

# THE HANGOVER

Turn last year's mess into a year of meaning



## Part Four: Finding Meaning in Suffering and Success // Jeff Brodie // January 31, 2021

2020 was a year of extremes. You experienced more ups and downs, adversity and prosperity, suffering and success than usual. We've all experienced it differently, but we've seen a common theme: there's something about the ups and downs of life that reveals our hearts and what's important to us. Even after the pandemic is over, suffering and success will be a part of life. As we look ahead, how do we find meaning in those moments? They might have more in common than you think.

**Scripture:** [Proverbs 3:9-12 NLT](#), [James 1:9-10 NLT](#), [Philippians 2:5-8 NLT](#)

**Bottom Line:** Your success and suffering are made meaningful in the hope of Jesus.

### Getting Started:

*As you begin, remember that the goal isn't to get through all of the questions but to use them as a tool for good discussion.*

1. Looking back on 2020, what would you say are some of the ups (highs) you've experienced? What are some of the downs (lows)?

### Jumping In:

2. Jeff shared that moments of success and suffering can teach us a lot about ourselves. What have you learned about yourself in your high and/or low moments during the pandemic?
3. Tim Keller said, "Success and suffering will either darken your heart or make you wise, but they won't leave you where you are." Have you seen this to be true in your own life? Why or why not?
4. What would you say is the top lesson you've learned in your life through your success? What would you say is the top lesson you've learned in your suffering?

**Discuss:**

5. In his writings, especially in Ecclesiastes, King Solomon saw life as cyclical. He would have recognized suffering and success as an inevitable part of life, but only a *part*. Would you say our culture sees success and suffering the same way?
6. Read [Proverbs 3:9-12](#). Here we read King Solomon's instructions about what God wants to teach us in the highs and the lows of life. What is challenging to you about this passage? What is encouraging to you?
7. Do you find it hard to hear what God wants to show you about your heart in prosperity and in adversity? Why or why not? Which is harder for you--listening in seasons of success or seasons of suffering?
8. Read [James 1:9-10](#). How do you understand the relationship here between suffering/success and boasting/humility? Explain.
9. Often at the heart of suffering and success is the loss or gain of our own self-made meaning (finances, relationships, time, health). The challenge of success or suffering comes when we put our hope in those *things*. Why is it hard for us to remember that Jesus is enough in the highs and the lows?
10. Read [Philippians 2:5-8](#). How did Jesus model for us the approach we should have in suffering and success?
11. God wants to help you experience more meaning in both your highs and your lows. Identify an area of life that you could invite God into, and share that with your group so they can pray with you.

**Moving Forward:**

As you look ahead, you know that your life will experience highs and lows. Remind yourself of that in both situations, Jesus has been and will always be enough. He is with you, ready to forgive your sin and bring you the hope of his love.

Next week, Jeff will be exploring how to have meaningful conversations with people you disagree with. A big topic in 2020 and in 2021, for sure!