



WEEK 4
Shared Devotional
March 30 - April 5

Suffering and Being Rejected

It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

2 Timothy 2:11-13

Death on the cross means suffering and dying as one who is rejected and cast out. Jesus must suffer and be rejected by virtue of divine necessity. Any attempt to interfere with what is necessary is satanic – even and precisely when it come out of the circle of the disciples, for it does not want to let Christ be Christ.... Thus for Jesus it now becomes necessary to relate the “must” of suffering to his disciples in a clear and unambiguous way. As Christ is Christ only as the suffering and rejected one, so the disciple is a disciple only as one who suffers and is rejected, as on crucified with Jesus. Discipleship, understood as being bound to the person of Jesus Christ, places the disciple under the laws of Christ, that is, under the cross.

It was Maria's birthday on Good Friday. If I didn't know how courageously she bore the death of her father, her brother and two beloved cousins last year, I should be really concerned about her. She'll now have the consolation of Easter and the support of her numerous family, and her Red Cross work will keep her fully occupied. Give her my fond love and tell her that she mustn't be sad, but brave as she has always been. She's still so young, that's the hard part.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer to his parents from Tegel prison, 25 April 1943

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *God Is on the Cross: Reflections on Lent and Easter* (pp. 56-57). Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. Kindle Edition.

These topics, suffering and being rejected, are often (always) unwelcome topics for our consideration. Humanity's driving ambition seems to be the absolute elimination of all forms of suffering and rejection.

- What value is there in suffering?
- Are we willing to be rejected? When should we welcome rejection?
- What experiences have you had of being bound to the person of Christ?
- What blessings can you think of that are part of being under the law of Christ?
- In Acts Chapter 5, Peter and the Apostle's with him rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name (of Jesus). How can we rejoice in such circumstances?
- Pray that the Holy Spirit equips you to accept and endure both suffering and rejection as a disciple of Jesus.



Lenten Prayer Calendar for March to April

30 SOMALIA More Somalis live outside the country than within its borders. Pray that Somalis everywhere will hear the gospel.	31 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Pray for Divine, who was orphaned and badly burned when rebels set her church on fire.	1 CHINA Pray that children and young people, especially in remote villages, will have access to God's Word.	2 MALAYSIA Pray for Christian converts who are tortured in reeducation camps in attempts to force them to return to Islam.	3 NORTH KOREA Pray for the bold Christians who are working to bring God's Word to the North Korean people.	4 SUDAN Bibles are scarce because of ongoing efforts to Islamize the country. Pray for increased access to God's Word.	5 BRUNEI Pray that Bruneians will have more opportunities to hear the gospel.
6 TURKMENISTAN Authorities often search believers' homes for Christian literature. Pray for the freedom to study God's Word.	7 SYRIA Pray that Christian converts who lose family relationships will find comfort and fellowship in the body of Christ.	8 MOZAMBIQUE Pray for the encouragement of pastors working in areas where Islamist groups regularly attack Christians.	9 MALI Pray for the boldness of churches in the north as they share the gospel in an Islamic stronghold.	10 BENIN Pray that Christians who have been attacked by voodooists will be encouraged and stand firm in their faith.	11 NIGER Pray for the safety of front-line workers who use motorcycles to reach people in remote desert areas with the gospel.	12 ALGERIA Pray that Christians in Algeria will hold fast to "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).
13 RUSSIA AND AREAS UNDER ITS CONTROL Pray that Christians will have a vision to reach the lost.	14 BURKINA FASO Pastor Hamadou was shot to death by Islamists opposed to his bold witness. Pray that God will comfort his family.	15 PAKISTAN Pray for the encouragement of the roughly 4 million Pakistani Christians, using Joshua 1:9 as a guide.	16 TANZANIA Pray that Tanzanian missionaries will share the gospel with unreached people groups on the Swahili Coast.	17 YEMEN Pray that Bibles stolen in an attack on a church will touch the hearts of those who do not yet know Christ.	18 INDONESIA Pray that persecuted Christians in rural areas will find ways to fellowship with other Christians.	19 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC Pray that Christians who suffered persecution will heal from their trauma.

Will you partner with MVPC this lenten season and commit to praying for those being persecuted.

20
SAUDI ARABIA
Pray that those who must worship in secret will have opportunities for fellowship with other Christians.