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Suffering University - Turning Life's Toughest Times into Victory (James 1.2-4)

Universities offer the highest level of education available to people today. It takes a significant amount of money, time and effort to receive a “degree.” Many of your counselees will claim to have a university-level degree in suffering, which has cost them much money, time, and effort. What do you, the counselor, say to this person is currently attending “Suffering University?”

Scripture says, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” 2 Corinthians 4.17.

“Light and momentary troubles?!” The suffering in today’s world doesn’t seem so “light” or “momentary.” In fact, in the lives of many of your counselees, they feel just the opposite! Suffering can become so intense that it drains the very life out of people! The counselee comes to you looking for answers; for an end to the suffering. What do you do? How do you begin? Is it even *possible* to significantly alleviate this suffering?

How you answer these questions (and how you counsel) is determined by what you’ve:

- Been exposed to
- Studied to build knowledge
- Experienced and believe

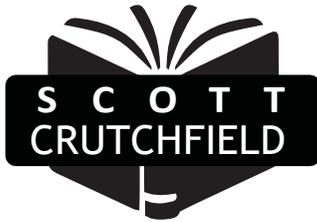
The aim of this study is to do exactly that – expose you to information on this often-misunderstood topic of suffering, give you a platform of study, so you can experience this for yourself and believe in God’s perspective of suffering. By going through this focused training, you’ll be better-equipped, as a counselor, to help your counselees who are suffering greatly.

I. Pain Vs. Suffering (Distinctions)

- A. Are they the same?
 1. Pain – physical or emotional discomfort caused by illness or injury
 2. Suffering – our response to the “pain stimuli”
- B. Examples
 1. Chronic back pain
 2. Depression
- C. Are they unavoidable?
 1. Pain is an unavoidable part of the human condition
 2. Suffering may not be eliminated, but can be greatly reduced
- D. Physical and mental functions are related

II. Pain and Suffering (Pre-dispositions)

- A. Physical
 1. Genetic and non-genetic illnesses
 2. Injuries
- B. Environmental
 1. Family unit and upbringing
 2. Friends
- C. Psychological



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1. Programming and auto-suggestion
2. Negativity and doubt

III. Biblical Principles that Address Suffering

- A. Core beliefs are vital (count it all joy)
 1. Make a conscious decision
 2. To be joyful in advance
- B. Faith-filled obedience grows us (knowing the testing of our faith)
 1. Our faith will be tested
 2. Obedient response to the “test” yields hopeful endurance
- C. Hopeful endurance completes us (patience brings wholeness)
 1. The refining process
 2. The completing result

James 1:2–4 (NKJV)

2 My brethren, **count** (hegeomai, G2233, lead thoughts to believe) it all joy when you fall into various **trials** (peirasmos, G3986, examination to prove or test),

3 **knowing** (ginosko, G1097, known by experience) that the **testing** (dokimion, G1383, battle-tested genuineness) of your faith produces patience.

4 But let **patience** (hypomene, G5281, hopeful endurance) have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Lead your thoughts to believe joy when you fall into a character examination
knowing by experience that the battle-tested genuineness of your faith
produces a hopeful endurance that completes and fulfills you

PREPARED ATTITUDE (lead your thoughts to believe joy when you fall into character examination)
based upon a

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE (knowing by experience that the battle-tested genuineness of your faith)
of an

ASSURED RESULT (inevitably produces a hopeful endurance that completes and fulfills you)

IV. Practical Behaviors to Alleviate Suffering

- A. Teach counselee distinction between pain and suffering
- B. Reduce the pain, when possible
- C. Help counselee re-interpret the pain signals
- D. Divert focus away from the pain toward biblical promises
- E. Give counselee physical things to do

V. Counseling Example and Resource Materials