



The Sacred Journey

A Grief Share and Growth Small Group Program by Pastor Chris Surber

Session I: Learning to Lament



Source: <http://sites.nd.edu/oblation/2014/09/30/the-praise-of-lament/>

Learning Objectives

- In this session we will be exposed to biblical ideas concerning practices of lament in the Bible. Our aim is to discover **the value of lament** as an integral part of Christian Discipleship.
- In this session we will seek to broaden our concept of lament through guided discussion and follow-on exercises. Our goal is to broaden our personal appreciation for the value of **open lament**.

What is Lament? KJV Dictionary: Lament

- Lament is more than the passive acceptance of God's will or the presence of pain in one's life. It is an active response to pain and suffering in one's life in the direction of God in faith. It is an integral part of knowing God and being a disciple of Jesus.
- We grow through pain when we become active participants in our responses to it. We have to approach our pain actively.

What is Lament? KJV Dictionary: Lament

- To mourn; to grieve; to weep or wail; to express sorrow.
- To regret deeply; to feel sorrow.
- To bewail; to mourn for; to bemoan; to deplore.
- Grief or sorrow expressed in complaints or cries; a weeping.
- Torment, and loud lament, and furious rage.

Theological Foundations

- David “Took up” his lament. II Samuel 1:17-18
- **Lament is the active shaping of suffering.** Grief comes into people’s lives apart from their control. Circumstances shape the degree to which people experience suffering, but a person’s response to it shapes the degree to which it has personal and communal discipleship growth value.

Theological Foundations

- David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and he ordered that the people of Judah be taught this lament of the bow... (II Samuel 1:17-18 NIV)
- They learned a song that celebrated the life and death of Saul and Jonathon. Don't lock yourself away in or from grief. Face it. Look it in the eye. Honor the memory. Enter the pain.

Theological Foundations

- “Activity is a valuable solace for sorrow:—The people were very grieved; for Saul and Jonathan, the king and the crown prince, were slain. David indulges their grief: he writes them a plaintive song which the daughters of Israel may sing. But to take off their minds from their distress he at the same time issues the order to teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, for activity is an effectual remedy in the time of sorrow. Certainly the opposite of it would tend towards blank despair. Do not be tempted to brood over your affliction. Do not shut yourself up alone to ruminate upon the great ill that has befallen you, so as to nurse your wrath against God: this can do you no good whatever.” (Biblical Illustrator, II Samuel 1:18)

Lament in the Old Testament – Psalms

- Consider the Psalms. Psalms of lament (of which there are many) give insight into the pain and circumstances of the psalmists who penned them and embody the collective heart of suffering.
- “Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.” (Psalms 4:1 NIV) [How many ways can this be said to God?]
- **Expressing distress is not at war with the life of faith.**

Lament in the Old Testament – Psalms

- The psalmists plainly place a great deal of emphasis upon the approachability of God. They believe that He is strong in love, quick to forgive, slow to anger, and cares for His people. Otherwise, the writers of these psalms would not turn to Him with their grief.

Lament in the Old Testament – Job

- Job's is not a faith of great maturity, but a simple faith in which he finds assurance of the character of God. This is further demonstrated in Job 2:9-10 when Job's wife confronts him in his suffering: "His wife said to him, 'Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!' He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said." Job's response – even in the anguish of his circumstance and in the lament expressed in the book through Job's friends, his own cries, and the book's dialogue—displays a kind of resolute trust in the character of God.

Lament in the New Testament – Jesus

- He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. (Luke 22:41-45)

Lament in the New Testament – Jesus

- The cry of lament is plainly not a departure from trust in God as even the Son of God does not hesitate to cry out in distress at the impending passion that He must endure. Even Jesus's words in verse 42 are not evidence of a lack of trust in the divine plan of redemption; they are the palpable cry of the God-Man about to endure the Cross. Sorrow, suffering, and pain are necessary aspects of Christian discipleship because they are essential components in God's plan for redemption and sanctification.
- **They are inherent in salvation in Jesus Christ.**

Lament in the Church Today

- Lament is among the chief components missing in churches today. A message of present prosperity has usurped even the possibility of rejoicing in suffering, knowing the good that it can produce when coupled with increased devotion to and dependence upon God. In the Old Testament it is common to find mourners expressing their grief outwardly.

Lament in the Church Today

- In the Old Testament, examples of lament abound. In the New Testament suffering and trial is no less abundant. For lament to once again become a part of the daily discipleship of believers, the Church has to rediscover its value. It is more than experiencing pain and sorrow—conditions common to all humanity. It is the open and outward expression of pain in crying out to God for healing and help in the time of trouble.

Guided Discussion – Embracing Lament

- What personal barriers keep you from *embracing* lament?
 - What has shaped how you grieve? Examples? Theology? Self Expectations? Needs of others?
- Does the phrase “embracing lament” seem oxymoronic?
- What are some practical ways that we can embrace lament?
 - In our outlook? In our speech? In our self-talk? In our mediation? What are we ruminating on? **Scripture?**

Guided Discussion – Defining Lament

- What does it mean to lament?
- In the Old Testament we see mourners clothing themselves in sackcloth and covering themselves in ashes.
 - How can we visually express lament?
 - How can we symbolize our pain in a way that reminds of God's loving care in the midst of it?

Guided Discussion – Expressing Lament

- We've seen some of the examples of lament in the Bible. How do you think that may affect your understanding of the need to lament or the meaning of lament?
- How is lament practiced today? Is it common today? Should it be? What are some examples that you can personally think of, or that you've observed with regard to the outward expression of grief?
- What are some examples you can think of when people failed to grieve openly or lament privately? Did this hinder the person's ability to grow through their pain?

Post-Session Assignment

- Attend Ash Wednesday service, giving serious thought and heartfelt engagement with the ideas from this session. Enter into the Lenten season – as we travel together as pilgrims on the lonely road – with an intention decision to lament actively, not suffer passively.

Session II: Learning to Trust God



Source: <https://twitter.com/topgodtweets>

Learning Objectives

- In this session we will be exposed to biblical ideas regarding the holiness and sovereignty of God and encouraged to adopt this as a foundation for increased and growing trust in God.
- In this session participants will grow our capacity to apply trust in God in difficult circumstances, seeing them as growth opportunities rather than faith destroyers.

Session I Assignment Discussion



- Let's read a few of our letters out loud. **This is a safe space, free from judgment.**
- Can anyone relate to anything specific that was contained in that letter?
- Has anything in that letter sparked a feeling or thought in you that relates to the way(s) in which God may be at work in the life of the writer? In your life?

Session I Assignment Discussion



- **Questions to the author of the letter...**
- Has your faith increased or decreased as a result of the circumstances that you wrote about?
- Have you experienced the peace of God in this?
- Have you seen any miracles of His love through others in your pain?

What is biblical Trust in God?

- “Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” Psalm 37:4-6 (ESV)
- Absolute surrender is the highest ideal of trust in God. How do we get there in the face of suffering? Will we use our questions and doubts as catapults of faith or will they become walls of disbelief? **How we will understand blessing?**

The Two Trusts

- I am the creation of God. He is the potter and I am the clay.
- All that occurs in my life is within the scope His sovereign control and will.
- God purposes or allows all that occurs in my life.
- God set my life in motion. I make myself.
- God may choose to help me but He is far off. I am basically on my own.
- Many things that happen are random and without purpose.

Can God be Trusted? *Theodicy*



Christian Apologist,
Dr. William Lane Craig.

The Nature of God – *Attributes*

- Aseity
- Eternity
- Goodness
- Graciousness
- Holiness
- Immanence
- Immutability
- Wrath
- Impassibility
- Impeccable
- Incomprehensibility
- Incorporeality
- Infinity
- Jealousy
- Love
- Mission
- Oneness
- Providence
- Righteousness
- Simplicity
- Sovereignty
- Transcendence
- Trinity
- Veracity
- Mystery
- Omnipotence
- Omnipresence
- Omniscience

The Complexity of the Love of God

- **God's love is complex.** The presence of suffering in the lives of His children does not negate His love for them. The present reality of pain does not nullify the present reality of God's love.
- **God's purposes are His own.** To resolve the problem of God's love and suffering we need but apply one more factor – God has purposes seen and unseen, known and unknowable, in pain.
- **God's love isn't limited to showers of blessing.** It is more complex, rich, deep, and eternal than that. It isn't a Hallmark card love...

The Blessing of God?

- **God's greatest blessing is the gift of Himself for eternity, not Gifts from Himself in our present temporary state.** "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21 NIV84)

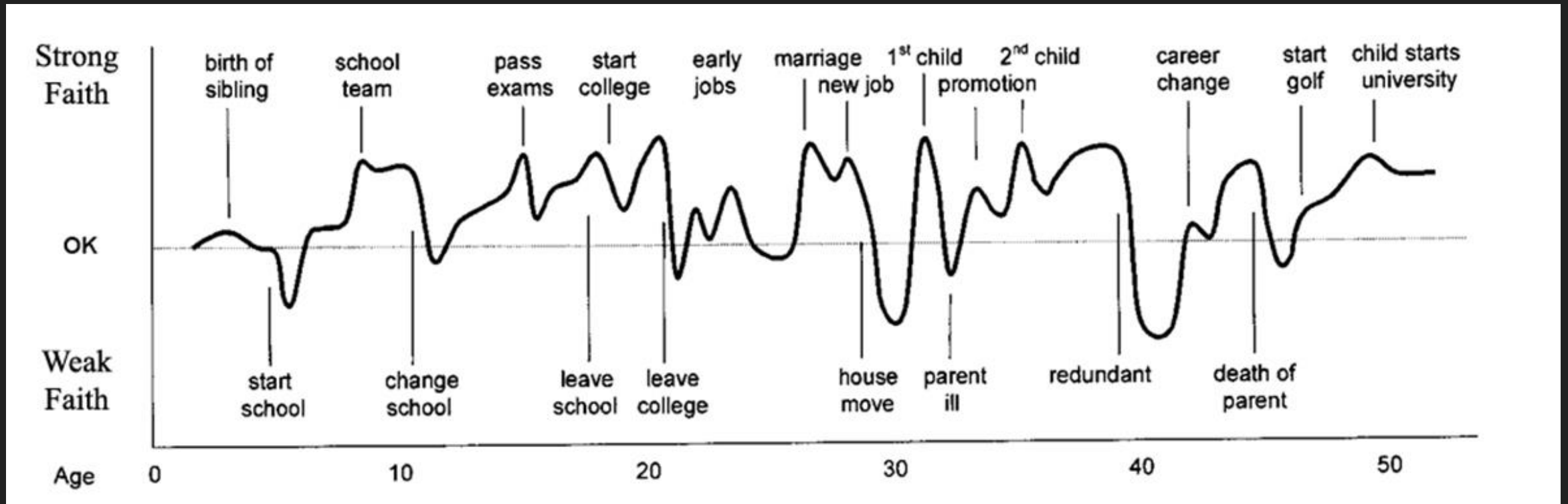
Guided Discussion – Trusting in God

- **To truly rely on God must experience grief and sorrow?**
- In light of Romans 8:28-29, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters,” what are some ways in which we can increase our trust in God through our grief?

Post-Session Assignment

- Create a chart showing a timeline of the major events of your life with a corresponding graph showing the nature of the progression or regression of your faith journey. The chart should highlight major or life-altering events along your journey. They might include childbirth, death of a loved one, relocation or a job change, and other significantly life-altering events. The purpose of this chart is to create a visual aide for discussion of the relationship between difficult circumstances in our lives and the way(s) in which those circumstances affect our relationships with God positively or negatively.

Post-Session Assignment



Session III: Learning to Fight



Source: <https://fromtheheartogod.wordpress.com/effective-prayers/spiritual-warfare-prayers/>

Guided Discussion – Life Charts

- Did the life chart help you think through your personal journey with God?
- Were there any specific memories triggered of God's faithfulness or times of doubt?
- Did you notice any trends in the charts of the group?
- Did you notice any interesting "take-aways" from someone else's chart?
- Were there any uncomfortable memories that this exercise triggered?
- Does it take courage to take this close a look at the relationship between our faith and the circumstances of our lives?

A Cosmic Warfare Worldview

Christians are not called to passively watch the trial and pain in the world. Healing for grief can come through taking action. Active discipleship comes not only through acceptance of the sovereign will of God; it comes with a concurrent acceptance of the reality that God works out His sovereign will in the world through believers.

Learning Objectives

- In this session participants will learn about intercessory prayer and action. God's people are not passive witnesses but active participants in the plan of God in the world.
- In this session participants will be equipped with the knowledge necessary to become people of intentional prayer and action. Specifically, we will be equipped with basic knowledge of intercessory prayer and intercessory action as disciples of Jesus.

A Cosmic Warfare Worldview

God is at war with evil in the world. While all that occurs is within the boundaries of His sovereign authority, He does call His children to fight against pain and evil. He will ultimately vindicate Himself in destroying evil utterly (Revelation 21, 22); however, during the present age, God wages war against evil in the world and does so most commonly through the direct prayerful action of His Church.

Spectrums of Light

- While researching this project, I explored primary perspectives of various Denominations and Church traditions. From Catholics I found identification with Christ in His sufferings. From the Puritans I learned trust in the sovereign action of God. From Pentecostals I learned that God uses the Church militant to fight spiritual battles in this world.
- Engaging in the battles can provide a new framework through which to view God's present purpose in our pain. Remember, the central idea of this course is that God is at work in us and in the world through our suffering. Our grief can become a window through which God will shine His light!

Intercessory Prayer – *Prayer Changes us!*

Prayer is first and primarily a means of gaining access to the presence of God. Prayer changes those who pray: “‘What can prayer do?’ That is a false way of stating a question. It might be better to ask, ‘What can we do for prayer?’ For prayer is ultimately a friendship: only base people cultivate a friendship in order to ‘use’ it.” Consequently, prayer is not properly understood purely as a means of gaining access to the riches, power, or provision of God. Prayer changes the hearts and minds of God’s people who then have clarity and power to engage the world in practical ways in order to express the purpose, plan, and glory of the God they serve.

Intercessory Prayer – Isn't God Sovereign?

- “Here we have, I believe, the reason for the necessity of prayer. God chose, from the time of the Creation, to work on the earth through humans, not independent of them. He always has and always will, even at the cost of becoming one. Though God is sovereign and all-powerful, Scripture clearly tells us that He limited Himself, concerning the affairs of earth, to working through human beings.” (Dutch Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*, 1996)

Spiritual Authority

- Luke 10:19: “Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.”
- Luke 9:1: “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases.” (ESV)

Spiritual Power

While traveling, a man came to a little church. On the roof was a devil fast asleep. He went along farther and came to a log cabin which was surrounded by devils all wide awake. He asked one of them what it meant. The demon said, "I'll tell you. The fact is that the whole church is asleep, and one devil can take care of all the people; but here are a man and a woman who commune with God in prayer, and they have more power than the whole church..."

Spiritual Power

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**” James 5:16 (KJV)

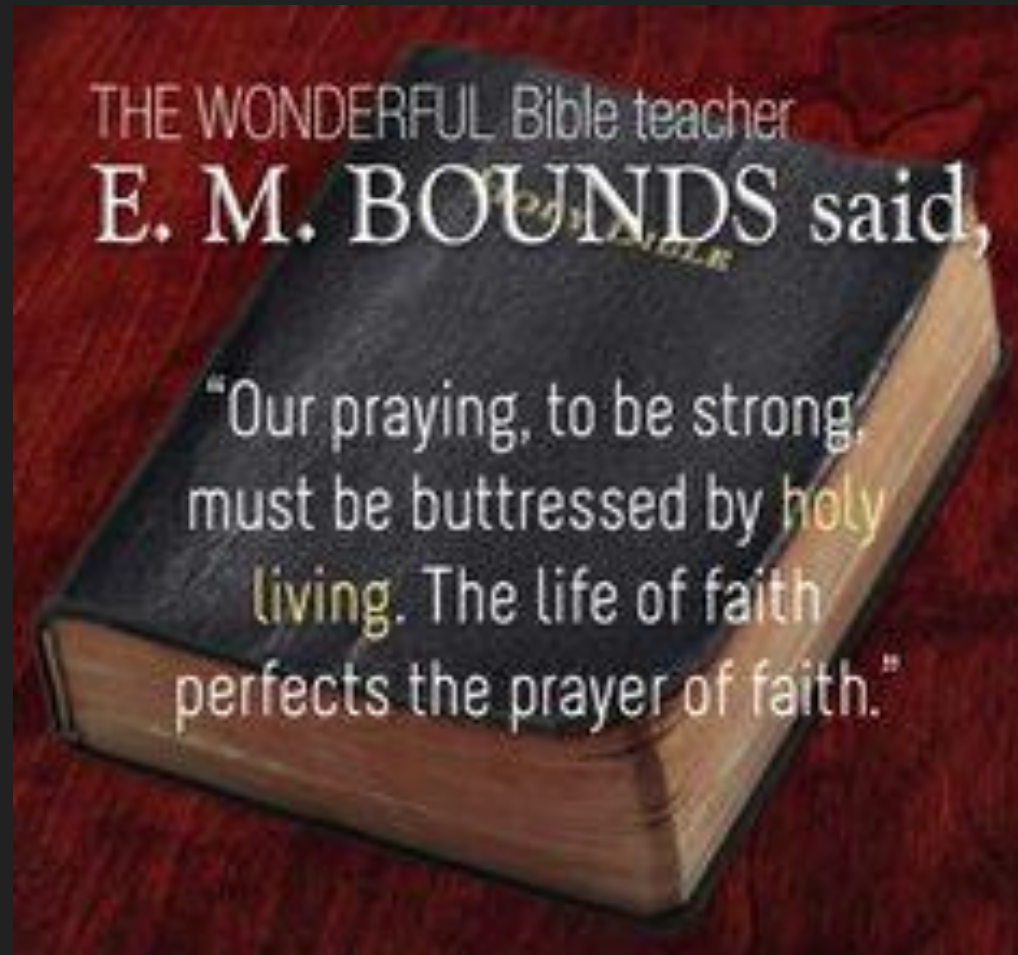
God has vested His people with power if we will but engage in the act of prayer we will see that power manifest in our lives and in the world. He will lead us in the mysterious union of our wills with His – our prayers becoming the vehicles the very rivers of blessing in the world around us.



Intercessory prayer is an act of communion with Christ, for Jesus pleads for the sons of men.

~ Charles Spurgeon

Intercessory Action



Intercessory Action

- “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” (Matthew 25:35-36)
- This is the way we are to **walk** in the world.

Intercessory Action

- “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)
- This is the way we are to **talk** in the world.

Great Commandment – Great Commission

Matthew 22, Matthew 25

- Share Compassion
- Give Physical Needs
- Care About People Today
- Enter Into Their Current Suffering

- Use our suffering as a platform to identify with the world and in the process find healing as wounded healers.

Matthew 28

- Share Christ
- Give Spiritual Needs
- Care About People Eternally
- Enter Into Their Eternal Concern

- Use our common humanity and spiritual needs as a platform to speak eternal life into the lives of others.

Intercessory Action

The bold Christian activist of his day, William Wilberforce, wrote, “In the language of Scripture, Christianity is not a geographical, but moral term. It is not being a native of a Christian country; it is a condition, a state; the possession of a peculiar nature.” The Christian life is one of pilgrimage through the darkness of this presently broken world. We suffer the trial and travail of this broken world alongside all others who live in it. We do so with one distinct advantage: we know and are known by God, who is Lord of history.

Post-Session Assignment

Create a spiritual warfare prayer journal. Make a plan for regular prayer which includes specific times and topics for prayer. Or, create a spiritual warfare action journal. Or Both. How will you take action as a part of God's action in the world? Create a journal with a specific plan to do and keep notes on what you have done. Perhaps you can join or create a ministry team at your church or plan to engage in the battles in life in some other direct and specific way.

Session IV: Seeing Sacred Beauty



Learning Objectives

- In this session we will consider ways in which God uses grief and sorrow to open our spiritual eyes more fully to the beauty and worth of Christ and to increase our desire for Him.
- We will consider the idea that there is nothing more beautiful or of substantive worth than Christ and Him alone.
- **First, let's review the prayer journal, prayer plan, or action plan we made.**

Suffering Reveals Deep Needs

- Suffering reveals our limitations.
- Suffering reveals the limitations of others.
- Suffering reveals our biases, judgmental potentials, and unrepentant sin.
- Suffering presently reveals past hurts in us and others.
- Suffering reveals deep personal needs for growth in the same way that spring heat reveals potholes that snow could hide but never heal.

Suffering Reveals Growth Opportunities

Against the dark backdrop of human suffering and sorrow the light of Christ shines all the more fully. Suffering highlights human weakness and need for God which, if embraced, increases dependence. This is not to imply or suggest that the process is comfortable. Who prefers discomfort to comfort, sorrow to joy?

Suffering Reveals Growth Opportunities

“Who doesn’t want to lick the filling from the Oreo? Who doesn’t want the crust cut off the sandwich? Who doesn’t want all that is sweet and soft about Christianity? Love. Joy. Peace. Who of us wants to be men and women of sorrow, acquainted with grief?” (Gen Gire, Seeing What is Sacred)

God Doesn't Waste Pain

While humans often allow pain to turn into bitterness and bitterness into all forms of personal, social, and spiritual malady, God never wastes the opportunity to bring beauty out of the ashes of pain—hopeful redemption out of the chaos of present suffering. God is, by nature, creative, never wasting any opportunity to express His creative and good nature. C.S. Lewis writes, “The world is a dance in which God, descending from God, is disturbed by evil arising from creatures, and the resulting conflict is resolved by God’s own assumption of the suffering nature which evil produces.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*)

Suffering Brings Redemption “Home”

Our suffering does not in any way add to the redemption of Christ at the Cross. However, when we suffer, when we experience grief, when are sorrow-filled, it is an opportunity to embrace a deeper and richer understanding of the Cross and of salvation as we identify with Christ in His suffering. He offered His pain to God for us as He poured out His life at the Cross for redemption. We have the unique privilege of offering our pain to God who pours His life into us, redeeming our pain as a means of intimacy with Him.

Suffering Gives Redemption a Home

“It [**Church**] is more than a fellowship in common religion. It is an eschatological creation of the Holy Spirit ... This relationship exists between people because they share a common relationship to Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). A bond exists between all who are in Christ that is unique and transcends all other human relationships.” (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*)

Suffering Points to a Future Promise

“Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” – Revelation 21:1-4

Discussion Questions

- In what ways has pain of loss and suffering opened your eyes to the worth of Christ?
 - Have you grown in your appreciation of the promises of God such as those found in Revelation chapter 21?
 - Have you gained a deeper appreciation for the hope of heaven?
 - Have you gained a deeper appreciation for the promise of the resurrection and the eternal reign of Christ?

Discussion Questions

- Have you more significantly discovered your need for Christ?
- Have you realized more fully your own frailty in your grief?
- Have you realized more fully the frailty of others?
- What about the relative brevity of life?
- Has the event over which you presently grieve altered your view of the importance of each moment?
- Have you gained insight into the need to live in the present moment?

Discussion Questions

- Have you more significantly found the worth of Christ compelling?
 - Does the goodness of Christ seem more important to you now?
 - Have you struggled because of your pain to see the goodness of Christ?
- Have you more significantly seen the contrast between the often bleakness of life and the beauty of Jesus?

Post-Session Assignment

Write a letter to someone who has experienced grief similar to your own. The person may be from within the group but, if possible, try to find someone outside of the group. The intent of the letter is not to solve the problems of pain and grieving for the recipient of the letter. The purpose of the letter is to facilitate our understanding and potentially be a blessing to the recipient.

Post-Session Assignment

- (1) Did anyone write a letter to you when you lost your loved one?
- (2) If so, was it helpful? Why or why not?
- (3) What can you say to someone in order to encourage them in the Lord?
- (4) In what ways has your suffering enhanced your insight?

Session V: Identification with Christ



Learning Objectives

- In this session we will discuss what it means to identify with Christ in His suffering. We will consider what it means to share our suffering with the world as Christ did. We will examine the idea of not *wasting* pain.
- **First, let's share about the letters we wrote to others who have suffered similar loss.**

Theological Foundations

- “In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Peter 1:6-7)
- “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” (1 Peter 3:12-14)

Theological Foundations

- Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. **However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.** (1 Peter 4:12-16)

Bearing the Burden of Pain

- God works through suffering in redemption. Salvation was won at the Cross through the passion of Christ. Suffering is a vital aspect of the life of faith. There is a level of reliance upon God that is achieved in suffering that is seldom accomplished otherwise. “We must understand and acknowledge, if we are honest, that we attain an intimacy and dependency upon Christ when we suffer that we probably would not seek apart from it.” (Morgan, *Redemptive Suffering*) Identification with Christ may be a seemingly esoteric notion. So how do we identify with Christ in His suffering?

Suffering as Participation with Christ

- In 1 Peter 4:13 the Greek word translated “share” or “participate” (in His sufferings) is *koinōneo*. This Greek word usage is striking as this word is etymologically closely connected with *koinōnía*—a word found often in the New Testament which means “participation, communion, fellowship.” This is the Greek word famously translated “fellowship” in Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Suffering as Participation in Christ Church

Peter is plainly telling believers to do more than just see the suffering of Christ as something that accomplished something for them; he is inviting believers to move well beyond a utilitarian pragmatism toward the Cross and identify with Christ in His suffering as they suffer. At the very least Peter is drawing an important connection between present sufferings and our relationship with Christ.

What is Lacking?

- Colossians 1:22-24: “But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and **I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions**, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”

Perfect Hope is Lacking in Me!

- Suffering requires of us the testing of our faith.
- Suffering demands we consider the source of our hope.
- Suffering tests the bonds of Christian fellowship.
- Suffering insists upon a sincere pursuit of Christ.
- Suffering is a refiner's fire that purifies the sufferer.

Bearing the Name of Christ

- What's in a name? The way that we suffer and grieve, the way that we deal with pain in general, is a testimony to the world as to the evidence, or lack of evidence, for the purpose of God in the presence of pain in the lives of His children. Our attitudes are reflective of our understanding of God's purpose in our lives in all things. This component of suffering does have an external factor. Believers do have a responsibility in their pain to be a witness to the light of Christ. We are called to give evidence for the faith that is within us; even – perhaps especially – in our pain.

Bearing the Name of Christ

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Bearing the Name of Christ

- **Christ was transparent in His pain.** He didn't pretend that suffering doesn't hurt. He was sincere in His suffering.
- **Christ was, above all, obedient to the will of God in His suffering.** He surrendered all. Christ fulfilled all things as commanded and foretold of His suffering in the Scriptures.

Sincere Suffering

- It is honesty in our sorrow, not stiffening the upper lip, putting on a happy face, or some other exercise, that will facilitate our healing, spiritual growth, or our bearing the name of Christ to the world.
- Show the world when we are crushed and yet not forsaken...

Surrendered Suffering

- Christ surrendered all in His suffering at the Cross. He was obedient to the end; though He had the power to stop all that was transpiring: “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him [Peter], “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” (Matthew 26:52-54) In His suffering Jesus surrendered everything. **He laid down His very life.**

Discussion Question

- How does bearing the burden of sorrow potentially relate to sharing the worth of Jesus to unbelievers around us?
 - Is it possible that through our suffering in sincerity others may come to us with questions of meaning in their sorrow?
 - Is it possible that bearing sorrow in full surrender to God may be a light and a witness to those around us who suffer or who are looking for meaning in a world full of sorrow?

Post Session Assignment

Write a reflection paper of any length and in any format on your general experience through this course. How did the Lord speak to you? How did the Lord use other participants to speak to you? Have you grown spiritually or have seeds been planted for growth? Bring your reflection paper to the concluding session next week.

Session VI: Concluding Discussion



Source: <http://www.writerscave.org/writing/ShakierSamie/1722472/>

Session I: Learning to Lament



Source: <http://sites.nd.edu/oblation/2014/09/30/the-praise-of-lament/>

Session II: Learning to Trust God



Source: <https://twitter.com/topgodtweets>

Session III: Learning to Fight



Source: <https://fromtheheartogod.wordpress.com/effective-prayers/spiritual-warfare-prayers/>

Session IV: Seeing Sacred Beauty



Session V: Identification with Christ





The Sacred Journey

- ❖ Concluding Discussion
- ❖ Closing Remarks