



## **Beyond the Sermon**

A Sermon Application Guide

Title: Growth Through Suffering

This guide offers a simple tool for those wanting to take the next step with Sunday's message. You can print it to study on your own or use it in a group to experience transformation together.

### **Message Theme**

How Forgiveness Breaks the Cycle of Evil

### **Prayer Focus**

*Father, thank You for being nearby, especially when I face things I don't understand. You're the source of all goodness and truth, and I trust Your presence even amid confusion and pain. Help me recognize my battle is not against people but against the forces of evil that seek to divide and destroy. Teach me to forgive as You forgave, stand firm in righteousness, and worship even when answers don't come. Strengthen my spirit and guide my steps according to Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.*

### **Key Truths**

One sign of spiritual growth is learning not to take offense. Many Western Christians tend to view Christianity as simply about dying and going to Heaven, but that wasn't the focus of Jesus' teachings. His mission was to bring the Kingdom of God to Earth here and now, a message He preached so effectively that His disciples carried it forward.

A challenging truth of faith is that God called us to suffer for righteousness. Christians are commanded to do what's right, even when it brings hardship. Jesus gave us the perfect example: living without fault yet being killed for it. Through His life and death, He showed us how to forgive, even in the face of injustice.

Though it may seem like our struggles are with the people around us, they're not our true enemy. The Bible teaches that our battle isn't against flesh and blood but against the Devil. Unable to touch God directly, Satan targets us, God's beloved children, and manipulates us to make harmful decisions.

We often find ourselves caught between two perspectives. On one hand, we make our own decisions and then blame God when we face the consequences. On the other hand, we assume God can do anything He pleases without limits. However, that's not the case, as God has chosen to limit Himself through His Word.

### **Practical Application**

Never let go of the truth because of things you don't understand. There will always be mysteries beyond our comprehension, but they don't alter the unchanging truth about who God is. When we face situations we disagree with or don't understand, we can choose to worship. The Bible repeatedly shows us this example,

setting aside our feelings and limited understanding to honor and glorify God through worship.

God is not the author of brokenness. He's the creator of all that is good and beautiful. And He's promised you this unchanging truth: He will never leave you or forsake you.

Memorize or write down verses that affirm God's character and promises, such as Hebrews 13:5 ("*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*") or Psalm 119:105 ("*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*"). When faced with things you don't understand, revisit these truths to anchor your faith.

## Reference Verses

- Matthew 5:43-45
- Psalms 119:165
- Mark 1:14
- Acts 1:3, 28:30-31, 10:38
- 1 Peter 2:15-21
- 2 Timothy 2:12
- Ephesians 6:12
- Romans 12:14-21
- Hebrews 12:15
- Genesis 9:6
- Proverbs 19:3
- Luke 10:18-20
- Job 16:12-14, 9:21-24, 35:2, 34:5, 40:19
- John 10:10
- James 1:17
- Deuteronomy 29:29

## Declarations

- I choose to forgive, even when it's difficult, because Christ forgave me.
- My battle is not against people but against the enemy, and I will stand firm in God's truth and righteousness.
- I will worship God in the midst of mystery, trusting His Word even when I don't understand His ways.

## What's Next?

This message challenges us to live out the core of the Christian faith by actively practicing forgiveness, understanding that suffering is often part of the godly life, and choosing to trust God's character and plan, even when we don't understand our circumstances. Applying these principles daily can transform our relationships, deepen our faith, and allow God's grace to work powerfully in our lives. The following steps provide a practical framework for incorporating these truths into your daily experience.

First, make a conscious effort to cultivate a forgiving heart and practice active forgiveness. This means beginning each day by acknowledging and receiving God's forgiveness, examining your heart for any resentment or bitterness, and making a deliberate decision to forgive those who have wronged you. It's not about denying the hurt, but choosing to release the offender from the debt and praying for them, asking God to bless them. Remember, forgiveness is a daily choice, not a feeling, and it's essential to check your heart regularly, especially when you feel offended.

Second, embrace the reality that suffering for righteousness is often part of the Christian walk and respond to it with a Christ-like attitude. This involves recognizing that people, though used by the enemy, are not our true enemies, and that God loves them. Instead of retaliating or harboring resentment, choose to bless those who persecute you, following Jesus' example of praying for those who mistreat you. Actively resist the temptation to repay evil for evil, and as much as it depends on you, strive to live peaceably with everyone, trusting that God will ultimately make all things right.

Finally, commit to deepening your trust in God, especially when you face situations you don't understand. This means refusing to throw away what you know to be true about God's character – His love, faithfulness, and sovereignty – because of your current pain or confusion. When you're tempted to blame God, remember that He is not the author of evil, and that He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. Instead of turning away from God in your suffering, run to Him, seek His presence, and trust that He is working even in the midst of your pain, even if you do not see it.

### **Conclusion:**

By consistently applying these three steps – cultivating a forgiving heart, embracing suffering with a Christ-like attitude, and deepening your trust in God – you can live a life that reflects the heart of the Gospel. This journey will not always be easy, but it will lead to greater spiritual maturity, deeper intimacy with God, and a powerful testimony to the world around you.

## **Scripture References**

### **Growth Through Suffering**

**Mark 11:25 NKJV** “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

**Luke 11:4 NIV** Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

**Matthew 5:43-45 NKJV** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

**Psalms 119:165 KJV** Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

**Luke 23:34 NKJV** Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

**Mark 1:15 MSG** "Time's up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message."

**Acts 1:3 NKJV** ...being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

**Acts 8:12 NKJV** But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

**Acts 28:30-31 NKJV** Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God...

**1 Peter 2:15 NKJV** For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men...

**1 Peter 2:18-21 NKJV** Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...

**2 Timothy 2:12 KJV** If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...

**Ephesians 6:12 TLB** For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.

**Romans 12:14 NKJV** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

**Romans 12:17-18 NIV** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

**Romans 12:19-21 NIV** Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Hebrews 12:15 TNT** See to it that no one falls away from God's grace, that no bitterness springs up to cause trouble and spoil everybody's life.

**Genesis 9:6 NKJV** "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed..."

**Romans 13:1-7 NKJV REF**

**Proverbs 19:3 NIV** A person's own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord.

**Psalms 138:2 NKJV** For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

**Luke 10:19 NKJV** Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

**James 4:7 NKJV** Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

**Job 16:12-14 NKJV** I was at ease, but He has shattered me; He also has taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces; He has set me up for His target, His archers surround me. He pierces my heart and does not pity; He pours out my gall on the ground. He breaks me with wound upon wound; He runs at me like a warrior.

**Job 9:22-24 NIV** It is all the same; that is why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.' When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent. When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?

**1 Peter 5:8-9 NKJV** ... the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...

**Job 35:2 EHV** "My righteousness is greater than God's"?

**Job 34:5 NKJV** ...'I am righteous, But God has taken away my justice...'

**Job 40:14 NKJV** Then I will also confess to you That your own right hand can save you.

**John 10:10 NKJV** The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

**James 1:17 NKJV** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

**Hebrews 13:5 NKJV** "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

**Deuteronomy 29:29 NKJV** "The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever..."