

Carey Away Day - April 2016

- The medicine of laughter
- Life is about losing things
- Rejoice in what you have rather than concentrating on what you have lost

12) Don't fight God

- **1 Timothy 6:6** - Godliness with contentment is great gain
- **James 4:6-7** - Submit to his will
- **Philippians 3:12-14** - Move on
- **Psalms 103** – Be thankful
- **Habakkuk 3:17-18** – Rejoice in the Lord
- Matthew Henry's example

13) Delight yourself in the Lord

- Richard Wurmbrandt
- **Matthew 7:24-27** – What is the foundation of your life?
- **Jeremiah 2:13** - water-slime
- Recognize that the only person who will never disappoint you is God
- Suffering is designed to drive us to God
- *"He will not lead you in a way that you know, for that would profit you little. He will lead you in a way that you know not, so that through a thousand intimacies, the way may be forever memorable, both for you and for him"*
- **Matthew 11:28** – Cast your cares on the Lord
- **Hebrews 13:5** – He will never leave you or forsake you
- **Romans 8:31-39** – His love will never fail

14) Suffering can be an evangelistic opportunity

- Be careful not to take advantage
- **Luke 13:1-5** – the mystery of pain reminds us of the importance of repentance.
- **Acts 16:16-34** – danger often drives people to God

15) Discover the power of hope

- Heaven – the best is yet to be
- **Luke 10:20** - "Names written in heaven"
- Short term suffering and eternal joy
- **Revelation 21:1-4** – one day the curse will be removed
- **2 Corinthians 4:17-18** – these light and momentary sufferings are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory
- We are pilgrims and nothing here lasts – we are not home yet.
- Every joy and every sorrow is temporary
- Life is like a bridge – we are not supposed to settle on the bridge

A. THE WORLD IS BEAUTIFUL BUT BROKEN

- **Genesis 1-2** – The world is beautiful
- **Genesis 3-6** – The world is broken
- **Romans 8:22-23** – the creation groans – and so do we!
- **Genesis 1-2...Revelation 21-22** - we live in the middle of the book
- Suffering is universal - the only condition for suffering is to live long enough: **Job 5:7** – Sparks flying upwards; **Job 14:1** – Few days and full of trouble. We suffer... as humans (**Romans 8:22-23**)... as Christians (**Acts 14:22**) and... as servants (**Colossians 1:24**)

IN WHAT AREAS DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

B. GETTING OUR THEOLOGICAL BEARINGS (LUTHER'S THREE PILLOWS)

❖ God is Sovereign

- The Bible affirms God's sovereignty
- **Job 1-2** - Who caused Job's suffering?
- **Genesis 50:20** – Who sent Joseph to Egypt?
- **Acts 2:22** – Who sent Jesus to the cross?

❖ God is Good

- God has not washed his hands – He has rolled up his sleeves
- **Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 100:5** – Scripture affirms His goodness
- **Psa 147:3-4** – God controls galaxies & binds up the broken hearted
- **Romans 5:6-8** - The death of Christ proves that God cares
- The cross proves that suffering has a purpose

❖ God is Wise

- **Psalm 18:30** – God's way is perfect
- **Job 38-41** – God doesn't explain all His ways
- **Deuteronomy 29:29** – the secret things belong to God

Therefore - there is a purpose in pain

- **Romans 8:28** - God has a plan
- *"Despair is suffering without meaning"* – V Frankl
- To reach us, to teach us, to train us, to transform us, to use us

WHAT OTHER THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS MIGHT HELP?

C. WE ARE CALLED TO BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

- **Genesis 2:18** – God does not intend us to be alone.
- **Galatians 6:1-2** – The clear command
- **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** – One purpose of pain is to enable us to minister to one another
- **Hebrews 10:24-25** – The ministry of encouragement – who is addressed?
- **Ephesians 4:11-13** – Pastor-teachers are to prepare God's people for works of service – including mutual love and support.
- **Ephesians 6:10-20** – We are involved in spiritual warfare
- God ministers to us through people
- *"People who need people are..."* – the only people in the world

D. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1) Develop a sensitive and compassionate heart

- Take their suffering seriously and show compassion
- Encourage them to talk and learn to be a good listener
- **Avoid glib answers** - do not be judgmental
- Be patient - sometimes be bold and challenge them

2) Care for the whole person

- Not always easy to distinguish between spiritual, physical & psychological
- **1 Kings 19** – make sure they get all the practical help they need
- **James 2:13** - words without deeds are dead.
- Encourage them to seek medical help where appropriate.

3) Help each other to listen to the right voices

- A cacophony of voices - pain, circumstances and society
- "The Prosperity Gospel" - *"The blessed band of helpful healers"*
- *"All sickness is because of the presence of sin or the absence of faith"*
- Do not believing the lies that suffering tells you
- What does God say? Choose to believe his Word
- There is (ultimate) healing in the atonement

4) Help the helpers

- Who are the main carers? Who is on the front line?
- What are their principle needs? How can you support them?

5) See suffering as an opportunity for service

- What can they do for God? - William Carey's sister
- **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** – Be a channel of blessing
- **Philippians 1:22-24** – fruitful ministry in limited circumstances
- **2 Corinthians 12:8-10** – His grace enables us to serve God

- A powerful testimony to the sufficiency of God's grace
- God has used him as a channel to reach others with the gospel

6) Seek to glorify God – *this is your calling*

- **Romans 5:1-5** – Suffering is designed to make us holy
- Jim Packer – dying of cancer to the glory of God
- What is their calling? What does the Lord require of them?

7) Help them not to give in to negative emotions

- Negative emotions - anger, bitterness, frustration, helplessness and fear
- These emotions can lead to a sense of being alone and worthless
- Easy to develop a critical spirit, an ungrateful heart & a reputation for irritability
- Be aware of "carer anger"
- The Church's pity or paternalism can be frustrating
- Bishop Stanway – *"There is no future in frustration"*

8) Help them to grieve in a healthy way

- **Job 3:23-26** – help them to express their feelings honestly to God.
- Find a psalm of lament and use it (eg Psalm 31)
- Mourn and then leave it with God - release the disappointment to Him
- *"I will not say do not weep. Not all tears are evil"* - Gandalf

9) Check your priorities

- Disappointment is often caused by the idolatry of the heart - we love the wrong thing or we love the right things too much
- *"An idol is that which we look to for all the good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. The trust & faith of the heart is what makes an idol. That which the heart chooses and entrusts to is really your god"*
- **Ezekiel 14:3** - The heart is an "idol factory"
- **Revelation 2:1-17** – losing our first love
- **Jeremiah 2: 5, 11** – Idols are worthless
- Suffering robs us of our idols

10) Grow through suffering

Don't waste your suffering – it builds character (Rom 5:3-5), it produces fruit (Gal 5:22-23) and it forces us to trust God more (2 Cor 1:8-9)

11) Enjoy the blessings God gives you

- **Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:12-13** - Enjoy the temporal blessings that God gives
- **James 1:17** – All good things are from Him
- Live a balanced life and enjoy what God sends
- Cultivate a positive mental attitude