

# *Grief & Perseverance in Suffering*

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# Webinar Overview

- Welcome
- Introduction to Suffering
- Experiencing Suffering Today
- The Presence and Role of Grief in Suffering
- Helpful Tools for Those Who Grieve
- The Importance of Perseverance
- Perseverance in Suffering
- Question & Answer Session

# Introduction to Suffering

- What are we talking about when we refer to suffering?
  - Definition- Suffering is the experience of pain, hardship, and distress
- What is true about suffering?
  - It can be experienced in different ways and to varying degrees
  - It can stem from a specific event that creates short or long term pain
  - It can carry on through a series of events that further prolonged distress

# Introduction to Suffering Continued

- What is true of suffering? (Continued)
  - It is often hard to bear. It's helpful when we don't bear it alone.
  - It can affect our:
    - Spiritual well being- Suffering often takes us through dark valleys and troubled waters where we are tempted with doubt, despair, hopelessness (Psalm 23)
    - Mind- Suffering often stirs, challenges, and/or cripples us in our thoughts of discouragement, bitterness, depression, anxiety, stress etc. (Psalm 43:5)
    - Body- Suffering can affect us physically. It can cause all sorts of things- headaches, stomach issues, body aches, health conditions, persecution, torture, etc. (1 Peter 4:1)

# Experiencing Suffering Today

- What are some examples of how we experience suffering today?
  - Death/Loss
  - Consequences of Sin
  - COVID-19 Pandemic
  - Trials/Persecution
  - God's Chastening/Affliction
  - Mental health or medical conditions
  - Trauma/Abuse
  - What else?

# Grief in Suffering



“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”

- Jesus (John 16:22)

# Presence of Grief in Suffering

- Grief- An often forgotten part of suffering
  - What is grief? Grief is a deep sadness, sorrow, and pain after trauma or loss. Grief can happen for a variety of reasons, not just death (a dramatic or chronic change in a relationship, loss of an ability to do something, loss of youth, loss of independence, regret following severe consequences of a decision that was made, change in relationship due to aging/dementia).

# The Role of Grief in Suffering

- Some times we experience emotions that draw our attention away from the fact that we need to grieve
- What role does grief serve in suffering?
  - Helps us make progress through and beyond the trauma/pain
  - Helps us in the healing process
  - The Holy Spirit uses it to bring us to a place of peace



# Presence of Grief in Suffering

- Kübler- Ross 5 Stages of Grief (comments in brackets are mine):
  - Denial [Shock, don't want to face it]
  - Anger [Frustration, upset that it happened, victim, blaming God, blaming others]
  - Bargaining [What ifs, If only...]
  - Depression [Fog, sadness, despair]
  - Acceptance

Kübler-Ross, E., & Kessler, D. (2005). On grief and grieving: Finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss. New York ; Toronto: Scribner.

# Presence of Grief in Suffering

- Christian Perspective on the Kubler-Ross Model
  - Kubler- Ross grief stages are experienced by many people. However, consider the following observations:
    - It doesn't consider the work of grace, the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in the grieving process
    - It doesn't include the person who faces a crushing loss and feels an immediate grief
    - Certain people in suffering have a peace, rather than denial.
    - Actual Grief isn't one of the 5 stages. It would be good if that was included.

# Help for Those Who Grieve

## The comfort of the Scriptures-

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14- “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.”

# Help for Those Who Grieve

Psalm 23- The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

# Help for Those Who Grieve

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.”

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

# Help for Those Who Grieve

- The shadows of death are concerning and fear inducing some times. However, Jesus is with us. He faced and conquered death for us. The last word for the Christian is the resurrection.
- Helping someone who is grieving is like providing the right medicine, in the right timing, often in small amounts. Shine the light of the Gospel promises of Christ. Comfort them with the peace and hope that is within us.
- When the time is right, teach them about true closure. Closure doesn't mean that the memory of what happened disappears. Closure brings peace, removes the rawness, etc. The 2 Corinthians 1 comfort that comforts us is also the spiritual salve to soothe the hearts and minds of those who grieve.

# Tools to Help Those Who Grieve

- Effective tools to help those who grieve:
  - Prayer/Support System
  - Talk to them
  - Show up/Be there
  - REMEMBER-
    - People grieve in different ways for different lengths of time.
    - They may think they are done grieving, but then experience it later due to birthdays, anniversaries, special events, memorable moments.
    - Don't tell them how long they can grieve. Be prepared to journey with them as they grieve.

# Perseverance in Suffering

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:10-13





# Grief and Perseverance

- What is Perseverance?
  - Pressing forward despite difficulty or resistance
  - Running the Race (Hebrews 12:1-3)
  - Fighting the Good Fight (1 Timothy 6:12)
  - Standing fully Armored (Ephesians 6)
- How grief and perseverance connect
  - Grieving can help one persevere
  - As one perseveres that also helps as they grieve

# What is Perseverance? (Continued)

Regarding persevering in the faith:

“They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”

(Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 17.1,  
*Of the Perseverance of the Saints*)

# Importance of Perseverance

- God calls us to persevere, and is at work in us that we would do so
  - We are knocked down, but we must get back up, by the grace and work of God, and press on for the glory of Christ, our Lord.
  - We walk through the darkest of valleys, taking each step with the knowledge and comfort that Jesus is with us. He comforts us along the way.
  - We forget what is behind us and press forward for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

# Importance of Perseverance

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Acts 14:21-22

# Perseverance in Suffering

- Don't be surprised by suffering (1 Pet. 4:12). The Son suffered, so do those who follow the Son. You will not be spared the sufferings that the world experiences, but you will participate in them, both for the world's benefit and your own.
- Live by faith, see the unseen (Heb. 2:2). Normal eyesight is not enough. Your eyes will tell you that God is far away and silent. The truth is that he is close—invisible—but close. He has a unique affection for fellow sufferers. So get help to build up your spiritual vision. Search Scripture. Enlist others to help, to pray, to remind you of the Truth. Ask the God of comfort to comfort you.
- Suffering will reveal what is really in your heart. It will test you (Jam. 1:2). Where do you turn when tested? Do you turn toward Jesus or turn inward?

# Perseverance in Suffering

- God is God, you are not (Job 38-42). This is important. Humility and submission before the King can quiet some of your questions.
- Confess sin. There is nothing new here; it is a regular feature of daily life. Yet it always helps you to see the cross of Jesus more clearly. It is the quickest way to see the persistent and lavish love of God (Heb. 12).
- Keep an eye out in Scripture for the Suffering Servant. He has entered into your suffering, and you can enter into his. (Isaiah 39-53, John 10-21)
- Speak honestly and often to the Lord. This is critical. Just speak, groan, have someone read you a psalm and say a weak, “Amen.”

# Perseverance in Suffering

- Expect to get to know God better while in this wilderness. That is how he usually works with his people (Phil. 3:10-11).
- Talk to those who have suffered, read their books, listen to them. You are not alone. Insist on being moved with compassion as you hear other stories of suffering.
- Look ahead. We need spiritual vision for what is happening now and for where the universe is heading. We are on a pilgrimage that ends at the temple of God (Ps. 84).

*(Ten Things to Do During Suffering by Dr. Ed Welch, 2014)*

# Resources

- How Can I Help Someone Who is Grieving? <https://rts.edu/resources/how-can-i-help-someone-who-is-grieving/>
- What Grieving People Wish You Knew: <https://rts.edu/resources/what-grieving-people-wish-you-knew/>
- Ten Things to Do During Suffering: <https://www.ccef.org/ten-things-do-during-suffering/>
- Grieving After Suicide <https://www.ccef.org/book/grieving-suicide-help-aftershock/>
- Grief: Finding Hope Again <https://www.ccef.org/book/grief-finding-hope-again/>
- To Parents Who Have Lost a Child <https://www.ccef.org/parents-who-have-lost-child/>
- Moving Toward People <https://www.ccef.org/moving-toward-people/>
- An Open Letter to the Suffering Christian: <https://www.ccef.org/open-letter-suffering-christian/>



# Question & Answer Session