

Principle #4
Teacher's Notes

Hurtin' for Certain

God REDEEMS suffering for our GOOD and His Glory

How do I Deal with Suffering?

PRINCIPLE #4

HURTIN' FOR CERTAIN

God redeems suffering for our good and His glory

Ask: How do I deal with suffering?

Read: Genesis 37-50 "The Life of Joseph"

Theme: God redeems suffering for our good and His glory

Live It: God uses suffering in the context of sport to make us more like Christ

Teachers note: Each section of this talk could easily be treated as a full talk by itself. So don't put the pressure on yourself to fully expound on each bullet point. We are introducing new categories of thinking for our audience and you won't be able to say everything you want to say to them about each point. Say what absolutely needs to be said, and then move on to the next point.

Review Principles 1-3. *The question we are answering in Principle #4 is "How do I deal with suffering (in my own life and others)?" How does God encourage us to handle the suffering that comes as a result of painfully difficult circumstances in our lives? God gives us the life of a man in the Bible—Joseph—to help us lean into God instead of running from him when bad things happen. You met him in Pregame, but by way of review...*

Give them a quick overview of Joseph's trials contained in Genesis 37-50: Pit, Potiphar's Property, Prison, Prominence, Provider, and Proclaim.

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|-------------------------|---|
| Genesis 37 | Joseph has dreams, dad's favorite son, brothers got jealous and put him in a pit. Sold as a slave, he becomes Potiphar's property. |
| Genesis 39:1-15 | Potiphar's wife accuses him of rape and he ends up in prison. While in prison, he interprets a dream for Pharaoh and gets released |
| Genesis 41:39-43 | Joseph is 2nd in command of Egypt and in charge of all grain, a position of prominence in a time of famine (13 years after his dream). During the famine, he provides grain for all the people, including his brothers. |
| Genesis 45:1-7 | Joseph proclaims himself to his brothers and forgives them for their treachery |

With all that from Joseph's life as a backdrop, let's consider three principles regarding suffering in our own lives and how to process it. Today we're going to unpack the reality of suffering, our response to suffering, and God's redemption of our suffering. First, let's look at...

I. Reality: Life outside the garden is broken and inevitably involves suffering

I've mentioned suffering several times already; what do we mean by suffering? Simply put...

Suffering: the pain that you experience as a result of a trial

Pain: something you feel that hurts

Trial: something circumstantially difficult that happens to you

Something happens that hurts whether emotionally, physically, or psychologically and the resulting pain causes suffering. Suffering is such a heavy word, but let's be careful to understand that whether pain comes into your life through something we would consider major or something relatively "smaller," it's still suffering and shouldn't be minimized. Don't try to compare yourself to others or even to Joseph. Everybody deals with trials and pain and suffering at all different levels.

Notice that it's tied to "life outside the garden." What do we mean by that? We already talked about Genesis 3 and the consequences of what is called "The Fall" in the Principles Intro talk. Before that moment, there was no suffering. Pain and suffering are a direct result of sin entering our lives and the world, a disruption stemming from our broken relationship with God. Let's look at letter A in your notes to find out who the architect of suffering actually is...

3 min

A. Satan is the author of brokenness and suffering

Satan is God's enemy and he continues to stand against all that is good and all the blessing that God has for people. The Bible tells us some important things about Satan's ongoing role in the world.

He has limited power but his influence is great *(Though Satan's ultimate demise is already secured because of the Cross and resurrection of Christ, God is still allowing Satan to have influence in the world for a period of time.)*

His mission is to steal, kill and destroy *(John 10:10 He sets himself against you and what God has for you. 1 Peter 5:8 says that "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.")*

He shouldn't be used as an excuse for your own poor choices *When you stay out all night before an exam that you haven't prepared for, you can't say, "The devil is just trying to stop me from doing well in school!" No. You chose to go party, and now you take the consequences for the bad choice. Or ask if there are any personal experiences with this.*

In fact, while it's important to understand that Satan is the author and originator of suffering in the world, it's worth noting also that...

B. Suffering is complex and comes at us from many different directions

Teachers note: Make sure to tie in Joseph's life in this section like we suggest below.

Personal choices *(Sometimes the suffering that comes into our lives comes as a result of our own choices like we talked about above. In Joseph's case, he may have opened door for his brother's evil by talking about dreams that he would rule over them.)*

Others' choices *(Sometimes the suffering that comes into our lives comes as a result of others decisions: coaches behavior, parents divorcing, friends betraying in some way. Joseph's brothers gave in to their own jealousy and chose to sell him into slavery.)*

Different circumstances *(Sometimes suffering occurs because of circumstances that aren't directly related to any choice at all: injury, sickness, accident, etc. What are the chances that a group of slave traders would happen to come by just as the brothers were trying to decide what to do with Joseph? Or that by the end of the narrative a famine in the land would bring his brothers back into his presence.)*

Review: Satan is the author of brokenness and suffering, and suffering is complex and comes at us from many different directions, but ultimately...

The challenge is not simply to avoid or manage suffering but to lean into God when we encounter it.

The title of this talk is called "Hurtin' For Certain" because no matter where it comes from— it's guaranteed that in this life you WILL suffer—the question remains: "How will you respond to suffering/pain/hardship when it comes?" There are really only two main responses—we'll either move toward God by faith or away from Him in any number of ways to cope. To choose God when the heat gets turned up, we need to know/be reminded of some truths about Him. What do we need to know in order to respond properly. Let's look at Roman numeral two...

6 min

II. Response: Trusting God's sovereignty is the best response to suffering

So then what do we mean by "sovereignty"? Simply put...

Sovereignty: to reign or rule over all.

2 min

In this case, it means that God is in control of everything that happens in the world; nothing happens to me or you that He doesn't first allow. Everything passes through His hands first before it takes place.

God has a different perspective on what happens in your life and therefore He has a very different view of what constitutes "good" and "bad" in your life. He's in control, He's all powerful and He wins in the end

The truth of Him being sovereign over all that happens leads to several important truths for us.

A. God's love and power anchor His followers even in the face of suffering

God promises to bring about "good" in every circumstance for those who love Him

Romans 8:28 says that "God works all things together for good, for those who love God."

All means all, which means that no matter what has or will happen to you, God will take it and you can be sure it will turn out good in the end.

God doesn't always allow us to understand why we suffer or how it will work out

Not only will it turn out good, but someday it will be clear why it happened, whether in this life or the next. That's the catch. Sometimes in the midst of, or after suffering, you'll have a clear sense of why it was allowed into your life (Give example.) However, sometimes you won't know for many, many years...many times things will happen that you won't understand until you are in the direct presence of God.

Joseph was given a glimpse into his future as a young man through the dreams God gave him of being a leader one day, but for the next 13 years he experiences the nightmare of what probably felt like abandonment by God as he tries to remain faithful in the midst of being misunderstood, misrepresented and mistreated.

God knows what He is doing even when we don't

In Isaiah 55:8,9, God reminds us that His ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts and that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, His thoughts than our thoughts. It's good to remember that God is God and we are not, that just because something doesn't make sense to us, just because we think this should be happening differently, doesn't mean that God should listen to us! He knows what's best and how to make all things work together for good, even when none of it seems to make sense to us. (Possible personal story here?)

5 min

Teachers note: Make sure to tie in Joseph's life in this next section like we suggest below.

B. How we respond to suffering reveals our trust in God's promises

Nothing reflects more accurately your trust in God than how you move through suffering. The truest measure of your professional character is what happens to it when you face adversity. Do you still believe and act on what you were taught when the heat gets turned up or do you quickly toss it aside and revert back to your own default settings? So here's the choices we typically face when we suffer...

Bitter or Better? *When bad things happen, you can easily become bitter and pouty because of what's happening. Or you can choose to trust that God is in control and pray that He would use the pain of the suffering to grow something new in you, to make you stronger, to strengthen your own faith. Joseph continued to submit Himself to doing the right thing, even when it seemed like he had every reason to turn his back on God and take matters into his own hands.*

Revenge or Release? *When you suffer and feel pain—especially at the hands of someone else—it's easy to lash out or to try getting revenge. It's natural to project your own pain onto someone else, to bring others down because you are down. But in Christ you can also choose to do*

5 min

what is unthinkable in the world's eyes: you can release the person from their debt to you. You can forgive them. You can turn toward God again and ask Him to give you strength to not react, to not get your own revenge. You can choose to trust God when He exhorts us in Romans 12:19 "never to avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God...for 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." Jesus, when he was being mocked and beaten, eventually being nailed to a cross, never struck back, even though he could have called down angels to defend himself. (1 Peter 2:21-23) And Joseph, instead of having his brothers killed for what they did to him, instead feeds them, loves them, and ultimately has them move into his life of privilege with him. You need the Spirit of God to respond this way, but it's always the right route to go!!

Medicate or Meditate? *When the discomfort of suffering arrives, medicating the pain is the easiest thing in the world to do. We want the pain to go away, so we do things to try and feel better. You know the list: sex, alcohol, spending, being with people incessantly, being alone and withdrawing. We all draw from the same general list but it looks different for all of us. But we can also choose to meditate on God's word and His promises. We can pray more, reflect on what is true, ask for relief of the pain, healing for the pain, growth through the pain. Maybe the very reason God is allowing the pain has something to do with us knowing Him better in the midst of it. Joseph could have easily justified getting with Potiphar's wife after all that had happened to him; instead, he ran from her and still wound up falsely accused and put in prison for it. But God met him there, and ultimately blessed him for his choices to trust in Him.*

But you don't just wake up one day and trust God in this way...you don't come to a 45 minute talk on the subject and become immediately completely different. It's one small choice at a time to trust God with the details of your life, and...

Trusting God in the midst of suffering is a continual process that begins today and continues the rest of our earthly lives.

Everyone of us is in a different place in our relationship to suffering. We need to cut others slack as they go through suffering, maybe we just sit with them like Job's friends did as he suffered. We also need to give ourselves grace as we learn to trust God to new levels during each new trial that we experience.

Finally...

III. Redemption: God will redeem our suffering for our good and His glory

Redeem: To take something broken and through payment make it whole again

Huge theological concept worth taking time to understand deeply. For now, understand that Jesus' death on the cross functioned as a payment (His blood) for what was broken (the universe) and satisfied God's wrath against the world. He basically paid the price on our behalf even though humans created the mess in the first place and did nothing to deserve His grace. Though He redeemed our lives on the cross, His death did not automatically wipe out all the suffering in the world in the present. He promises that on a day in the future, every tear will be wiped away and all suffering will become a distant memory, but for now, while Satan is still allowed to influence the world, suffering is a part of our experience. But even now, God is "redeeming" or "buying back" our temporary suffering. How?

2 min

A. Suffering is a refining process that can produce growth in our lives

There is no wasted pain. There are no wasted tears. There is a point and a purpose to it all. He uses suffering in our lives to help us grow in a number of ways. The first thing suffering does is...

It will reveal character

Nothing brings out the real us more than suffering. Hard times expose what's really inside us and reveals our faith or lack of faith in God. We understand this intuitively as sports medical professionals: we learn who we are as a professional when the heat gets turned up in a competition—we find out what our strengths and weaknesses are, whether what we've learned has become part of muscle memory, whether we have the ability to keep the athletes healthy or not.

It can bring about Christ-likeness and maturity

But when we choose to trust Jesus in the midst of suffering, somehow we become more like him. As we share in His sufferings, we acquire His character in place of our own, we respond like he would respond instead of how we would normally respond, we grow up and see the world as He sees it instead of just the surface reading most of us carry around within ourselves.

It can strengthen our faith for the next challenge

Physical muscles get strengthened as they repeatedly move through resistance over time. In the same way, our faith "muscles" grow as we apply faith under difficult circumstances—in this case, as we trust God in the midst of suffering. Each time we trust God with our circumstances, we grow stronger in our ability to withstand difficulties and trials and our faith is strengthened. (Personal example?)

But not only will we grow personally, but we will put God on display in a way that draws attention to Him...

Teachers note: Make sure to tie in Joseph's life in this next section like we suggest below.

B. God's greatness is reflected

God is the one being in the universe who can justifiably be all about Himself if He chooses—it's built into the very definition of being called "God"! Crazy thing is, when we trust God in the midst of our own suffering, He gets put on display and His strength and power get revealed through our lives.

A couple of things that are true regarding God's use of our suffering for His aims...

God uses the suffering and details of our individual lives to bring about His ultimate aims in history

One of the great advantages of seeing your story as part of God's story is that we know how God's story ends. God is moving history toward a certain conclusion, one in which Satan and all enemies of God are finally and fully destroyed and where He will reign obviously supreme and suffering will finally end.

God transforms the sin and suffering of our individual lives into something beautiful in His perfect timing

Genesis 50:20- (summarize how Joseph's story concludes) Joseph has been elevated into a position of power, he is reunited with his brothers and helps save Israel from extinction due to famine. God takes the choices of others and reworks them for His purposes. He's putting all the moments and choices made in this biography of these peoples' lives and puts them back together piece by piece in a way that "redeems" all that has happened. He rewrites the story with a surprise

4 min

4 min

ending full of grace and truth and unexpected mercy--kingdom stuff that His people get to experience when they choose to trust Him in the midst of whatever happens!

God uses the greatest suffering (the cross) to bring about the greatest good for all of humanity (the redemption of all things)

Teacher's Note: Maybe use this "tapestry illustration" or some other way of closing that captures the process of trusting God in the midst of suffering: *When you look only at the back side of a tapestry it seems like a mess and a mistake...random threads tied in random patterns that don't make a clear picture at all. But when you flip it over and look at the front side you see the beautiful picture that is clear and amazing. The problem is that we may only be allowed to see the back side of suffering and not glimpse the God side until later in this life or maybe not even until the afterlife.*

4 min **Transition to Live it Page:**
Tell the students to take a 3-4 minutes and look at the chart on the Live it page and circle on the chart what their default response tends to be when they experience suffering and let them write answers to the questions.

Head to Lab after they are done with the Live It page.

Principle #4
Hurtin' for Certain

Live it Page

What is your default response to personal suffering?

BITTERNESS	REVENGE	MEDICATE
<i>Self-centered</i>	<i>Hurting others</i>	<i>Abusing alcohol</i>
<i>Entitled</i>	<i>Hurting self</i>	<i>Abusing sex</i>
<i>Complain</i>	<i>Trash talk</i>	<i>Social media addiction</i>
<i>Make excuses</i>	<i>Hate speech</i>	<i>Over training</i>
<i>Pouting</i>	<i>Gossip</i>	<i>Overly competitive</i>
<i>Constantly judging</i>	<i>Passive revenge</i>	<i>Binge eating</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Other</i>

What could it look like to respond differently the next time you experience suffering whether in sport or life?

What did you learn about God's perspective on suffering?

What about embracing suffering through God's perspective is most difficult for you?

Ask God's Spirit to enable you to deal with suffering in a way that would honor and glorify him.



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Principle #4: Hurtin' for Certain

What is the question we are asking for this Principle?

- How do I deal with pain?

What is the main point(s) of this Principle?

- Pain is guaranteed in life. It is God's instrument for developing our character and helping our athletes walk through it.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a time you walked through suffering and saw God's hand through that?
2. Look at 1 Peter 1: 6-7 together in your group . . . what positive results do we see from a Christian who allows God to use suffering in his or her life to develop character?
 - a. Have you seen yourself grow through suffering and be faithful in the midst of it?
 - b. Have you been able to help athletes become better through suffering?
 - c. How can we respond to those who become bitter?
3. How do you encourage Christian athletes who are going through a serious injury?
 - a. What about athletes who are not Christians?
4. How do you personally deal with suffering in your life?
5. Thinking about what you have learned today, what are some of God's promises that you can comfort yourself, a colleague, or an injured athlete who is going through tough times?

*“We can't choose our trials,
but we can choose
our responses to them.”*

Principle Breakdown Grid #4-Hurtin' for Certain

What is the question we are asking for this Principle?

How do I deal with suffering?

What is the main point(s) of this Principle?

We need to trust God and His sovereignty in the midst of the pain and suffering that everyone is guaranteed to experience in this life.

What are the main words that would sum up this Principle?

- Trust (in God- He is sovereign over all things)
- Sovereign
- Suffering

If the audience only gets one thing out of this principle what should that be?

We can't choose our trials, but we can choose our responses to them.

Why is this the Biblical text for this principle? How does it illustrate the point?

- Joseph's life contains lots of unexplained trials even when he is obedient to God.
- You get to see his godly response to suffering and how the spotlight is on God's faithfulness.

What should be some of your first words to your audience as you introduce this Principle?

- Quick review of the first 3 Principles.
- The question we are asking for Principle 4 is "How do I deal with suffering?"
- Attention getting story or illustration about suffering in life. Could be a personal story or the story of an athlete or other person.

What are we asking the audience to consider changing about the way they serve?

- See their trials as an opportunity to trust God in the midst of pain and suffering.
- Believe that He has a higher purpose for your problems.

What is the most challenging thing about teaching this Principle?

- *Talking about trials can be a sensitive issue for people with deep & present pain.*
- *Be gentle in the way you challenge them to respond to their trials.*

How do you go about picking examples to use for this Principle?

- Personal examples can help connect your audience to you as the communicator.
- Also use relevant stories of athletes and sports medicine personnel if possible.

Who is your audience and how can you connect the material with them?

- *Has this team or group of professionals that you are talking to been through a rough season or faced tragedy recently? Possibly acknowledge that or at least be aware of it if possible.*