

# Mental



## ✓ Prepare in Advance

Facilitator: In advance of the session:

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the *Bible Background Video* ready to view.
- The first question (Jesus' descent into hell) might consume a lot of time. Be prepared to rein in the discussion after a few minutes!

## ✓ Introduce

Ask the following question to introduce today's session:

- Some people today believe that Christians in America are being "persecuted" for their faith. Do you think this is true? If not, what is really happening?
- Now have someone read 1 Peter 3:13-21 out loud. Watch the *Bible Background Video*, then use the following questions to guide discussion.

## ✓ Suffering of Jesus

**Say:** Let's start at the end of this passage first, then work our way back. This passage (3:18-22) is unique in what it says about Jesus' spiritual actions after he died. As Nikki mentions, no one is completely sure what it means.

**Ask:** Have you studied this before? What do you think Peter is saying? According to the examples of Jesus and Noah in these verses, what do suffering and death accomplish in us and for us?

## ✓ Blessed to Suffer?

**Say:** Several times in this letter Peter mentions that we are blessed if we suffer for doing the right thing. Use the following questions to encourage discussion.

- I believe we tend to think of suffering as being UN-blessed... do you agree? If so, why do we think this way?
- Why does Peter say there is blessing in this kind of suffering (3:14, 17-18, and 2:20-21)?
- What does Jesus himself say about this (Matt. 5:10, Luke 9:23-25, John 16:33)?
- In what ways does suffering bring us closer to Jesus and his experiences... and why is that a blessing?

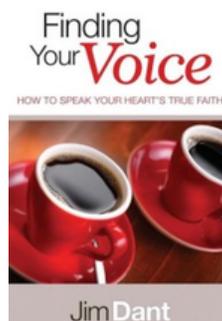
- Examine Peter's exhortation to witness in verse 15. What might make people ask about our hope? Specifically, in our response to suffering?
- Why is it important to do this in a gentle and respectful way?

## ✓ Closing

- In closing, let's revisit the introductory question (persecution in America). How does Rowan Williams' quote help us think more clearly about the situation of Christians in the U.S.?
- As you think about these things, what places and people do you know who really are being persecuted for their faith and actions?
- From our discussion today, how can we best pray for them?

Close with prayer:

**By Jon Parks**



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