

Seminar

Share in Suffering



Sophie Gower
& Kenny Larsen

Seminar outline

- We suffer (discussion)
- Christ suffered
- We are in Him
- Implications (discussion)
- Conversation video and discussion
- Questions

We Suffer

IDENTITY

Christ Suffered

- How did Christ suffer?
- What does it mean that Christ suffered?
- How is it distinct from how we suffer?

We suffer, Christ suffered...we are in Him

Being in Christ means:

- We're following a pattern
- ..that leads to life
- ..in fellowship and communion with Jesus

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We're following a pattern

2 Corinthians 13:4

For to be sure, Christ was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by God's power. Likewise we are weak in Him, yet by God's power we will live with Him in our dealing with you.

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We're following a pattern

- It's not what we expect

We're following a pattern

If we are in Christ, our experience has another dimension: we experience great weakness, because in God's economy and purposes, it is from our communion with Christ in His dying, in His weakness, that fruitfulness develops. That is the Christ-pattern.

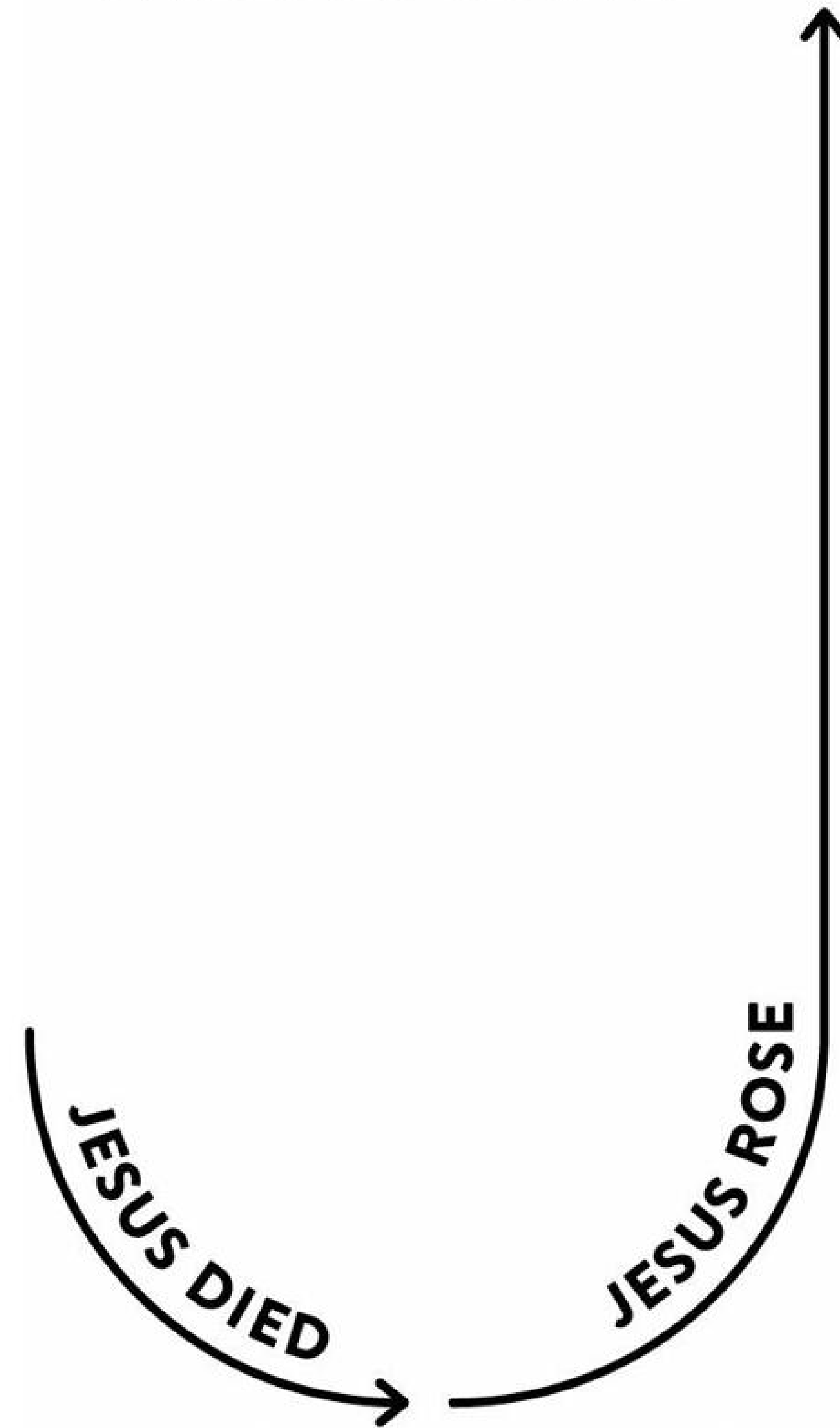
Sinclair Ferguson "Union with Christ. The blessings of being in Him" 2025 Ligonier ministries

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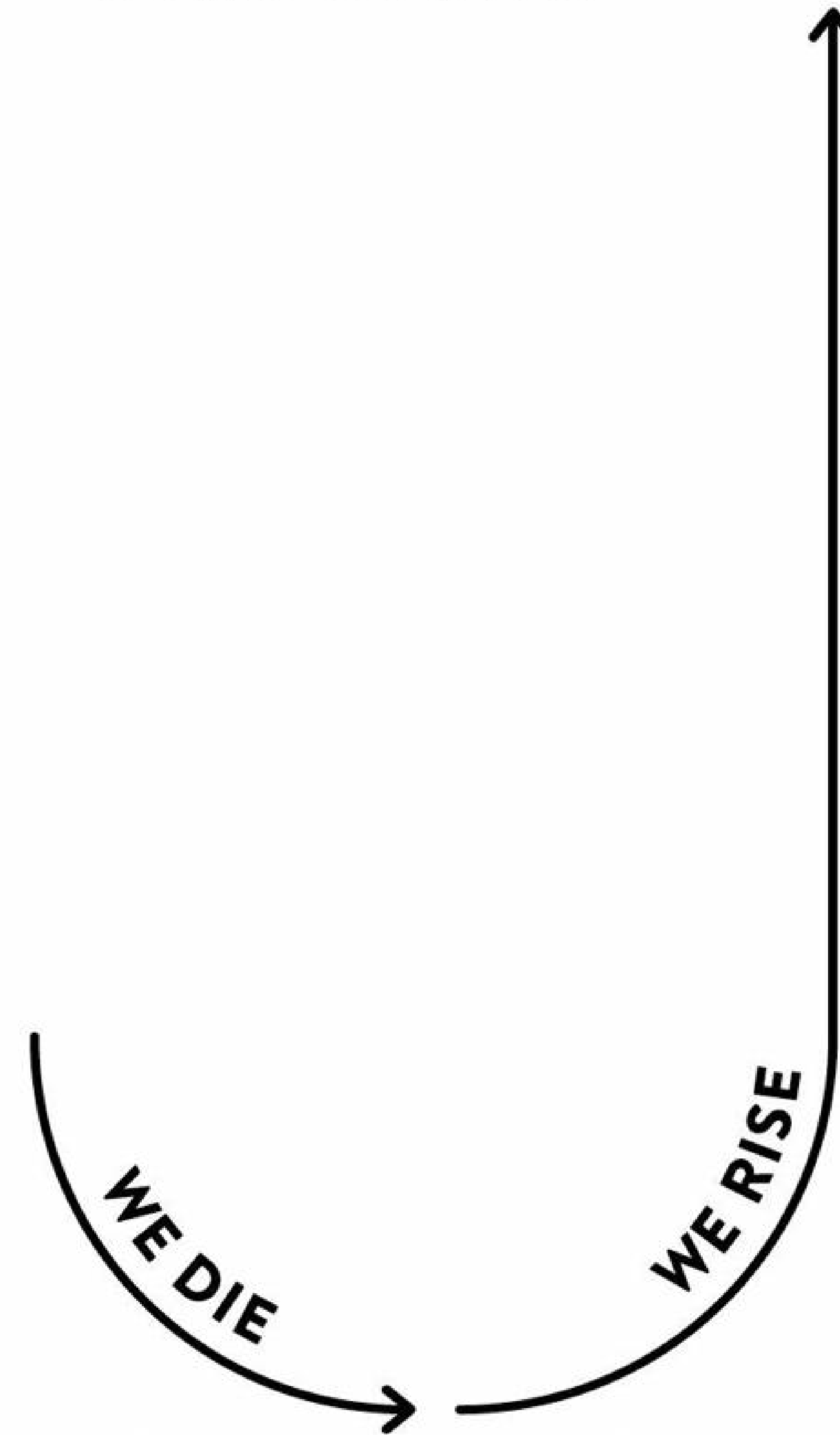
We're following a pattern

- It's not what we expect
- Jesus sets the pattern

JESUS'S J-CURVE



OUR J-CURVES



The J-Curve is the shape of the normal Christian life. Our lives mirror Jesus's.

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We're following a pattern

This is God's manner of working redemption. Weakness leads to power. Suffering leads to glory. What is right and good for Jesus is right and good for us. We are united with him in his death and resurrection and thus participate in his story. This is the reality and rhythm of the Christian life.

Mike Emlet "Content with weakness: Paul's Paradoxical Proposal"
JBC 40:1 2026

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We're following a pattern

So -

- We interpret suffering carefully
- We go to the gospels frequently

...a pattern that leads to life

John 14:19-20

Before long the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

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...a pattern that leads to life

- Eternal life
 - 'in-one-another' life
- (Clive Bowsher - "Life in the Son")*

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...a pattern that leads to life

All our suffering is headed towards life, not death. Death does not have the last word. As we are in Christ, we are being irresistibly taken to life. That is we are taken into his immortal life.

Ed Welch "Suffering to Life" blogpost April 2016 CCEF

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...a pattern that leads to life

You're the place where the Spirit of God is personally present...the Father and Son are at home with you. You can't stumble out of the Trinity's love. Resurrection reality is the reality we live in.

Clive Bowsher 'One' 2023 Union publishing

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...a pattern that leads to life

So -

- We notice signs of life
- We stay in relationship with church family

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...to life in fellowship and communion with Jesus

Philippians 3:10-11

I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

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...to life in fellowship in communion
with Jesus

Matthew 11:28-30 yoke

Psalms 84:5-7 pilgrimage

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...to life in fellowship and communion with Jesus

Our suffering doesn't separate us from our saviour but draws us into the closest possible fellowship with him as we journey along the same path as he did, with glory as its endpoint.

Mike Emlet "Content with weakness: Paul's Paradoxical Proposal"
JBC 40:1 2026

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...to life in fellowship and communion with Jesus

So -

- We help one another practise relationship with Jesus
- We find words to speak about our suffering with Him

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We suffer, Christ suffered...we are in Him

Being in Christ means:

- We're following a pattern
- ..that leads to life
- ..in fellowship and communion with Jesus

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Implications

- What has struck you? What have you been thinking about?
- What difference does being united to Christ make to how we respond to suffering?

Implications

- What difference does it make to how we walk alongside one another?
- What's different when someone isn't a Christian?

Video

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Kenny Larsen

Discussion

What difference would counselling through the lens of Union with Christ have made here?