

# ***Humility in Suffering***

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

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## ***Thinking about life as a student in healthcare***

Think of the people around you within your course.

1. From what you have observed, do they normally respond to suffering/trials with humility or with pride? What specific things have you seen/have you heard from a class mate experiencing a trial that evidence your answer (that is, how does their pride/humility manifest itself in actions or thoughts)?
2. What do you think the link might be between suffering and pride? What attitudes lie beneath a prideful response to suffering?
3. How have you observed that your classmates deal with their anxieties?
4. Within the context of being:
  - a. a university student of an 'elite' course, and
  - b. part of an 'elite' profession in the future:Define humility.

## ***What does God have to say?***

Read 1 Peter 5:5-7.

Peter's discussion here about the necessity of **humility** is not an irrelevant tangent to his discussion on how to manage suffering that he has been focusing on in his letter so far. Peter feels the need to raise the importance of humility because he knows the sinful human nature's natural response to suffering and trials – **pride**. Pride as a response to suffering may manifest itself in the following ways: anger towards God, excessive anger towards the offending party, self-righteousness, or the thought, 'God, I really don't deserve this'. The thought that one does not deserve 'this' fails to see the good purpose of God in suffering (for God uses it as discipline to those he loves – see Hebrews 12:7), and lacks humility because in effect, it assumes that the **discipline** God has provided is not needed (discipline is never 'not needed' because we are all sinful human beings).

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Not only is pride opposed by God (v5), but it will also ultimately make our experience of suffering more difficult. This is because it is the **humble** that God adorns with **grace**. And grace is just what we need during our **time of struggle**. (Of course God in His great mercy will still provide grace for us even in the midst of our sin [here pride], but He does actively *oppose* pride – even when it be found in His own people). The last thing we need during a time of suffering is to also have God opposing our pride!

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Peter wants to save us this further trouble caused by pride, and so gives us the simple solution found in the command, 'Humble yourselves...under God's mighty hand'. The command is not simply to humble ourselves, but to humble ourselves *under God's mighty hand*. Humility in suffering necessarily involves **submitting**, that is willingly giving over, oneself and one's circumstances to the Lord. This submission requires great humility because it acknowledges that God knows better than we do, and that we are His dependent subjects – we are not in a position to tell Him what He should be doing. This humility will involve acceptance of the suffering as part

of God's **sovereign plan**, a continuing countenance to **thankfulness**, and an ongoing recognition that we are sinners in the hands of a gracious God – never 'deserving' of anything.

We do not need to fear when we adopt this position of humility and submission – because there is hope in the midst of suffering. Peter tells us that God will lift us up when He sees the time is right (end v6). We can trust God has our best interests at heart, that He loves us and cares for us (v7), when we submit our suffering to Him. Note that Peter anticipates that fear is often what will stop us from trusting God with our struggles/suffering – and so he pastorally advises us to trust the Lord with these fears that will be related to our suffering (v7).

### ***Putting it into practice***

1. Can you relate to the normal human response of pride during suffering? (Consider the possible manifestations of this as previously outlined).  
Do you believe that it is pride that underlies these things?
2. What pressures/expectations/circumstances within your context as a health care student make it hard for you to be humble in suffering?
3. List three truths you have learnt from this passage that will help you to remain humble during trials.
4. How can humility in suffering testify of God's grace to your fellow healthcare peers and university staff?  
Have you ever seen the effect of such humility in your year group?
5. Discuss together the things you are most scared of in submitting to God in suffering. Pray that you might be strengthened to trust God with these anxieties.

# Bible Bites

(Suitable to be completed over approximately 20-25 minutes)

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3. How have you observed that your classmates deal with their anxieties?

### What does God have to say?

Read 1 Peter 5:5-7:

<sup>5</sup> Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup> Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.’

Peter's discussion here about the necessity of **humility** is not an irrelevant tangent to his discussion on how to manage suffering that he has been focusing on in his letter so far. Peter feels the need to raise the importance of humility because he knows the sinful human nature's natural response to suffering and trials – **pride**. Pride as a response to suffering may manifest itself in the following ways: anger towards God, excessive anger towards the offending party, self-righteousness, or the thought, 'God, I really don't deserve this'. The thought that one does not deserve 'this' fails to see the good purpose of God in suffering (for God uses it as discipline to those he loves – see Hebrews 12:7), and lacks humility because in effect, it assumes that the **discipline** God has provided is not needed (discipline is never 'not needed' because we are all sinful human beings).

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