

## This Earthen Vessel: The Suffering Body Discussion Guide

### Summary:

No matter how much we try to avoid it, the fact that you are human being means that you are going to suffer. Every one of us suffers in small and big ways. Sometimes it's an illness that we deal with and other times it's an annoying co-worker. No matter how you slice it, suffering will happen in your life.

There is a lie that has been passed down over the years in church circles that if you believe in Jesus then life will be easier – including a lack of suffering. There is *some* truth to that. You will have more joy, hope, and peace available here and now AND we will no longer suffer one day either when we pass away or Jesus returns (whichever comes first). But the reality is that you may actually suffer *more* for the Gospel if you embrace it fully.

As we suffer now, however, we have a hope that does not disappoint. We know that one day we will join Jesus in glory because of His death on the cross. So, the question isn't, "Will we suffer?" but rather, as Christians, "How are we to suffering without losing heart (2 Corinthians 4:16)?"

### Questions:

1. Have you ever heard anyone say (or maybe you've thought), "I thought if you were a Christian that your life was perfect all the time – why are you suffering?" or something like that? Where do you think that idea comes from?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Tell us about a time that you were hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, or struck down (i.e. a time that you suffered in life). How did you get through it?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-14. When we talk about Christians suffering we often reference our eternal destiny in heaven as something to keep in mind. We know that one day we will be with Jesus. This is our hope. How can you help someone through suffering who doesn't know Jesus? Where do they find their hope? How important are the words *you* choose to use as you come alongside someone who suffers (either Christian or non-Christian)?
4. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16. Even in the face of suffering Paul is able to recognize that he is being "renewed day by day". How do you think suffering helps reconstruct and renew us day by day?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:18 and Revelation 21:1-8. How are these passages encouraging to you as you suffer? Take time to pray together about this future reality and how it can manifest itself in your lives here and now.