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Principles of Christian Growth

Section Two: The Means of Christian Growth – How do we do it?

Lesson Nine: We grow through suffering.

Bible Reading: Job 23:1-17, 42:10-17, Rom. 8:18-39, Heb. 11:32-12:4.

We live in a world of extreme suffering. This suffering often seems as senseless as it is cruelly difficult. Some religions tout the power of positive thinking to confront suffering, and others even deny the reality of evil itself. Suffering people all around us turn to substance abuse and other pleasures to ameliorate their suffering. God's Word assures us that the suffering of God's people, a consequence in the world of man's sin, is also used by Him to help them grow into Christlikeness. Christ suffered, and we must too if we would be like Him.

Discussion questions:

1. The book of Job was written about a suffering believer for suffering believers. Job lost loved ones, possessions, and his health, but not his faith in the midst of suffering. He had difficulty understanding the specifics of God's purpose (Job 23:1-9), but he clung in faith to an important truth (vv. 10-12). What is the truth, and how did it come to his heart in spite of inscrutable and harsh circumstances?

2. All suffering is traceable to the fall (Rom. 8:20-23). God's work of redemption in Christ reverses the fall, and so it shall one day bring an end to suffering in this world (vv. 23-25). As Paul contemplates this suffering, he too affirms some wonderful truths about suffering in the life of the believer (vv. 25-39), and he speaks of the way that truth comes to encourage the suffering heart (vv. 26-27). Identify these.

3. Christ must inspire and sustain us in the midst of suffering (Heb. 12:1-4). What enabled Him to endure, and how does that help us endure (v. 2)?