Introduction: What is an “impact” player?

Spiritual “Impact” Players: Believers who graciously endure unjust suffering are the most powerful testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ on this planet.

How do they do it? And why?

Biblical / Historical evidence: I Peter 3:13-22

1. Context:
   
   Suffering for doing good is both rare… I Peter 3:13
   
   …and blessed I Peter 3:14a

2. God’s Game Plan:
   
   Saints suffering unjustly or the “How To” of enduring I Peter 3:14b-17

   1. Do not fear what others will think.
   
   2. Do not fear what others fear.
   
   3. Reaffirm and refocus your thinking about Christ.
   
   4. Be prepared to give an answer for the hope within.
   
   5. Maintain a clear conscience.
3. **The Rewards:**

Suffering for doing well or the “Why” of enduring  

18 “For (because indeed) Christ suffered (died) for (on behalf of, as a substitute for) sins, once for all (time), the righteous (one, singular) for the unrighteous (ones, plural) (for this purpose) to bring (grant access to the King’s presence) us to God, having been put to death (on the one hand) in the body (flesh), but made alive (on the other hand) in the spirit;

19 in which (being in the Spirit) He also went and preached (made proclamation, Eph. 4:8-9) to the spirits (fallen angels or human spirits) in prison (II Peter. 2:4, 5; Jude 6; Genesis 6:1-6),

20 who were once disobedient (rebellious), when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being built, in which a few, only eight persons (souls) were saved through the water.

21 Which also is a corresponding figure (picture – antitype) of baptism that now saves us – not the removal of dirt from one’s body (flesh), but the pledge (appeal) of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

22 Who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand (position of the King’s authority and power) with angels, authorities, and powers (3 terms used of good and evil angels, dependent on contest, clearly evil angels here) in submission to Him.

**Conclusion:**

The Lord suffered wrongfully and is now exalted and glorified.

**Application:**

God will exalt those who suffer unjustly and use them as His most powerful instruments to win others to Christ.
Discussion Questions:

1. Share a time, if it has ever occurred, when you have been treated poorly, rejected, or suffered for doing something honorable and good as a Christian.

2. Share a time when you failed to take a stand for Christ because of what others might say or think about you. Which of the 5 steps in responding to unjust suffering in verses 14b - 17 did you most identify with? Why?

3. What does it mean to you to “set apart Christ as Lord in your heart”? What does that look like in your everyday life? How does doing this counteract the fear of people?

4. Explain to the group your thoughts on maintaining a clear conscience. What does it mean, how is it done, why is it important? How does our experience of “peace” and “boldness” relate to a clear conscience? Is there any step you need to take with God or man to have a clean conscience?

5. Verses 18-22 are difficult. The general intent of this portion was to comfort and encourage the believers in Peter’s day to withstand suffering because Jesus had done this for them. When have you (if ever) suffered with joy knowing that it was helping another person? Share your experience. How does God exalt those who suffer unjustly in our day?

6. Why do you think this teaching on accepting and even embracing unjust suffering is so difficult for us to accept? Share a time of prayer for any who are suffering unjustly in your group, or that you may know about.

“Unjust suffering carried out with unwavering convictions and confidence in God produce unimaginable impact and blessing for you and others.”
The Context:

Do not be afraid of imitating Christ’s example in suffering for doing God’s will, because:

1. It is a powerful testimony of the reality of God in your life.

2. You will be greatly rewarded for your faithfulness.

Notes:
Discussion Questions:

1. Share the name of someone who has been a personal encouragement to you this week. What did he/she do or say to brighten your week?

2. After listening to this message on 1 Peter 4:1-6, why do you think the title “Finding Freedom...on a Road Less Traveled,” was appropriate or not so appropriate?

3. At the heart of this passage is the truth, “Decide to exchange short term pain for long term gain.” Share an experience or situation from your past home, business, personal, or family life that reinforces the reality of this truth.

4. In Peter’s day, the immediate application of this passage would be to endure persecution, ridicule, and possibly job security to identify with Jesus Christ. What do you think the immediate application of this passage is in our day?

5. Read verses 3-6 carefully and identify some ways Peter was seeking to motivate his readers to “hang tough” and “be pure” even in the midst of abuse. How could these things help you “arm yourself” to accept short-term pain for long-term gain?

6. What, in general, is God saying to your life through this message and passage? What steps or practical application would help you implement this truth in your life over the long haul?

7. Spend a few minutes in prayer together with those who feel comfortable participating.
The Context:

I Peter 4:1-6

Christians are choosing to willfully accept unjust suffering with the same attitude (viewpoint) that Jesus did; resulting in a clear break with sin, a powerful testimony and motivated by the certainty of coming judgment for both believers and unbelievers.

Question:

What is God’s plan to sustain His people in the midst of their faithful obedience which at times results in hardships, ridicule and difficulty?

Answer:

I Peter 4:7-11

Being motivated by the certainty of Christ’s return and coming judgment let us. . .

Think clearly…

1 Peter 4:7b

(Life in perspective) and soberly (alert, not fuzzy thinking) in order to pray effectively.

Love deeply…

1 Peter 4:8

(Earnestly, fervently) because it builds support and community that overlooks and compensates for mistakes (sins) in interpersonal relationships.

Offer hospitality…

1 Peter 4:9

Gracious opening of your home and resources especially to those undergoing persecution in this case) with a winsome and positive attitude.

Serve others…

1 Peter 4:10-11

Meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs) of other believers (especially those suffering) by the consistent exercise of your spiritual gifts.
How?

1. Speaking gifts exercised with humility and caution  
   1 Peter 4:10

2. Serving gifts exercised in dependency.  
   1 Peter 4:11a

Why?

1 Peter 4:11b

So in all things (the relationships, the gifts, the sacrifice, the encouragement, the love and hospitality, the teaching, etc.) God will get the glory and praise and Jesus will be “center stage” as suffering believers are sustained and empowered in their time of need.

Discussion Questions:

1. If someone said they knew a Christian who’s going through a difficult time in their life, what practical suggestions could you give them from this passage in helping their friend?

2. Suffering is inevitable when we choose to follow Christ unwaveringly. What is God’s primary provision in helping us through these kinds of times according to 1 Peter 4:7?

3. How is the “body of Christ” much like a “support group”? What factors make it easy to minister to each other in these ways? What factors hinder us from extending this kind of care and concern consistently?

4. What relationship is there between the knowledge and use of our spiritual gifts and the meeting of needs and the experience of love?

5. What opportunity have you had in the last few weeks to use your spiritual gifts to help someone through a difficult time? How did this make you feel?

6. How did God speak to you in this message? What difference would you like to see occur in your life in response to what you’ve learned? What is the first step you will need to take to make this a reality? When will you take this first step?
The Context:

Beginning in Chapter 2:11-4:11 Peter has been dealing with the believer’s response to slander, ridicule, unjust treatment, and varying degrees of persecution.

God’s counsel through Peter has been that we are to live “blameless” and Godly lives, submit to the God-ordained authority in government (2:13-17), at work (2:18-25), at home (3:1-7) and follow Christ’s example of suffering for “doing good” with a winsome and loving attitude (3:13-4:6).

We will be enabled to do this by God’s grace and the provision of His body, the church (4:7-11). The result is our critics will be silenced, Christ’s reputation will be enhanced, and lost people will be moved to believe on the basis of our love and faithfulness to the Lord.

The Text:

Now, in Chapter 4:12-19 Peter summarizes this entire section on suffering unjustly and addresses the issue of how to respond to intense, “fiery”, all-out, even life-threatening persecution.

What should I do if I find myself intensely persecuted?

Perspective:

- Don’t be surprised (literally – be astonished). It’s normal and it’s purposeful (refining). 1 Peter 4:12

Attitude:

- Rejoice in the privilege of your partnership with Christ. 1 Peter 4:13a
- Rejoice that you will share in future glory. 1 Peter 4:13b
- Rejoice because God promises a special empowering and manifestation of His presence as you undergo persecution. 1 Peter 4:14
Warning:

- **Make certain** your persecution is for good not for evil behavior. 1 Peter 4:15
- **Don’t be ashamed** of Christ (like Peter was of Jesus) when the stakes get high and it gets tough. 1 Peter 4:16

**Why does God allow such persecution if He loves me?**

Reason:

- **A holy God** must and will judge sin (see 4:5-7). God, as in the Old Testament, begins His judgment with those who carry and know His truth (see Ezekiel 9 for an Old Testament example) to purify and refine His vehicle of grace. 1 Peter 4:17a

- **Logic of Peter’s argument** (from lesser to greater): If you think this persecution is a difficult judgment that God is using with His own family, then you should carefully and compassionately consider the severity of judgment that unbelievers are going to endure in the very near future. 1 Peter 4:17b-18

**What can I do? How can I make it?**

Action Plan:

- **“Entrust”** (literally – make a deposit – banking term) yourself and your circumstances to the One who created you, who fully understands the situation, and is always faithful to His promises – **TRUST**. 1 Peter 4:19a

- **Keep on “doing good,”** don’t compromise your faith, don’t deny your Lord – **OBEY**. 1 Peter 4:19b
Discussion Questions:

1. According to 1 Peter 4:12-16, what is our attitude to be toward persecution and suffering? Share 3-4 observations from these verses that support your answer.

2. What warning is given about suffering in v. 15? List and define four specific things we are not to suffer for. Why do you think this warning is included in this passage?

3. Why does God allow suffering of this type to come into our lives according to v. 12? A second reason is given in v. 17. Share briefly how God has used some difficulty in your past to “refine” and purify your life in Christ.

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