

Discussion Guide 1 Peter 1:22-2:1
Loving one another for Suffering

<https://youtu.be/p4Wpp6ewy5k?t=1836>

<https://youtu.be/p4Wpp6ewy5k?t=2393>

The above are excerpts from a history of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer is famous today as the theological light of the persecuted Confessing Church that stood apart from the Nazis during the reign of Hitler. The end of the story is that Bonhoeffer's life ended very early in a Nazi concentration camp because the result of his faith was that he joined the underground opposition to Hitler.

The two clips above in the story of Bonhoeffer focus on the times in his life in the 1930s where he was able to find community amongst suffering believers in the body of Christ. These times amongst segregated African Americans in New York City and amongst illegal pastoral trainees in Germany. These experiences gave him the strength of character that would later allow him to sacrifice his life in resistance to Hitler.

One of the unmistakable lessons from any part of the life and writings of Bonhoeffer is the critical role that community plays in the formation of the type of faith that can thrive in persecution. One of my takes from reading Bonhoeffer is that American-style churches would likely buckle under persecution because we have not formed the types of church communities that instill the character of faith in the average church member.

The average Christian in America views church as an event. It is something we do for 75 minutes once a month (according to recent surveys documenting the worship habits of the average American Christian.) Worship is something of a spectator sport that well-educated and talented staff take care of while we observe. The typically spectator, while appreciative of what the staff do, does not think that she has what it takes to worship Jesus on the same level as the great show she witnesses on the Sunday that she chooses to come to church. It's very similar to the way I treat professional golf. I love watching golf and I may even try to play from time to time, but I am under no thought that I can perform well enough to actually play golf competitively at any level.

But how would life be different if I lived with someone who was a good golfer and actually took time to play some element of golf with me every day? I will never play at the level of the LIV or PGA Tour professionals, but I could certainly become good enough to call myself a competitive golfer on some level.

Now apply that analogy back to the church. How would the formation of our faith be different if we actually spent time with the church daily and made some practice of worship with the church a part of our daily life? I'm not asking whether this is possible (almost every American

will tell me that it isn't possible), I'm simply asking what effect it would have on you as a believer in Jesus.

We cannot claim to use the Biblical language of church as a household when we do not actually spend time in household with other believers. At most we can say that we are occasional practitioners who have an appreciation from the church. But if we live as occasional practitioners of faith, how can we ever expect to excel in faith?

Stop here and make a list in your group of the things in your lives that take priority over worshipping and fellowshiping with the church, according to your calendar.

Let's look at life from another angle. Who are the people you love the most? You naturally should say that you love the people with whom you spend the most time. For most of us, that would be our family and perhaps some people we work with. Many of us would say that we love the church, but in reality we spend very little time with the church.

Peter is writing to an exiled and persecuted community. You might expect him to tell them to become strong, independent, and tough so that they can withstand the onslaught. But isn't it interesting that Peter instead tells the believers that they need to grow in love? Read the passage together and discuss together what it means for a Christian to grow in love for the church.

22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls,

25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.

Discussion Questions

- It is often said in the world that there is no such thing as love that has no selfish motives. Is this also true for believers in Jesus? (v. 22)
- What makes the difference in our ability to love others? (v. 23)
- Why does being born again allow us to love purely and sincerely?
- How does loving one another glorify the word of the Lord?
- Why is the word of the Lord longer lasting than the things most people spend their lives doing?
- What are the 5 things we must put away to love each other well? (v.1)

- **How are some challenges we encounter that keep us from putting away those five things?**
- **How many people do you feel like you know well enough to say that you love them earnestly?**
- **What aspects of modern life separate us from being able to truly love one another?**
- **Why is independence often detrimental toward building a love-based community?**
- **How might we live counter-culturally to build communities of love that will teach us how to actually live like Christ?**