



SPIRITUAL PROGRESS | PART 1

DISCIPLE MAKER

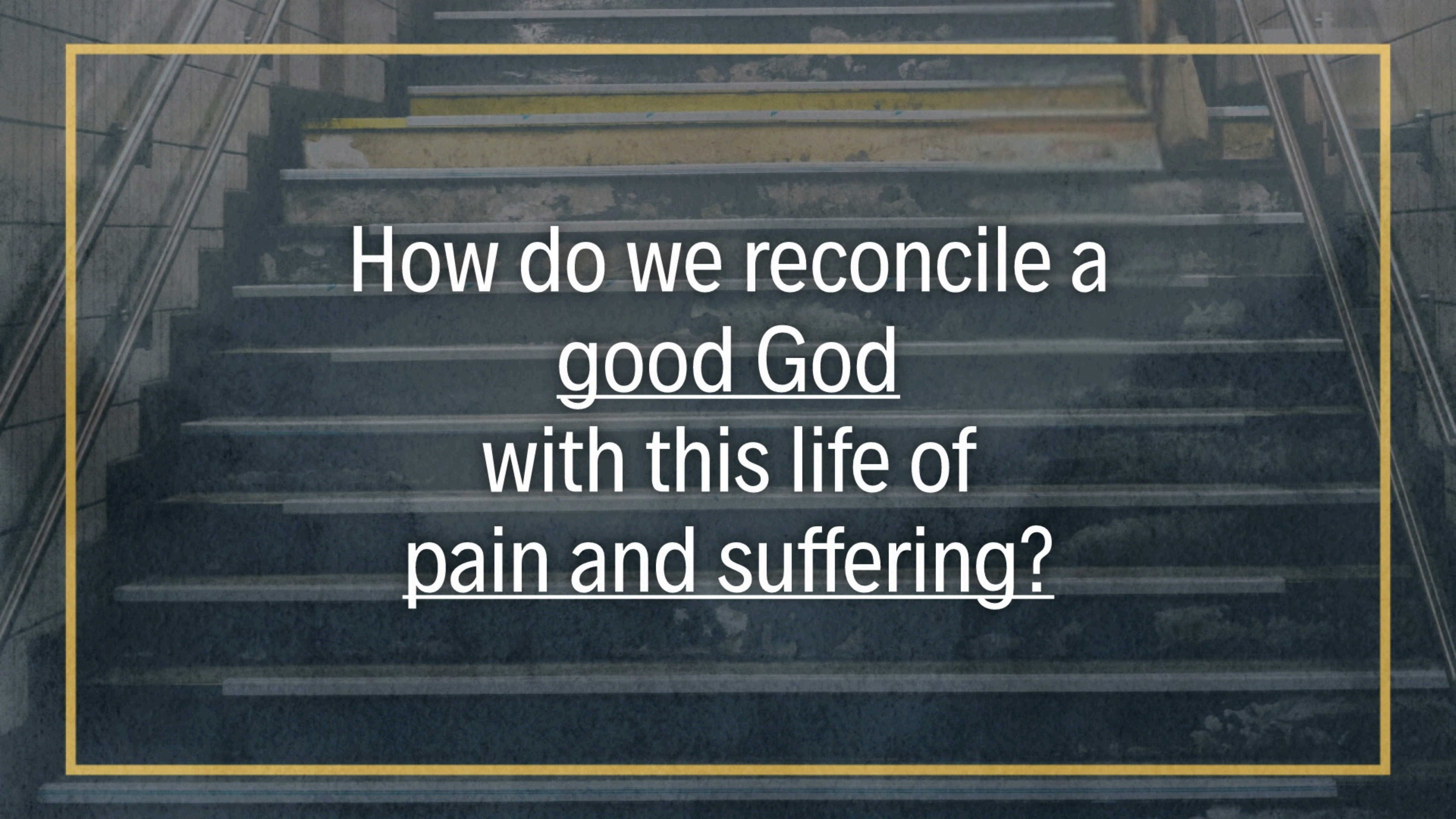


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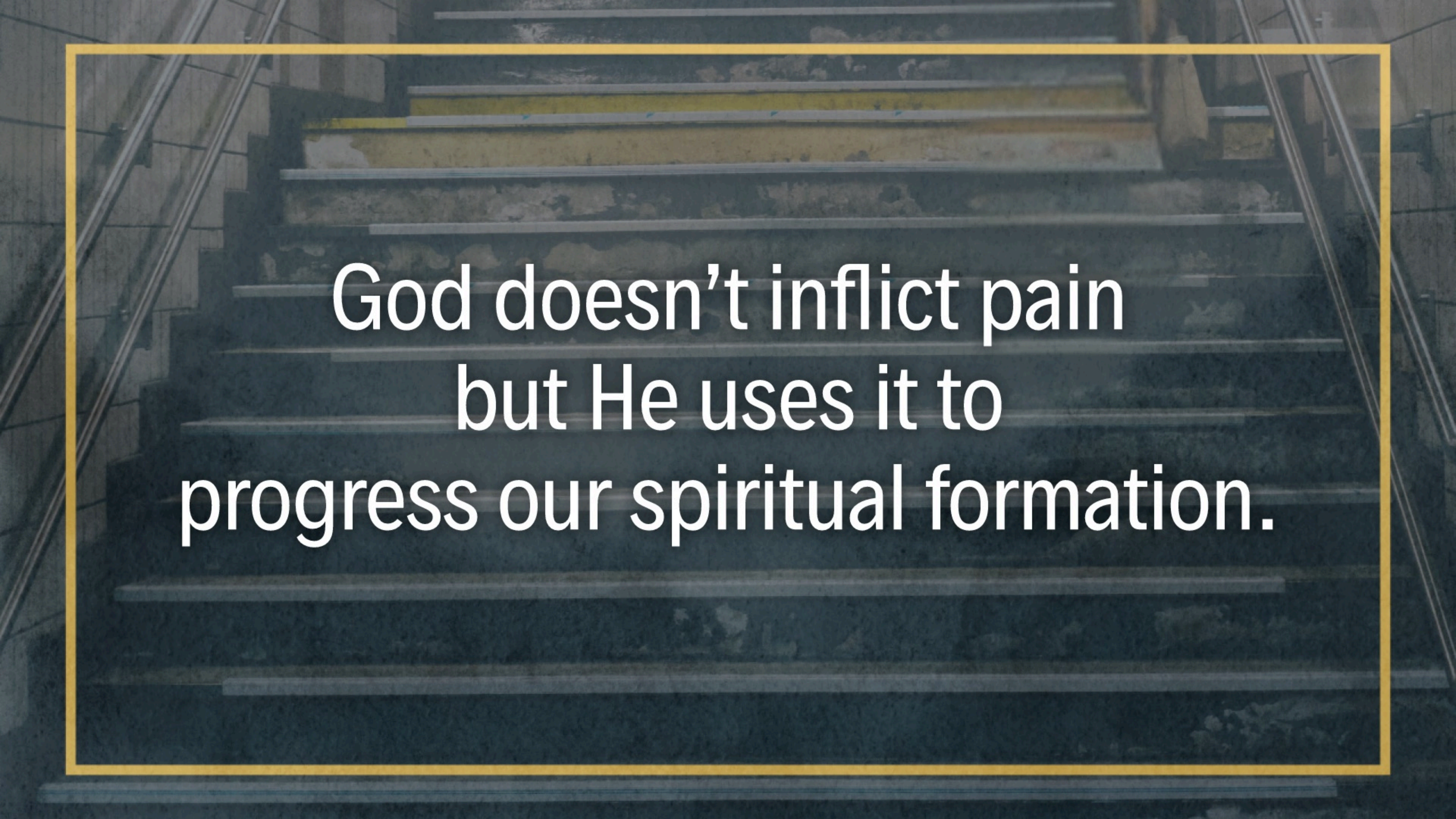


“Life is suffering.
That’s clear.
There is no more basic,
irrefutable truth.”

Jordan Peterson

A photograph of a staircase with a yellow highlight on one step, framed by a yellow border. The text is centered over the image.

How do we reconcile a
good God
with this life of
pain and suffering?



— God doesn't inflict pain
but He uses it to
progress our spiritual formation.

DISCIPLE MAKER

Jesus' mission was to launch a
Disciple Making Movement.

Our mission is to continue
making Disciples who make Disciples...

God uses pain to teach us obedience

⁷ While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God.

Hebrews 5:7–9

God uses pain to teach us obedience

⁸ Even though Jesus was God's Son, he **learned obedience** from the things he suffered.

⁹ In this way, God qualified him as a perfect High Priest, and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who **obey him**.

Hebrews 5:7–9

God uses pain to grow our character

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³ For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

James 1:2–4



‘Character is the makeup of a person that enables them to meet the demands of reality.’

Integrity, Dr. Henry Cloud



‘Character is the settled inner condition of a person that determines what they naturally do. Spiritual formation is the process of shaping that character to become like Christ.’

Dallas Willard

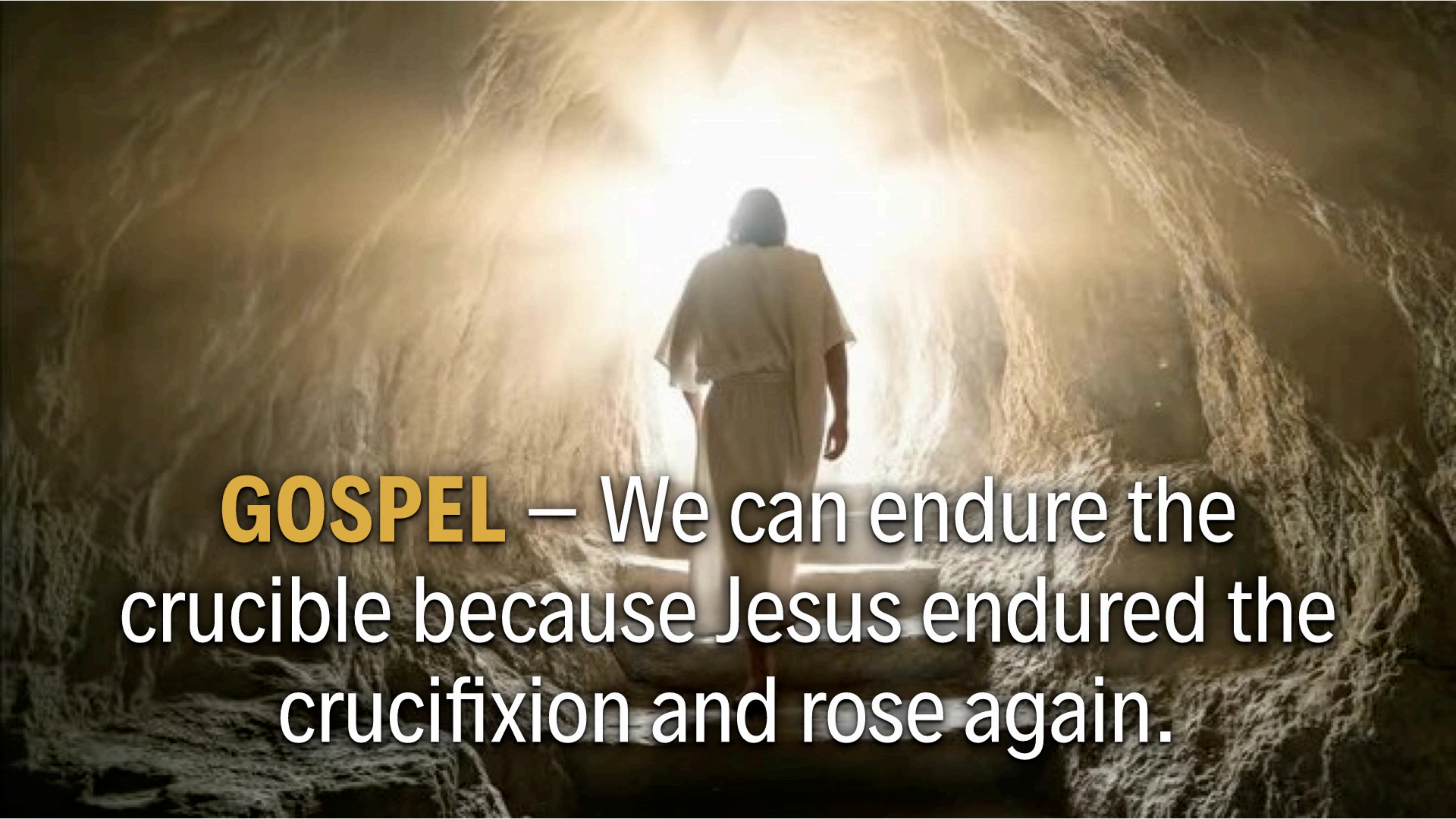
God uses pain to refine our faith

So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold.

1 Peter 1:6–7b

Crucible



A person wearing a white, simple robe is seen from behind, walking away from the viewer through a dark, narrow, and rocky tunnel. The tunnel's walls are uneven and textured. At the far end of the tunnel, a bright, glowing light emanates, creating a strong silhouette of the person and casting a warm, golden glow on the surrounding rock surfaces. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and journey.

GOSPEL – We can endure the crucible because Jesus endured the crucifixion and rose again.

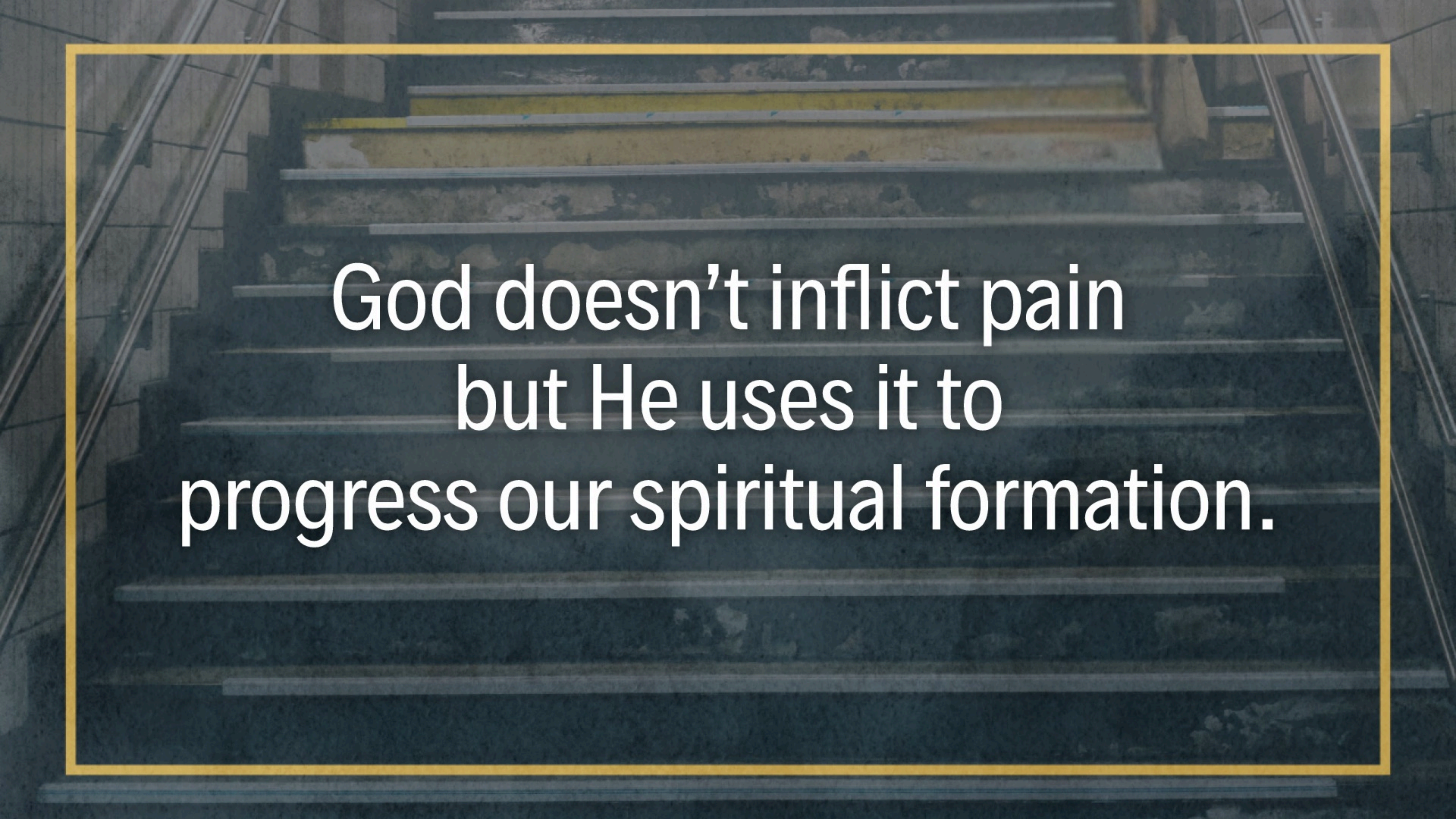
What happens if we don't
remain in the crucible?





What happens if we don't
remain in the crucible?

The pain creates a **rift** with God
and then we **drift** from God.



— God doesn't inflict pain
but He uses it to
progress our spiritual formation.

THE SIX STAGES OF THE CRITICAL JOURNEY

Janet O. Hagberg and Robert A. Guelich



1

RECOGNITION OF GOD



We become aware of our need for God and accept His invitation to follow Jesus.

2

LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP



We learn how to follow Jesus by forming spiritual habits and engagement with a Christian community.

3

PRODUCTIVE LIFE



We actively serving God and others with our unique gifts and skills. The “doing” stage.

4

JOURNEY INWARD (THE WALL)



God brings us to a Wall that takes us on an intense journey into the depths of God and our own heart.

5

JOURNEY OUTWARD



We again move outward to “do” for God but now we are humble, broken and profoundly reliant on God’s love.

6

LIFE OF LOVE



We have been transformed into love by God’s continued work on us. Our life is marked by deep union with Jesus and unconditional love for others.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Share one of your more painful moments in life? Did it cause you to doubt God's existence or involvement?
2. Have three people read a passage each – Hebrews 5:7–9, James 1:2–4, 1 Peter 1:6–7b. What do these passages teach you about how God uses pain and trials?
3. Review the 'Six Stages of the Critical Journey' – Which stage are you at right now? Why?