Advice for When We’re Suffering

There are two ways to look at 1 Peter 5:1-4.

One is to focus on what Peter teaches about church leaders.

That’s a good and useful approach. But it misses two things:

- the connection between 5:1 and 4:19 (“So,” “Therefore”)
- the statement in 5:3 (“being examples to the flock”)

The context, in other words, is not primarily about church leaders. It’s about how those leaders are to be examples when they and their congregation are suffering.

The passage leads us to ask, when you or others around you are suffering, what should you do?

Peter encourages us to do four things.

1. Commit Yourself to the Lord and Do Good (4:19)

The word disciple means a follower of Christ. But a passage in Isaiah shows us it has a deeper side.

“I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my trust in him” – Isaiah 8:17

Good definition: A disciple is someone who trusts in the Lord even in the dark.

2. Use Your Gifts and Talents and Stay Focused on Christ (5:1)

I find it instructive to compare this statement of Peter’s (“to the elders among you I appeal as a fellow elder”) with one Paul makes in 2 Timothy: “I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am” (2 Tim. 1:11).

Both mention suffering and both reveal clarity about the nature of their calling and gifts.

Principle: When suffering comes, it’s vital to know who we are in Christ.

Stand firm! This is where endurance begins. Husbands, stand firm! Wives, stand firm! Parents, stand firm! Children, stand firm! Students, stand firm! Singles, stand firm! Whoever you are, and wherever you are, and whatever you are doing, if you don’t do anything else, do this: Stand firm!

3. Watch Your Motivations and Attitudes (5:2b-3)

There are several mentioned in this passage.

- Grumbling
- Greed
- Glory

4. Be Joyful and Filled with Hope (5:4)

Peter’s is a positive statement. It’s a promise.

In a similar passage, Paul does the same thing:
“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.” – 2 Cor. 4:5

CONCLUSION

So then, when everyone around you is suffering, including yourself, what should you do?

- Commit your life to God and do good
- Use your talents and gifts and stay focused on Christ
- Watch your motivations and attitudes
- Be joyful and filled with hope