christ returns, all evil will be destroyed. Matthew 16:27 "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done."
  - The good that He is working out far surpasses the power of evil and suffering. 2Corinthians 4:17, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."



## Point 2: Suffering's Impact is Unavoidable, We Have Two Pathways of Response

- Suffering has a power/impact that, like the law of conservation of momentum, must go somewhere.
- Impact has two potential pathways in our hearts (and in communities/cultures):
  1. Turning to God (Matthew 16:24 "...take up his cross and follow me") and following the path outlined in Romans 5:3-5 that builds of our characters in Him and leads to "God's love being poured into our hearts"
  2. Turning inward (self preservation), a path where suffering distorts our souls and resurfaces as sin, causing alienation from God and others, e.g., the repressed pain of our loneliness bubbling up into addictions such as pornography, e.g., the ignored suffering of the mentally ill man we pass in the streets resulting in our increasing hardness of heart toward the suffering of others. Matthew 16:25 "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"
- Experiences of suffering often travel down both pathways – the more they head down one, the less down the other.

### **Point 3: Mourning that is Entrusted to the Lord in Prayer – Lament – is a Central Spiritual Practice in Suffering**

- In allowing ourselves to fully see suffering (take up our cross), we allow ourselves to rightfully mourn; mourning that is entrusted to the Lord in prayer is lament
- Over 40% of the Psalms are lament
- Matthew 5:4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (See Pat McLeod’s article on mourning)
- Praying into psalms of lament is an important spiritual practice. Psalms of lament generally have four movements:
  1. turning to God,
  2. bringing the suffering/the complaint,
  3. asking for God’s intervention,
  4. choosing to trust God

# Suffering

*Point 1. First step from suffering to hope is seeing and entrusting God with suffering.*

*Point 2. Suffering's impact is unavoidable, and we have two pathways of response.*

*Point 3. Mourning that is entrusted to the Lord in prayer is lament – a central spiritual practice in suffering*

*Fall → evil in us & evil around us →*

Christ  
Follower

Moment to  
moment choice

*Easier path:*

*Denying suffering, not entrust God with suffering (relying on self, running from God)*

*Practices: Avoidance, withdrawal...*



## Group Questions and Practices for the Week

### **Group Questions**

- *Name examples of ways we can avoid suffering in and around us and/or not bring suffering to God?*
- *Why are we sometimes uncomfortable with or reluctant to lament?*
- *What do we learn about God in the fact that He invites us to lament?*

### **Weekly Spiritual Practices**

- *Take an example of suffering you are experiencing (however big or small) and pray into it using Psalm 13. Read all of Psalm 13 each day, and meditate and journal on one successive verse for at least 10 min, listening to God's words and allowing them to voice your suffering and speak into it: Monday Ps 13:1, Tues Ps 13:2, Wedn Ps 13:3, Thurs Ps 13:4, Fri Ps 13:5, Sat Ps 13:6.*
- *Consider reading and reflecting on Pat McCleod's words on mourning.*
- *Consider memorizing Romans 5:3-5*