

Speaking to the soul



Suffering

**Since Jesus himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.
Hebrews 2:18**

For many years I have suffered from back pain, which I have in common with many of you because 60 to 70 per cent of people have back pain at some point in their lives. I find that people are very caring and sympathetic, but there is such a difference between those who are kindly sympathising but have never had back pain, and those who have. I am, of course, grateful for anyone's kindness but when it is clear that the person I am speaking to has, in some measure, shared my experience it is a particular blessing. Here in Hebrews the writer is keen to show that Jesus really understands the challenges that we face in life because he himself went through suffering and testing.

Later in this letter the writer makes it clear that the Church had suffered terribly for the faith. It must have been so difficult for this group of relatively new Christians to have suffered so much. He wrote that they had been exposed to public ridicule and beaten up for their faith. Some of them had been thrown in jail and others had had all their possessions taken from them. Jesus understood all that they had experienced. He knew what it was to be laughed at and rejected and went on to suffer the ultimate physical suffering of death by crucifixion.

Superficially our lives are obviously very different from Jesus'. But all the deepest experiences of life are ones that he knew. He faced joy and sadness, loving acceptance and bitter rejection, laughter and tears, peace and storms. When we pray and bring our lives before the Lord, we are not speaking to someone who lived a protected life far away from the bumps and bruises of life. We are speaking with one who shared fully the experience of being a human and who can therefore offer us his deep heart-felt sympathy.

QUESTION

In what specific way does it help you to know that Jesus understands your suffering?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I thank you that you understand me so completely. Amen

Photograph - Snow drops at Mount Stewart

