

## Leader Guide

**BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD!***WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**By Jean McCain*

Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version

Suffering is the crucible in which our faith is refined and strengthened. All suffering of any kind — physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, social, financial, our own, or that of a loved one — is a battle ground on which Satan seeks to destroy our faith and trust in our Lord Jesus, while Christ is strengthening our faith and teaching us to *fear, love, and trust in God above all things\**.

(\*See “Section I, *The Ten Commandments, The First Commandment*” of *The Small Catechism: LSB*, page 321; *LW*, page 301.)

**Read Together:** *The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5b–8).*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear heavenly Father, I want to be able to “be still” and trust You: to make good come from the evil of my suffering; to put an end to my suffering when and if it is Your will; to help me be like St. Paul and accept my suffering because Your “grace is sufficient for me;” to help me understand what I must do. But the devil, the world, and my own sinful flesh make this so difficult that I almost sink into despair when my suffering overwhelms me. Give me strength to “fear, love, and trust” in You above all things at all times in all circumstances. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. In Jesus’ name I trust and pray. Amen.

- I. Psalm 46:10** tells us to “Be still and know that I am God.”  
*What is it God wants us to know or to recognize about Him?*

**Matthew 28:19** <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*Our God is the Triune God who wants all people to know Him and to be baptized.*

**John 3:16** <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

*Our Lord is a God who loves us more deeply than we can understand. Christ earned salvation for all sinners — even those who neither knew He was God nor loved Him. Those who believe in Christ as their Savior are reconciled with the Father and given life eternal. God is a righteous and just God who hates our sin. For those who believe in Him, He “remembers their sin no more.”*

**Romans 3:20–24** <sup>20</sup>For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in

Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, *Righteousness and justification are gifts God earned for all on the cross. We do not earn salvation. We receive His gifts through faith, not because of works, because it is impossible for us to keep the Law — which is what God's righteousness demands, but only Christ could keep.*

**Titus 3:4–7** <sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

*The fullness of our Triune God's love and mercy was poured out for us on the cross. God the Father gave His Son to pay for the sins of those who disobeyed Him. Christ, the sinless Son of God the Father, suffered His Father's wrath against the sins of the world on the cross and paid the full price for our reconciliation and redemption. God the Holy Spirit makes us children of God through Baptism and His Word. He continues to assure us of our forgiveness through Holy Communion as we receive Christ's body and blood. God's love is fulfilled in Christ coming — joy to the world, the Lord is come!*

**1 John 3:1–2** <sup>1</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

*God the Father calls us His children. When the Lord Christ comes again to earth we shall be able to see Christ both as True God and as True Man.*

### **Isaiah 43:1**

<sup>1</sup> But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.

*Our Triune God knows us individually and personally. He called each individual by name — we are His own dear children.*

## **II. When we are baptized we become God's own dear children, but we can only grow to know Him and to develop a personal relationship with Him through His Word.**

*How does God work through His Word to teach us about Himself?*

**John 1:1–4;14–18** <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) <sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth

came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

*We only know God the Father through Jesus Christ, His Son. Christ is the Word who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit at creation. Through Christ all things were made. Now the Holy Spirit works through Christ's Word to teach us to know God. The gifts of grace and truth come to us from our Triune God.*

**John 14:25–26** <sup>25</sup> “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

*God the Father sends us the Holy Spirit to teach us to know and to remember all that Christ is, all that He has done for us, and all that Christ wants us to know about God.*

**John 16:13–15** <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

*The Holy Spirit is given the task of teaching us the truth, the meaning of the Triune God.*

**Romans 8:26–27** <sup>26</sup> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup> And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

*The Holy Spirit not only teaches us what God tells us through His Holy Word, He also intercedes for us with the Father — prays for us when we do not know what to pray — and guides and teaches us as we learn how God would have us live throughout our life's journey. How comforting to know how intimately the Holy Spirit understands us — knows what we need better than we know ourselves.*

### *III. What are some characteristics of the relationship we have with our Lord?*

**John 14:18–21** <sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

*Our relationship is personal and individual. We have life eternal because Christ tells us we are “in Him” and He is “in us.” For that reason we are part of the Father's “family” as His adopted children. The bond on which our relationship with God is built is love — a love that is greater than any other. Knowing God as He teaches us to know Him through Christ enables us to “fear (stand in awe of His deep love as well as His fierce hatred of sin), love (deeper than any love we have for any other person or thing), and trust in Him (His wisdom, power, and promises) above all things.*

**Galatians 2:20** <sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*(Christ's death on the cross proved His deep love for us. Through our Baptism, God the Father gave us what Christ earned for us on the cross. We became His forgiven children, and Christ became our brother. It is Christ who now lives in us — our lives are His. His Holy Spirit guides and teaches us.)*

**Romans 8:15–16** <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

*There is no closer relationship on this earth than we now have with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.*

**Psalm 139:1–6; 14–16**

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

<sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.

<sup>3</sup>You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup>Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

<sup>5</sup>You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high; I cannot attain it.

<sup>14</sup>I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.

<sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth. (*reference to Adam's creation*)

<sup>16</sup>Your eyes saw my unformed substance;  
in your book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.

*God created us and knows how many days we will live. He even knows our thoughts and the words we will use before we do. God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows us better than anyone else will ever know us on this earth.*

**IV. God — our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier Who is Righteous and Merciful, All-knowing and All-powerful — allows us to call Him *Father!*  
Christ — God's Son, who loved us so much that He died for us on the cross and rose from the dead to assure us of our reconciliation with our Heavenly Father — allows us to call Him *Our Brother!*  
*What, now, does GOD expect of us?***

**Matthew 10:37–38** <sup>37</sup> Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

*God often uses designations like “father,” “brother,” “bridegroom” to describe his relationship with us. Just as a husband expects his wife to love others in different ways, he does not want her to love anyone more than himself — so it is with God. He wants us to love and honor our family members and our neighbors. Scripture makes clear that a husband should love his wife as his own body. A wife is to love and honor her husband. Children are to honor their parents. By telling us that we must love Him more than our own family, we realize the place He is to have in our hearts and lives.*

**Matthew 22:37–38** <sup>37</sup>And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment.

*This is what it means to love our creator and redeemer more than anyone or anything He has created.*

**Deuteronomy 6:5–8** <sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. <sup>7</sup>You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. <sup>8</sup>You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

*Not only does God want to be first in our minds, hearts, and lives — He also wants us to teach our children to love God this much. He wants us always to remember what He teaches us so that the Holy Spirit can keep us close to our Lord Jesus.*

V. What are some promises God gives to us that reveal His deep love for us and that sustain us during times of suffering or temptation?

**Isaiah 43:2–3a**

<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.

<sup>3a</sup>For I am the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

*God will be with us during any type of suffering or danger that threatens us.*

**Psalm 37:5**

<sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD;  
trust in him, and he will act.

*Know God to be Who He tells us He is. Trust Him — He can and will act in the way He knows is best for us.*

**Joshua 1:9** <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

*God knows our fear and dismay weaken our courage. He knows our weaknesses, but promises to be with us always and everywhere.*

**Psalm 46:1–3**

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,

though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,  
<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

*God is our strength in the worst of times – in any time of disaster or suffering.*

**VI.**     *How does God use suffering in our lives?*

**Hebrews 12:5–11**

<sup>5</sup>And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.

<sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives.”

<sup>7</sup>It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. <sup>9</sup>Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? <sup>10</sup>For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup>For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

*God the Father wants us to learn to live as His children – to learn how to fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. He wants us to be Holy because He is Holy and we are His children. Our sufferings in life are signs of God’s love because He uses them to discipline us and to mature our faith. He teaches those He loves, even as an earthly father trains His children.*

**1 Peter 5:6-7** <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

*Christ served as our “humble servant.” To humble oneself is to recognize Who God is and what He has done for us. He tells us not to exalt ourselves above God by putting our requests and thinking above His decisions for our lives. God promises we can place our anxieties on Him because He loves us. When we pray For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. \*\*we humble ourselves before God by trusting Him to care for us. God will exalt us when He determines it is the proper time.*

(\*See “Evening Prayer” of “The Small Catechism”: *LSB*, page 327; *LW*, page 305; *TLH*, page 118.

**Psalm 119:67,75**

<sup>67</sup>Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
but now I keep your word.

<sup>75</sup>I know, O LORD, that your rules are righteous,  
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

*God uses affliction to rescue us. His discipline is sign of His faithfulness to us.*

**Romans 5:3-5** <sup>3</sup>We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.



*God uses every opportunity to keep us close to him, to guide us into a mature faith in Him. Suffering produces endurance, character and hope. The Holy Spirit's guidance of us through God's Word and His understanding of our weaknesses is another sign of God's ever-faithful love for us.*

**VII.** God's relationship with us is very personal and individual. Only because He first loved us can we love Him (1 John 4:9). He promises that "all things work together for good for those who love God" (Proverbs 9:2).

*Why, then, do we find it so difficult to be still and know that God is at work in our lives when suffering of various kinds and degrees enters our lives?*

**1 Peter 5:8**<sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

*Satan is our adversary! He uses every opportunity — good or evil — to cause us to doubt Christ's love for us, God's ability to care for us, and the Holy Spirit's wisdom in God's Word. Satan is, after all, the "chief of liars."*

**Ephesians 6:10–12**<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

*The battle that we fight when suffering comes into our lives is far greater than the immediate problem — it is part of Satan's effort to win us back from the redemption Christ earned for us. Satan uses suffering to deceive us and to weaken our faith and trust in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**VIII.** What can we do to overcome sinful worry and harmful anxiety when we face the problems and temptations that can result from suffering?

### **Psalm 86:7**

<sup>7</sup>In the day of my trouble I call upon you,  
for you answer me.

*Pray without ceasing, believing God hears and will answer prayer! Trust His answer to be what is best for you.*

**1 Corinthians 10:13**<sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

*Temptation to doubt God is inherent in suffering. Remember that God is faithful — knows when and how to provide a way for you to endure the pain and sadness of suffering as well as Satan's use of it.*

### **Proverbs 2:1–3; 5–6**

<sup>1</sup>My son, if you receive my words  
and treasure up my commandments with you,  
<sup>2</sup>making your ear attentive to wisdom  
and inclining your heart to understanding;  
<sup>3</sup>yes, if you call out for insight  
and raise your voice for understanding,

<sup>5</sup> then you will understand the fear of the LORD  
and find the knowledge of God.

<sup>6</sup> For the LORD gives wisdom;  
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

*Prayer and staying in His Word provide the paths to trusting and knowing God — as well as lessons in how to cope with the fears, confusion, and temptations that come with suffering.*

### **Conclusion**

Neither personal feelings of fear, frustration, and futility nor reliance on personal expectations, public opinion, or human reason can provide a foundation on which to stand and fight the temptations we face in suffering. Only **prayer** and the Holy Spirit working through **God's Word** can and will provide the solid ground on which we stand with Christ as He, time and time again, brings blessing from the suffering we endure while we are here on earth.

**Closing Prayer** (based on Psalm 139:17–18, 23–24):

*Leader: How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!*

**Group: How vast is the sum of them!**

*Leader: If I could count them,*

**Group: they are more than the sand.**

*Leader: Search me, O God, and know my heart!*

**Group: Try me and know my thoughts!**

*Leader: And see if there be any grievous way in me,*

**All: and lead me in the way everlasting! Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less” (*LSB* # 575; *LW* #368; *TLH* # 370)

**Note to Leader: For additional information, see Sidebar on following page.**



## Sidebar

### *How Does the Theology of the Cross Differ from the Theology of Glory?*

*To understand suffering as a blessing is to understand Luther's Theology of the Cross, which is based on God's Word. Understanding the role of Christ and His cross in our lives teaches us that for the baptized, forgiven Christian - God makes strength come from weakness and good come from evil. Suffering becomes the discipline God uses to deepen and mature our faith in Him. The Theology of the Cross teaches us that the humiliation and cruelty of Christ on the cross, which the world saw as Christ's greatest weakness, was really revealing Christ's strongest use of His Divine Power as He defeated Satan, sin, death, and hell – for us. Christ on the cross revealed the depth of His love for us as He reconciled us with our Heavenly Father. God's suffering became our greatest blessing. God can – and does – also turn our suffering into blessing as we learn to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” Through the Theology of the Cross we learn what it means to “Be still and know that I am God!”*

*However, Satan, society, and our sinful selves, would rather have us believe in a theology of glory which is the “sinking sand” on which many build their lives. Professor Veith describes theologians of glory as follows:*

*A theology of glory expects total success, finding all the answers, winning all the battles, and living happily ever after. The theology of glory is all about my strength, my power, and my works. A theologian of glory expects his church to be perfect and always to grow. If a theologian of glory gets sick, he expects God to heal him. And if he experiences failure and weakness, if his church has problems and if he is not healed, then he is often utterly confused, questioning the sufficiency of his faith and sometimes questioning the very existence of God.*

Glory Versus the Cross by Gene Edward Veith  
<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/glory-versus-cross/>