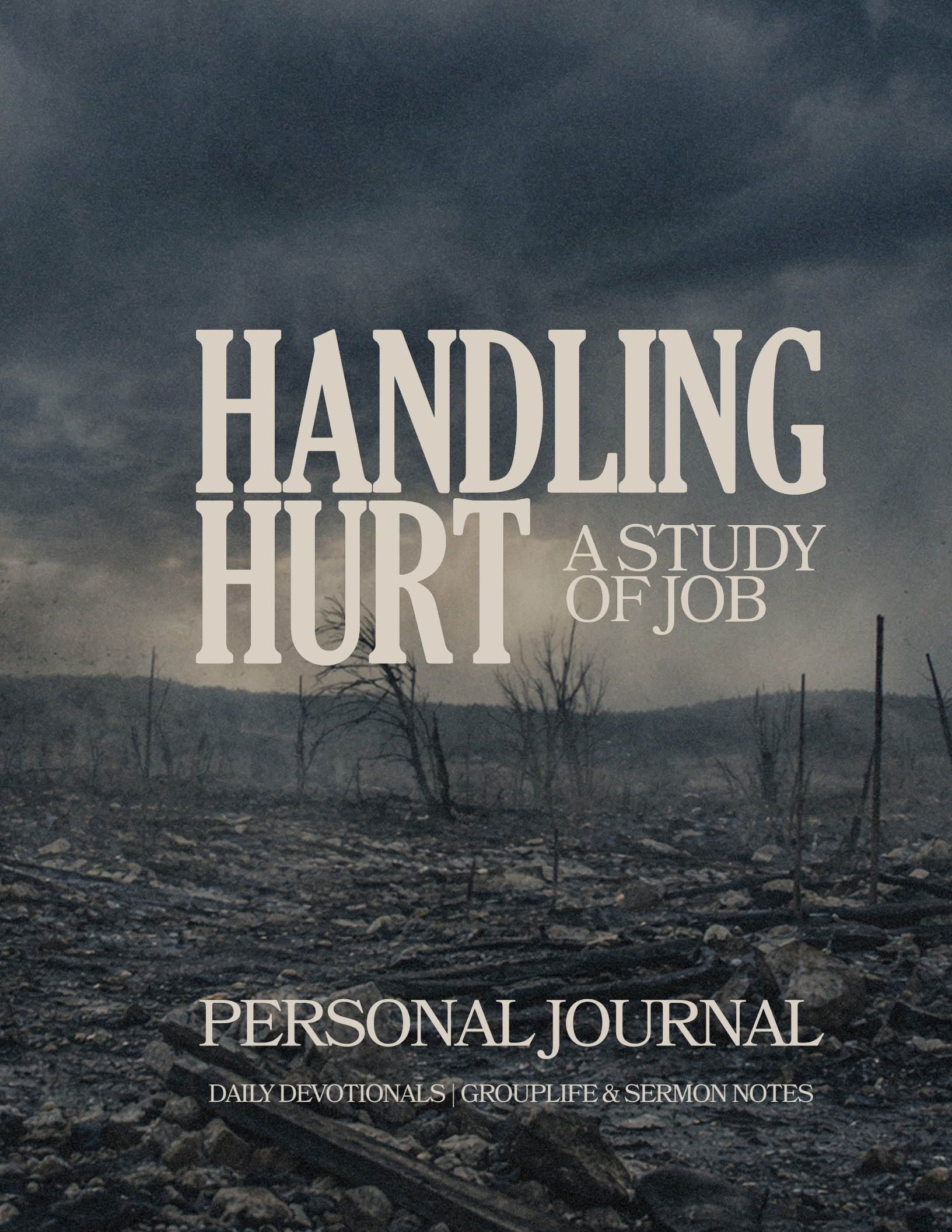


The background of the entire page is a dark, atmospheric photograph of a landscape. The foreground is filled with dark, jagged rocks and debris. In the middle ground, there are several bare, skeletal trees and shrubs. The sky is a deep, dark grey with some lighter, swirling clouds, suggesting a storm or a very late evening. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

HANDLING HURT

A STUDY
OF JOB

PERSONAL JOURNAL

DAILY DEVOTIONALS | GROUPLIFE & SERMON NOTES

HANDLING HURT

A STUDY OF JOB

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A WORD FROM OUR SENIOR PASTOR

I love the start of a new ministry year. Ever since the Fall of 2020, we have started the Fall semester with a churchwide growth emphasis. During these five weeks, my sermons, GroupLife lessons, and devotional content written by our very own Adult Discipleship Pastors all align to provide a deeply transformative experience for you. When we saturate our personal and corporate worship with God's Word in these various ways—God uses such seasons to deepen our love, trust, and dependence on Him. I've seen God do this close-up with many of you, and I've seen God deepen our church family as a whole. I love this time!

This Fall, our churchwide growth emphasis is titled *Handling Hurt*. The Old Testament book of Job will be our guide. Why this study? In all the years of my pastoral ministry, I've observed that nothing disorients one's faith like personal pain. Some end up with a stronger, more robust faith that shines even more brightly. But sadly, others sink under the sorrow of human suffering. I've seen godly men and women shipwrecked from decades old assaults from the enemy. He wants nothing more than wounds from abuse, sickness, tragedy, addiction, and death to remain open and festering. As your Senior Pastor, my heart aches for you to encounter God, especially in your hurts. Just as Job did.

Job came to experience God personally as the God who delights in personally raising beauty out of the ashes. I have witnessed this first hand on countless occasions. And I want that for you when you face your darkest hour. I also want you prepared to come alongside others as a faithful Ambassador of Christ when they find themselves reeling from the world's worst. How you handle hurts will form your soul, your future, and your influence on others.

So, join our church family through the end of September as we saturate ourselves in the Book of Job and experience the God it reveals. Read through the Book of Job with us. Journal through the devotional content between Sundays and unpack it with others in a GroupLife class. Attend Worship weekly and take notes in your Personal Journal as you hear what the Lord has put on my heart for our church family. When we see God for who He truly is, even dimly through the ominous clouds of our darkest hurts, we can't help but make Jesus our all. God invites us to experience Him fully in our hurts, and to share Him with all in theirs, too. I can only imagine what His heart has in store for us.



Jim Heiligman

Pastor Jim Heiligman

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HOW TO USE HANDLING HURT

You can get the most out of this churchwide growth emphasis by giving God plenty of opportunity to speak. Hearing Jim's sermon will be one opportunity. Discussing in GroupLife is another. But reading and journaling through the devotional content and reading through Job between Sundays will position you to linger at the feet of Jesus to learn even more intently from Him. The Pastors who wrote these devotionals will lead you to spend meaningful time with the Lord as you consider truths about God found in the pages of Job.

SERMON SERIES

On August 23rd, our new ministry year kicks off with a churchwide growth emphasis called *Handling Hurt*, based on the Old Testament book of Job. Our Senior Pastor will preach the introductory *Handling Hurt* sermon, followed by five weeks of coordinated study with devotional content and GroupLife lessons. We strongly encourage you to write down any discoveries God reveals about Himself and His will in your journal.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

As soon as you pick up your copy of the *Handling Hurt Personal Journal*, read through the Preface and introductory pages before August 23rd, in preparation for Kickoff Sunday. The Monday following the Kickoff Sunday introductory sermon, you will begin working through daily devotional readings. There are five readings for each weekday, with a catch-up/reflection page on Saturdays and a note-taking page for Sundays.

Some of you may want to add to the daily devotional readings a few chapters from Job using the Job Reading Plan schedule. By the end of the study, you will have read through Job in its entirety. The Christian Standard Bible was selected for these devotional readings, but we encourage you to have your favorite translation open as well. We also encourage the use of free online Bible Study resources, like netbible.org, to make the most of your study by comparing wording from multiple translations, reviewing original language insights, and reading available commentaries.

SUNDAY MORNING GROUPLIFE CLASSES

Your participation in a Sunday morning GroupLife Class will reinforce the content every week with complementary content you will explore as a group. If you are not a member of a GroupLife Class, please begin attending one. A helper at the church Welcome Desk will help you find a few classes to try until you find the right fit. You can find out more about GroupLife in the Appendix.

CHURCHWIDE SCHEDULE

PRIOR TO AUGUST 23, 2026

- Pickup your free Personal Journal; read through the Preface before Week 1.

FALL MINISTRY YEAR KICKOFF SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 2026

- **IN WORSHIP:** Jim will preach the HANDLING HURT Introductory Sermon.

WEEK 1

- **AT HOME:** Week 1 readings begin Monday, August 24; Read Job 1-9.
- **IN WORSHIP:** Jim will preach the Week 1 sermon, August 30.
- **IN GROUPLIFE:** GroupLife will do the Week 1 lesson, August 30.

WEEK 2

- **AT HOME:** Week 2 readings begin Monday, August 31; Read Job 10-16.
- **IN WORSHIP:** Jim will preach the Week 2 sermon, September 6.
- **IN GROUPLIFE:** GroupLife will do the Week 2 lesson, September 6.

WEEK 3

- **AT HOME:** Week 3 readings begin Monday, September 7; Read Job 17-24.
- **IN WORSHIP:** Jim will preach the Week 3 sermon, September 13.
- **IN GROUPLIFE:** GroupLife will do the Week 3 lesson, September 13.

WEEK 4

- **AT HOME:** Week 4 readings begin Monday, September 14; Read Job 25-33.
- **IN WORSHIP:** Jim will preach the Week 4 sermon, September 20.
- **IN GROUPLIFE:** GroupLife will do the Week 4 lesson, September 20.

WEEK 5

- **AT HOME:** Week 5 readings begin Monday, September 21; Read Job 34-42.
- **IN WORSHIP:** Jim will preach the Week 5 sermon, September 27.
- **IN GROUPLIFE:** GroupLife will do the Week 5 lesson, September 27

JOB READING PLAN

WEEK 1

Begins August 24

- ☐ Day 1: Job Chapters 1-3
- ☐ Day 2: Job Chapter 4
- ☐ Day 3: Job Chapter 5
- ☐ Day 4: Job Chapter 6
- ☐ Day 5: Job Chapter 7
- ☐ Day 6: Job Chapter 8
- ☐ Day 7: Job Chapter 9

WEEK 3

Begins Sept. 7

- ☐ Day 1: Job Chapter 17-18
- ☐ Day 2: Job Chapter 19
- ☐ Day 3: Job Chapter 20
- ☐ Day 4: Job Chapter 21
- ☐ Day 5: Job Chapter 22
- ☐ Day 6: Job Chapter 23
- ☐ Day 7: Job Chapter 24

WEEK 5

Begins Sept. 21

- ☐ Day 1: Job Chapter 34-36
- ☐ Day 2: Job Chapter 37
- ☐ Day 3: Job Chapter 38
- ☐ Day 4: Job Chapter 39
- ☐ Day 5: Job Chapter 40
- ☐ Day 6: Job Chapter 41
- ☐ Day 7: Job Chapter 42

WEEK 2

Begins August 31

- ☐ Day 1: Job Chapter 10
- ☐ Day 2: Job Chapter 11
- ☐ Day 3: Job Chapter 12
- ☐ Day 4: Job Chapter 13
- ☐ Day 5: Job Chapter 14
- ☐ Day 6: Job Chapter 15
- ☐ Day 7: Job Chapter 16

WEEK 4

Begins Sept. 14

- ☐ Day 1: Job Chapter 25-27
- ☐ Day 2: Job Chapter 28
- ☐ Day 3: Job Chapter 29
- ☐ Day 4: Job Chapter 30
- ☐ Day 5: Job Chapter 31
- ☐ Day 6: Job Chapter 32
- ☐ Day 7: Job Chapter 33

PREFACE

The book of Job is regarded as one of the great works of ancient literature. Literary giant Alfred Lord Tennyson declared, “The Book of Job is the greatest poem of ancient and modern times.” Victorian era philosopher Thomas Carlyle considered Job “one of the grandest things ever written with pen.” That shouldn’t surprise us. For Job wrestles with some of life’s biggest questions: Why is there suffering in the world? Why do bad things happen to good people? Where is God when life seems unfair? The book of Job does not shy away from wrestling with any of these questions, and is unflinchingly honest in our need to question God and cry out to Him from the midst of our pain. Grief and pain are inevitable in this life, and Job confronts us with whether or not it will draw us closer to God or drive us farther away from Him. This Preface is written to give you a sound overview of the Old Testament Book of Job, along with some of the critical issues that form its proper understanding.

AVOIDING COMMON HANGUPS

Before we dive into our Job overview, let’s look at 4 common hangups for modern readers of the Book of Job. First, we must honestly acknowledge that it’s unavoidable for us to bring our 21st century mindset and values to the reading of ancient Scripture. So it’s important that we have a posture of humility. If not careful, these 21st century lenses through which we read Job can prohibit a proper understanding of God’s Word and how He meant it to be understood. Here are 4 important truths that will aid your understanding.

Personal Bias — One of the most common mistakes the readers of Scripture make when reading Job is to interpret Job through the lens of our personal biases. For example, when God talks directly with Job, we can project a harshness upon God’s correction based on personal experiences with parental correction, or modern sensibilities. However, when we go to the Scriptures as a whole, we discover that compassion, sympathy, and love form the heart and manner of God’s correction of His children. God’s self-revelation in the Bible must outweigh any biases we bring to its reading.

Progressive Revelation — The setting for the Book of Job was during the time of Genesis, so it’s among the oldest of the books collected in our Old Testament. As you read Job, remember that Job did not have The Law or written Scripture. He was relying on the general revelation of creation, stories that had been faithfully passed down about the Creator, and any instances of direct revelation from God Himself to form his theology. With this limited amount of revelation, Job was remarkably faithful. We should aspire to that example. When we read Job, we can rightly infer truths about God if those inferences are confirmed by Scriptures written later. It would be inappropriate, however, to make inferences about God in Job without a Scriptural basis for doing so. Such inferences would be nothing more than baseless speculation.

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive — Job and his friends reveal their personal theologies in the Book of Job. While these descriptions of God are in Scripture, some of those descriptions are wrong,

or incomplete at best. When we read Job, we must remember that it contains many human claims about God which are often rife with error, especially common when trying to make sense of suffering. While descriptive of a particular viewpoint, they are not meant to be prescriptive—in other words, these erroneous viewpoints are not meant to prescribe, or dictate, what our theology of God should be. In Job 42 God speaks to Eliphaz and says, “I am angry at you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about me” (Job 42:7). So we must be careful not to allow descriptive verses in Scripture assert what is false about God. For us who consider God’s Word to be without error, suggesting that the Scriptures contain anything false can cause us to squirm. However, understanding the difference between descriptive and prescriptive language is essential for recognizing that God’s Word is true in everything it asserts to be true. The thoughts and words of some in the Bible do not describe God as He truly is.

Applying Old Testament Commands — The Bible is God’s self-revelation to us. It primarily addresses how people can rightly be related to God. In the Old Testament, the means for ongoing favor with God was faithful obedience to His commands. God’s Spirit rested only on those who carefully followed the law or were set apart for special purposes—but even then, the Spirit would come and go. Though the Old Testament reveals that The Law contains God’s righteous standard, The Law is powerless to revive spiritually dead hearts to want to obey it.

The New Testament paradigm for rightly relating to God, however, is grace. God’s Spirit permanently indwells those who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord by faith, making them spiritually alive, motivated, and empowered to live in progressive righteousness. God gets the glory for producing this kind of God-authored righteousness. In contrast, independent self-effort neither glorifies God nor meets His standards of righteous living. If we could glorify God through self-effort, we would not need a Savior! So, whenever a command is given in the Old Testament, ask yourself how someone under the old covenant would have attempted faithful obedience to it. Then ask how you should attempt obedience to this timeless command through your abiding relationship with Jesus.

OUTLINE* OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Chapters 1-2	Prologue — “Will a person fear God for nothing?”
Chapter 3	Job’s Lament
Chapters 4-27	The three dialogues — Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar
Chapter 28	The discourse — “Where does wisdom come from?”
Chapters 29-41	The three monologues — Job, Elihu, God
Chapter 42	Epilogue

*Adapted from [*How to Read the Bible Book by Book*](#), Fee and Stuart, 122.

THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF JOB

Setting — Job seems to be set during the time period of the patriarchs in a land called Uz. The book of Lamentations (4:21) places Uz in the land of the Edomites, which is somewhere southeast of what would become Israel. In Job, there is no mention of Israel and The Law, and the covenantal name of God (Yahweh) is only rarely used. For this and other reasons, Job is considered a contemporary of the patriarchs found in the second half of the book of Genesis.

Genre — Job consists of both ordinary prose and poetry. But because it is primarily concerned with the universal exploration of life's biggest questions, it is considered a part of the Bible's Wisdom literature. More will be said about genre in the section on sound interpretative approaches to the Scriptures below.

Audience — Even though the Book of Job is set in non-Israelite culture, the intended audience seems to be a Jewish audience in the Wisdom tradition. It is written for any reader, ancient or modern, asking the hardest questions about God and the experience of human suffering.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Where can wisdom be found? This is one of the central questions of the book of Job and is explicitly stated in Job 28:12, *"But where can wisdom be found, and where is understanding located?"* Job 28 goes on to answer this question in verse 23, *"But God understands the way to wisdom, and he knows its location."* Ultimately the book of Job is concerned with pointing us to a right understanding of the Lord as the source of wisdom.

The suffering of the righteous. While the question of innocent suffering is explored from many perspectives within the book of Job, a definitive answer is never given. God affirms all of our honest questions and struggles, and in the end, Job challenges us to trust in God, even when we don't understand.

The character of God. It is important to remember that while Job's suffering is a prominent theme in the book, it is primarily used as a way for us to ponder the character and capabilities of God. The depth of God's wisdom and power is consistently put on display for us to consider.

APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF JOB

Genre Analysis — Job is primarily a poetic drama set within the tradition of Hebrew wisdom literature. The main section of Job is written as poetry (chapters 3-42) bracketed by two prose sections serving as the prologue (chapters 1-2) and the epilogue (chapter 42). The prose sections function and should be interpreted differently than the poetry section.

Unified Structure — Even though the book of Job is comprised of a series of dialogues and monologues by its different characters, the book itself is a unified whole which seeks to answer the basic questions of the nature of wisdom and God's character against the backdrop of human suffering.

Prose vs. Poetry — The prose sections provide the necessary “rules” of the story (Job’s righteousness, Satan’s role, God’s sovereignty), while the poetry contains the emotional and theological struggles of the characters.

Character Analysis — Because the structure of the book consists of a series of dialogues and monologues by different characters, it is helpful to note the role that each character plays in advancing the overall story and argument of the book.

Satan — Satan in the book of Job plays the role of putting God on trial. The word Satan means “the accuser.” Satan appears in the prologue in the heavenly courtroom scene and asks the question, “*Shall a man love God for nothing?*” Overall, Satan is a relatively minor character in Job. He sets the stage and then slithers into the background. Interestingly, Job’s wife seems to take up the voice of Satan when she tells Job to “*Curse God and die*” (2:9). Will Job remain faithful to God even if he receives no material reward for his faithfulness?

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar — Job’s friends give voice to the conventional religious perspective of the time: God rewards the righteous and punishes wrongdoing. There is some truth to that, but it does not explain the full breadth of human experience. In their view, God is both almighty and just; suffering should only be understood as the result of human sin, therefore, there can be no such thing as undeserved or senseless suffering. Each of these “friends” reach the conclusion that since Job is experiencing suffering, Job must be guilty of wrongdoing. From this standpoint, they reason and argue that Job might as well confess his sin and pray for restoration. However, Job maintains his position that his tragic experiences are not the consequences of any sin.

Elihu — Elihu comes on the scene after the dialogue between Job and each of the three friends. He is angry with Job for trying to justify himself, and angry with the three friends for not being able to refute Job. Elihu is much younger than Job, or the three friends, and represents the overconfidence of youth. Elihu assumes he knows more than the older friends and Job. But he does bring an additional perspective to the answer of suffering. Elihu asserts that Job has overstepped his bounds by defending his own righteousness and fallen guilty of self-righteousness. Elihu makes a contribution to the argument, but he falls short of giving a satisfactory explanation for Job’s suffering.

Job — Job, as one might expect, plays a primary role in the book. In the opening chapter God declares that Job is “*blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil*” (1:8). Satan questions Job’s motivation for faithfulness. Is Job merely loyal to God because of the blessings God gives? Job sees those blessings disappear, but throughout the book, Job maintains his integrity. He refuses to curse God, and continues to honor God in faithfulness. In James 5:11, Job is commended for his perseverance. Nothing in his situation makes sense to Job, and yet he chooses to endure. His recurring request is to present his case to God.

God — The ultimate character in the book of Job is God Himself. It is God who initiates the story and is in control from the beginning. The answer to where wisdom is found is in

God alone, and He silences all other voices asserting otherwise. Yet, God reveals Himself as present and restoring in the midst of Job's suffering.

OLD TESTAMENT PRINCIPLES FOR NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS

Below are several principles for applying Old Testament texts to New Testament believers. Why is this important? Because there are entirely different paradigms for applying Biblical truth in the Old and New Testaments.

You will see God's people in the Old Testament relate to God through an old paradigm. New Testament believers relate to God through the paradigm of new birth, a new nature, and the indwelling Spirit. These principles are not only important for studying the book of Job in its original covenant context; they are important for studying Old Testament books and passages in general.

- **Read any Old Testament passage or book in its historical context and setting first.** What did it mean to the original audience? Many times as believers, we are too quick to rush to conclusions based on New Testament revelation. Before we get to that, make sure you take the time to ask the question, "What did this passage mean to the original recipients? What was it trying to teach them?" When those questions are answered rightly, it's rather simple to take the original meaning and place it within the new life Jesus secured for us.
- **Read the Old Testament book again in the light of the life and ministry of Jesus.** How does this book anticipate Christ? If you have ever re-watched a mystery movie or re-read a mystery novel, you will experience the movie or novel in a very different way. When you watch or read it after you know the ending, you will pick up on clues and foreshadowing you might not have observed the first time. As Christians, we know the ending, and as we re-read the Old Testament, we pick up on foreshadowing we might not have seen previously. Ultimately, all of the Old Testament is pointing towards our need for Jesus, and preparing our hearts for a lifetime of abiding in Him.
- **There must be a clear connection between the original Old Testament meaning and potential analogies to Jesus.** Don't try to "force" pictures of Christ onto the Old Testament. When word pictures or typologies are taken too far, they can detract from the meaning of the text. The clearest pictures of Jesus in the Old Testament are already stated as such in the New Testament.
- **Different books (and even different parts of the same book) may point to Christ in different ways.** Wisdom literature is not the same as historical narrative. Prose is not the same as poetry. Apocalypse presents truth differently than law. Be sensitive to those differences, and allow the style of the Old Testament passage paint the appropriate understanding of the passage.
- **Sometimes the connection to Christ is on a thematic level.** Keep the larger themes of Jesus's person, ministry, and mission in mind. The Old Testament reveals to us many themes

that anticipate the coming of Christ. In Romans 11:22 Paul says this about the story of Israel, *“Therefore, consider God’s kindness and severity: severity toward those who have fallen but God’s kindness towards you—if you remain in his kindness.”* Several themes such as the identity of God’s people, substitutionary atonement, fidelity to God, and God’s blessings are subtly seen in one form in the Old Testament then explicitly seen in the person and work of Jesus.

JESUS IN JOB

- **Jesus is anticipated in Job as the wisdom of God.** As mentioned above, one of the primary themes of the book of Job is the source of true wisdom. Each of the characters in Job offers their version of human wisdom about the problem of suffering. Some characters believe that the solution to the problem must be that Job has sinned. Others believe that the solution lies with God’s apparent lack of justice. When we review all of the human attempts at wisdom in Job, we see that they all fall short. None of the human characters get it completely right. Only God is incomprehensibly wise, and that is the point when God confronts Job from the whirlwind in chapters 38-42. As a result, in the midst of his suffering, Job submits to the wisdom and power of God. When we read this through a New Testament lens, we are reminded that Jesus is True Wisdom. 1 Corinthians 1:24-25 states, *“Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, because God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”* Jesus is the very epitome of God’s wisdom. According to John Walton and Tremper Longman III, “When the book of Job asserts the wisdom of God, the Christian understands that Jesus displays God’s wisdom in all its abundance” (*How to Read Job*, 157).

- **Jesus is anticipated as the kinsman-redeemer.** Throughout the book of Job, Job maintains that his suffering is not because of his sin. Job’s desire is to present his case before God, but he realizes that he is not adequately equipped to do so. What Job longs for is an arbiter/mediator, someone who could stand before God on his behalf and plead his case. *“For he is not a man like me, that I can answer him, that we can take each other to court. There is no mediator between us, to lay his hand on both of us”* (Job 9:32-33). Job’s desire is for a mediator who could “lay his hand” on both God and Job and bring peace between them. This desire for an advocate is most powerfully expressed in Job 19:25-27 when Job declares, *“But I know that my redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh. I will see him myself; my eyes will look at him, and not as a stranger. My heart longs within me.”* Even in the midst of intense suffering, Job is confident that God will provide a kinsman-redeemer to stand not only on his behalf, but with him on his pile of dust. As Christians, we recognize the role of Jesus as our redeemer in Job’s cry. The advocate/mediator/redeemer that Job is longing for is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. According to commentator John Hartley, “God himself, identified with Job’s sufferings in the sufferings of his Son, Jesus Christ, who suffered unto death even though he was innocent. Jesus overcame his ignominious death by rising from the grave. In his victory, he, as God’s Son and mankind’s kinsman-redeemer, secured redemption for all who believe on him” (*The Book of Job*, John Hartley, pg. 297).

- **Jesus is anticipated as the innocent sufferer.** From the very beginning of the book of Job we are reminded that Job is not suffering because of his sin. Job 1:8 introduces Job as a man of “perfect integrity” or “blameless.” Job is the one clear example of an innocent sufferer in the Old Testament. When we look at the New Testament, we recognize only one other innocent

sufferer and that is Jesus. Hebrews 4:15 states, “*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.*” Even though Jesus was completely sinless in every possible sense, he was well acquainted with suffering and grief, ultimately dying an excruciating death on the cross. While Job’s innocent suffering anticipated the innocent suffering of Jesus, there is a major difference. Jesus voluntarily entered into suffering and Job did not. Jesus’s suffering and death was on our behalf; Job’s was not. Job’s suffering teaches valuable lessons to us about God’s wisdom and power; Jesus’s suffering leads to the forgiveness of our sins through His death and resurrection.

• **Jesus is anticipated as the ultimate answer to the problem of suffering.** Many people turn to the book of Job looking for the answer to the question of why there is suffering in the world. When we get to the end of the book we realize that the book of Job does not answer the question of why we suffer. We are challenged to trust God’s wisdom and power even when we don’t understand. We are left to wrestle with the problem of pain and suffering. As one scholar has put it, “We do not turn to the book of Job to discover God’s ultimate answer to our suffering; we turn to the New Testament, and there we see Jesus” (*How to Read Job*, 160). As the ultimate Judge and Creator, Jesus will right every wrong and will make all things new.

RESOURCES

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Zondervan, 2002.

Hartley, John E. *The Book of Job. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988.

Walton, John H. and Tremper Longman III. *How to Read Job*. IVP Academic, 2015.

INTRODUCTORY SERMON

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

The background of the image is a dark, atmospheric landscape. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, suggesting an approaching storm or a late evening. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and debris, with some sparse, leafless trees or shrubs scattered across the middle ground. The overall tone is somber and dramatic.

WEEK ONE

GOD CREATES

WEEK ONE - DAY ONE

GOD CREATES

We will begin each week by looking at an anchoring truth about God's character as seen throughout Scripture, so that we may see Him rightly, worship Him truthfully, and walk with Him faithfully.

We will do this by following a devotional pattern using the acrostic P.R.A.Y:

P - Pause

R - Reflect on Scripture

A - Ask God for help

Y - Yield to God's will

P - PAUSE

Take a moment to still yourself in the Lord's presence. Surrender your whole self—your thoughts, beliefs, feelings, burdens, and life to Him. Ask for His presence. Ask Him to renew your unhindered fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9). Ask Him for wisdom, insight, and guidance from His Word.

R - REFLECT ON SCRIPTURE

This week we are looking at God as Creator. Why look at creation during a study of the Book of Job? The answer, in part, is because God draws Job's attention to Himself as Creator. It is only fitting for us to follow that pattern. Few things can effectively recalibrate our lives like remembering God as Creator, and ourselves as His creation operating within the confines of His created order.

In the verses below, what do you see about God's original design for humanity? (Note the commands God gives to them, as well as the list of things He has given for their flourishing.)

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth." God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

Genesis 1:28-31

Looking at these verses, you will see God's provision for humanity was His original design. In the beginning, God provided man with everything he would need to flourish—literally giving them the created world to sustain them. Job acknowledges himself as part of God's creation.

*Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head.
He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying:
Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will leave this life.
The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.
Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything. Job 1:20-22*

What is the posture of Job's heart as he falls to the ground to speak the words above? Pay special attention to Job 1:22. **Using bullet points, write down what you believe Job's view of God must have been for Job to trust God that way:**

On the very first pages of Scripture, God introduces Himself as the Creator and Grand Engineer of all creation. God creates by His spoken word, out of nothingness. Not only that, He creates the physical terrain, every living thing, humanity reflecting His own image, and even creates the concept of time by marking the days and nights! There is nothing in all of creation that exists that does not find its beginning in God! As John says in John 1:3, *"All things were created through him [Jesus], and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created."*

One of the fundamental plot lines in the story of Job is whether Job will continue to worship God for who He is, even after all God's material blessings are removed. Satan, the accuser, makes a strong assertion that Job's faith and trust in God is not based on God's character and supreme authority, but that he is only "faithful" because of the material blessings he receives from God. Satan asserts that Job's worship is conditional, and if he were to encounter suffering and loss, Job would quickly turn to cursing God.

A - ASK FOR GOD'S HELP

What happens when what we believe about God does not seem to fit with our experience and feelings? At our best, we tether ourselves to the anchoring truths of God's character as Creator, Sustainer, and Author of our faith—along with all that those characteristics imply about His power, authority, and supremacy. But on our hardest days—in the thick of grief, confusion, and fear—we can struggle to reconcile current circumstances with these truths. We may start to question His power and His goodness, and search for some good explanation as to how a good and powerful God could allow His loved ones to experience such things. This is the very tension the Book of Job intends to address. Instead of running from these very tough and uncomfortable tensions, Job leads us to take an honest look at our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to see how God might want to recalibrate them within us.

In this study, we encourage you to face these inner wrestlings honestly and ask God to meet you where you are. He wants you to bring your questions and doubts to Him. God intends to use them to grow your capacity to know and experience Him. However, the enemy can use them as a wedge between you.

Write down any questions You believe God wants to address:

Y - YIELD

What are some things that you have difficulty letting go of as it pertains to handling life's hurts? Write them below:

Though you may not fully understand, yield all of yourself into the care of God, even the things that hurt the most. That might sound something like this:

Father, I cannot look around this world without seeing all the works of Your hands! My brain can't comprehend the genius and power You exercised when You spoke all living things into existence. So into Your capable hands, I give everyone and everything that I treasure to You, Lord Jesus. Jesus, I give everyone and everything to You.



WEEK ONE - DAY TWO

GOD CREATES

God, my Creator, my Father, I quiet myself for a few moments even before diving into this devotional. I invite You to speak to my heart. I invite You to help me to fully encounter You through this study. I don't just want to experience words about You. I want to experience You. So I ask that You will use Your Word, words from our church leaders, and Your very Spirit to engage me fully in this study, that I might receive from You all of the hope and transformation You have in Your heart of love reserved for me. Amen.

...Fearing they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the drift-anchor, and in this way they were driven along. Because we were being severely battered by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo the next day.

On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. For many days neither sun nor stars appeared, and the severe storm kept raging. Finally all hope was fading that we would be saved...Then, fearing we might run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight to come. From Acts 27:17-29



The Fastnet Race is regarded as one of the world's most famous and challenging offshore sailing competitions. Every two years, since 1925, sailing teams race from the Isle of Wight in the English Channel, across the hazardous, open Atlantic to Fastnet Rock off the southwest coast of Ireland, before looping back to finish the 600+ nautical mile course at Plymouth, England. Sailors often face multiple days of sleep deprivation, extreme cold, and violent seas, hoping to be remembered in the annals of racing history. In the 1979 race, 303 yachts began, but only 86 were able to overcome the severe Atlantic storm that generated 70 mph winds and 50 foot swells. 75 boats capsized, 5 sank, and 4,000 rescue personnel were deployed. Tragically, 15 competitors and 6 spectators still lost their lives, making the '79 Fastnet Race the deadliest in yachting history.

Today's reading from Acts 27 is a small excerpt from the Apostle Paul's own maritime misadventures in the stormy Mediterranean Sea (you can find the full harrowing account in Acts 27). Insert yourself into Paul's winter adventure. Imagine being on an ancient sailing vessel large enough for 300 people. You're at sea in those less-than-luxury-cruise conditions for nearly two weeks, before facing a raging north-eastern tempest. The sailors do their best to keep the ship stable through the use of various types of anchors. But the storm is too much for them. The ship runs aground and is overtaken by the waves. You jump ship before it breaks apart, plunging into the frigid, troubled sea, frantically fighting to stay afloat. Finally, you struggle onto the shoreline.

Paul alludes to this experience allegorically in his letter to Timothy, in which he urges believers to guard against a “*shipwrecked*” faith (1 Timothy 1:19). Likewise, the author of Hebrews uses maritime language to encourage believers to take refuge in the hope in Jesus that is “*an anchor for the soul*” (Hebrews 6:19). These stories, coupled with the book of Job, serve as cautionary tales for all of us as we voyage along life’s race. Like the vessels from these two sea stories, we handle the relatively calm seas of life fairly well. But when life’s storms suddenly rage upon us, we can find our faith upended and capsized, unable to continue life’s race in victory.

You might have noticed that the sailors in Paul’s ship were trying. They were partially prepared. They dropped a drift-anchor for stability while continuing to sail, and when close enough to shore, dropped four other anchors to remain in position. But this effort and these tools proved insufficient to handle the particular raging storm they faced. Both the Fastnet Race and Paul’s voyage cross the Mediterranean highlight the fact that sailing vessels must not only be seaworthy, but must also be designed to withstand even the most violent storms. When life becomes difficult, or when we face the worst of human suffering, we drop the only anchors we have available to us at the time, whether or not they are effective. I’m thoroughly convinced that, when facing suffering, everyone on the planet does their best, given their level of understanding, emotional maturity, and with the resources they have available. Even Christians, with God’s unlimited resources available, struggle to navigate suffering well. So, Christian or not, we do our best to make it through.

As we study the book of Job together, we are encouraged to tether ourselves to five anchors of truth. We’ll contemplate one anchor for each week of our study. The first anchor is analogous to the drift-anchor used to stabilize Paul’s ride. It’s the anchor we’re calling “God Creates”. This anchor explores the good world God created, who occupies it, and how things now operate. You might say this is your “world view,” or how you see the world and operate within it. Everyone has a world view, but not everyone’s world view corresponds to reality as God created it. Those lens distortions must be corrected. In order for us to navigate raging waters, we need to understand the world as it truly is. Your worldview forms the lenses through which you will interpret the book of Job, the suffering it describes, and the meaning it makes of that suffering. In the final four weeks, we will look at four other truth anchors: God Stays, God Weeps, God Reigns, and God Restores.

When we see God rightly, we accurately see everything else. Our view of God provides what is needed for us to correctly understand ourselves, the world, and to correctly make meaning of what we experience in life—both the good and the bad. 20th century atheist philosopher-turned-Christian, C.S. Lewis, brilliantly captures this idea, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” The sun is not there so we will see the sun—it is there to provide light so we will see everything else. This is also true of the Bible and the book of Job contained in it. It is there, not just to be read and understood, but so that we will see God, ourselves, and life itself more clearly, even through the darkest clouds of human experience.

"I BELIEVE IN CHRISTIANITY AS I BELIEVE THAT
THE SUN HAS RISEN: NOT ONLY BECAUSE I SEE
IT, BUT BECAUSE BY IT I SEE EVERYTHING ELSE."

- C.S. LEWIS

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Think of the times you have experienced different kinds of loss and suffering. Jot down ways you typically do your best to make it through:

Describe how you have seen suffering change the way people see the world:

Thank You, Father, for providing anchors for my soul to help me navigate life and suffering well. Thank You that You didn't just create this world and leave it alone. No, You involve Yourself in my life, because while I don't deserve it, You love me and give me all that is needed to live life well. And Your desire is for me to be prepared to handle suffering well. So I pray that in this season of working through Job with my church family, that You will tether me to truths that will not only shape my life, but also any suffering I face within it.

WEEK ONE - DAY THREE

GOD CREATES A BIGGER STORY

Jesus, Creator, Savior, Lord, I quiet myself for fresh moments with You. Restore my soul. I take refuge in You. You made me for Yourself and rescued me out of darkness into new life. Your love for me is staggering—that warms up my heart of love for You. And compels me to entrust myself to You. I invite You to speak to my heart, and open my eyes to the things You want me to receive today from this devotional. King Jesus, may this deepen the understanding of my mind and the love of my heart for You. Amen.

There was a man in the country of Uz named Job. He was a man of complete integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil. He had seven sons and three daughters. His estate included seven thousand sheep and goats, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large number of servants. Job was the greatest man among all the people of the east. Job 1:1-3



When I was a boy growing up in the 1970s, on a Sunday afternoon every Spring, my parents and I—each with a salty bowl of popcorn in our laps—gobbled up the annual television broadcast of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). The film's story-line was perfectly suited to highlight the wonder of color television. It opened in the monochrome, greyscale tones of Kansas and then burst into the vivid, dazzling hues of a magical land called Oz, showcasing the full potential of Technicolor. I can still hear the Cowardly Lion's quivering voice, the unforgettable jingle of the Lollipop Guild, and the terrifying squawks of the flying monkeys! The main character, Dorothy, is a young farm girl from Kansas who finds herself in a whirlwind of calamity, longing to be reunited with her family. She soon discovers that, like it or not, her story in Oz hinges on the Wizard of Oz—the one she believes can make or break her quest for home.

Like Dorothy, we naturally see life from the center of our vantage point. But we must come to terms with the fact that our story is part of a larger story—a story big and consequential enough to involve every person, all of history, and eternity future. We have an important role to play in it, but God is its central character. Only when we see life from that corrected point of view, can we fully experience the joy and healing that God, in His love, makes available to us, even in the worst of human experience.

These opening verses in Job remind us that each of us has a story that has been inserted into a larger story. Job was a man that lived in the biblical land of Uz (not to be confused with the fictional land of Oz). He was God-fearing, lived with integrity, and was blessed with a thriving family and career. Job was considered the greatest among his contemporaries. Like you and me, Job and his story were inserted into the timeline of history at a particular time and place appointed by God for His redemptive purposes.

“...[God] has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” Acts 17:26-27

Notice that God is the central character in the story of history. But that does not diminish your importance. God inserts people into history, so that each person might find Him. This is by no accident. God is a pursuing God. And to that end, He begins everyone’s story precisely when He wants it to begin, in the exact location it will unfold to have the Kingdom influence He intends. Jesus is advancing His Kingdom! God has always desired your redemption. But your redemption story does not end with you. Your story is an important part of God’s overall plan of redemption for everyone. God uses even your suffering to further His rescue plan of love for the world. Your story is part of His bigger story.

**GOD USES EVEN YOUR SUFFERING TO FURTHER
HIS RESCUE PLAN OF LOVE FOR THE WORLD.
YOUR STORY IS PART OF HIS BIGGER STORY.**

Job’s story is no different. God placed Job in a land called Uz, that his life and witness might be a testimony to those in his day, as well as those still reading his life story 3,000 years later. Is there anything unique about Job’s story? Not really. Job’s story encapsulates the inevitable human experience. We share a story in which sin weeds its creeping tentacles of suffering into lives otherwise filled with the goodness of family thriving, prosperous work, friends, and community. God inspired the writing of Job because He knows everyone grapples with handling hurt and making sense of the world’s brokenness when it visits you or those you love.

But even more than suffering well, the purpose God has in mind for every reader of Job is the same purpose He has in mind for everyone reading any portion of Scripture. The Bible is how God reveals Himself to us. He wants to be known for who He really is. This is personal. The Bible is God’s story about Himself—a story in which He reveals what can be learned about Him from key interactions with people throughout history. Just like the rest of the Bible, God wants us to know more about Him by reading the book of Job. And by knowing more about Him, we can more rightly and personally engage with Him as a son or daughter in any season of life in which we find ourselves. Including seasons of unspeakable loss and deepest despair.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

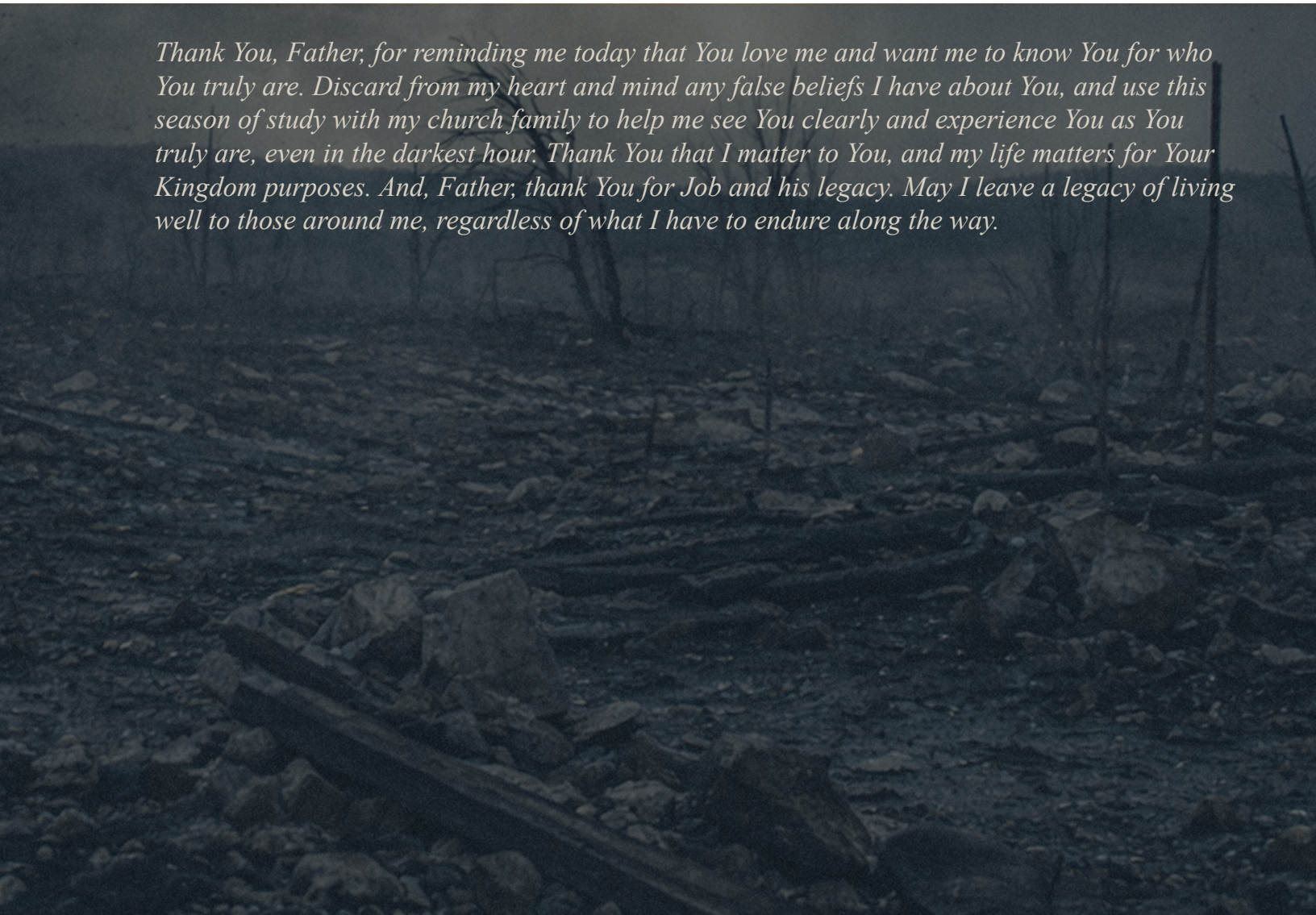
Consider your personal timeline, from birth until right now, and write down the key moments you consider as defining moments in your story:

On a scale of 1 to 10, circle how strongly you believe God uses even senseless suffering in His big picture rescue mission:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Is it more difficult for you to connect with God's love in times of suffering, or is it easier?
Write why you think some experience suffering differently:**

Thank You, Father, for reminding me today that You love me and want me to know You for who You truly are. Discard from my heart and mind any false beliefs I have about You, and use this season of study with my church family to help me see You clearly and experience You as You truly are, even in the darkest hour. Thank You that I matter to You, and my life matters for Your Kingdom purposes. And, Father, thank You for Job and his legacy. May I leave a legacy of living well to those around me, regardless of what I have to endure along the way.



WEEK ONE - DAY FOUR

GOD CREATES SEEN AND UNSEEN KINGDOMS

Jesus, Sovereign King, I acknowledge that You are the King of Kings and Lord and Lords. With eyes of faith, I see You enthroned and reigning over all things in Heaven and Earth—with the Father placing all things under the footstool of Your Lordship. That includes me. May I be completely yielded to You, entrusting myself to You, holding nothing back from You, my perfect, good, and loving Savior. May Your will be done in me completely, just as it is done in heaven. Amen.

One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord asked Satan, “Where have you come from?” “From roaming through the earth,” Satan answered him, “and walking around on it.” Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil.” Satan answered the Lord, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Haven’t you placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face.” “Very well,” the Lord told Satan, “everything he owns is in your power. However, do not lay a hand on Job himself.” So Satan left the Lord’s presence. Job 1:6-12



In 1945, an American radar engineer named Percy Spencer was testing some military grade radar equipment when he felt something strange: the chocolate bar in his pocket had suddenly and curiously melted. He was standing within reach of an active magnetron and put two and two together. On a hunch, he placed some popcorn kernels and an egg in the same general vicinity where he was standing when his candy bar melted. The kernels popped and the egg exploded, leading him to conclude that the unseen microwaves produced by the magnetron had effectively cooked the food from the inside out. This discovery led Spencer to invent the Radarange, the world’s first microwave oven, weighing over 700 lb, standing nearly 6 feet tall, and costing a whopping \$50,000 in today’s money. Spencer’s behemoth invention eventually became the lightweight and affordable microwave oven ubiquitously found in kitchens, dorm rooms, and campers around the world. Anyone can operate and enjoy the conveniences a microwave oven provides, though few understand how it actually works.

In Job 1:6-12, we find a curious exchange between Satan the accuser and God in the courts of heaven. A number of angels, among whom was Satan, presented themselves to God, presumably to give some kind of accounting of their activities and observations on Earth. Satan had been roaming around on the earth and God asks him whether or not he had observed Job. God gives Satan permission to test whether Job’s faithfulness resulted from God blessing him with abundance, or whether it was deeper than that. After Job’s wealth, family, and health were

stripped away, Job's faithfulness remained, though deeply shaken. Today, we give focus to the unseen realm that affected Job, and that affects each of us.

EVERY RELATIONSHIP, EVERY EVENT, EVERY
CHOICE, EVERY TRAUMA, EVERY FAILURE, AND
EVERY VICTORY DYNAMICALLY INVOLVES THE SEEN
AND THE UNSEEN.

We can not rightly understand life and survive suffering without a grasp of the unseen. There are unseen locations and unseen spiritual beings. There are also unseen physical realities (like gravity and quantum mechanics), and unseen spiritual realities (like knowledge, lies, power, authority, faith, and love). All have an effect on our lives. Suffering happens in the intersection of both the seen and the unseen. Every relationship, every event, every choice, every trauma, every failure, and every victory dynamically involves the seen and the unseen.

Everything spiritual and physical operates inside one of two kingdoms—the kingdom of darkness, or the Kingdom of Jesus. There is no neutral ground—no spiritual Switzerland. Either we are in harmony with God through absolute trust and total surrender, or we are living in hostile independence of Him.

He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves...For everything was created by him [Jesus], in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him...and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated and hostile in your minds as expressed in your evil actions. But now he has reconciled you by his physical body through his death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before him.” From Colossians 1:13-22

Though Jesus is the creator of, and has authority over, both kingdoms, only one is currently in joyful submission to His Lordship. His Kingdom is occupied by those who are in right relationship to Him by grace through faith, are being transformed into His likeness, and have eternal life secured in Him. Those in the kingdom of darkness are considered God's enemies and will fall under the authority and judgment of Jesus, who has been appointed as the final Judge to whom all must give an account (Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). This gives the sufferer of injustice great comfort, knowing that all injustice will finally be avenged and made right (Romans 12:19). Unbelievers have no such hope.

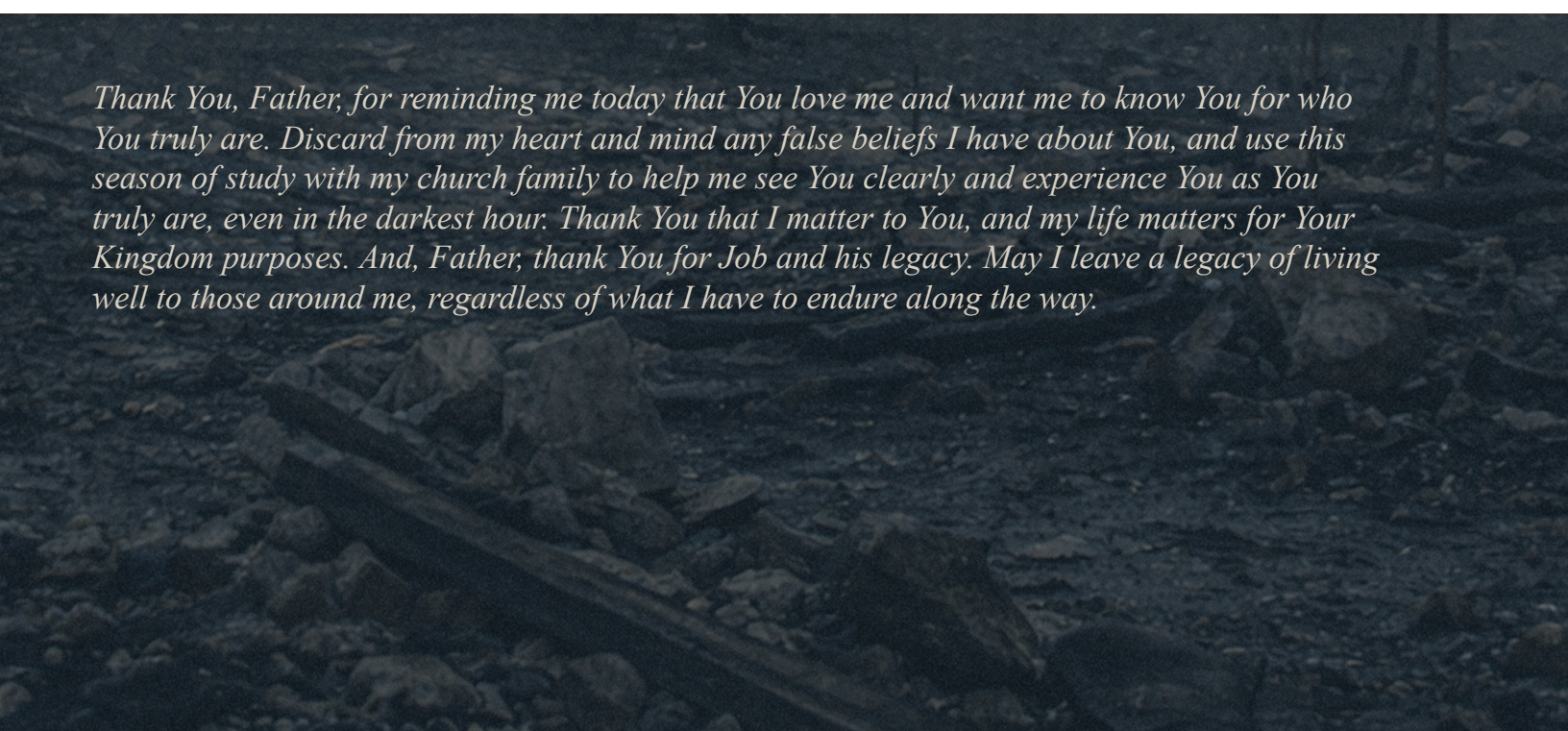
Behind all suffering is the agenda of a dark, unseen kingdom. The same accuser who brought affliction upon Job prowls around each of us, looking to deceive someone unguarded and vulnerable (1 Peter 5:8). His weapons are not of flesh and blood, but are formed of lies, shame, abuse, isolation, lusts, and unforgiveness. This has profound implications on our sufferings. The sufferer must rightly identify that the source of suffering is Satan, “*who comes to steal, kill, and destroy*” (John 10:10). Yet suffering is unique in its ability to cause spiritual amnesia and

disorientation. We forget who we are and to whom we belong when suffering crashes through our door. Suffering has the capacity to disorient us and cause us to misplace blame on our God who is utterly incapable of authoring evil. Our hearts can remain anchored and our faith afloat when tethered to the world view that God creates the seen and the unseen, and inserts us into a bigger story connected to both. Tomorrow, we draw our attention to the posture of God's heart toward us.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Does the reality of the unseen realm give you feelings of confidence or fear? Explain:

Write John 10:10 below. Double-underline the origin of human suffering.



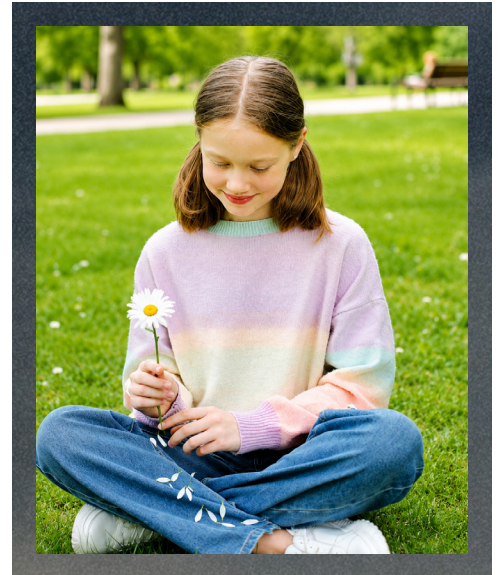
Thank You, Father, for reminding me today that You love me and want me to know You for who You truly are. Discard from my heart and mind any false beliefs I have about You, and use this season of study with my church family to help me see You clearly and experience You as You truly are, even in the darkest hour. Thank You that I matter to You, and my life matters for Your Kingdom purposes. And, Father, thank You for Job and his legacy. May I leave a legacy of living well to those around me, regardless of what I have to endure along the way.

WEEK ONE - DAY FIVE

GOD CREATES AND SUSTAINS IN LOVE

Jesus, I can't fathom the full depths of Your love for me. But I can respond to what my heart and mind are able to comprehend in some measure. May the capacity of my heart and mind be expanded to comprehend You more, both intellectually and emotionally. May the result of today's study be a fresh stirring of all that is in me, resulting in the increasing joy of absolute trust and total abandonment to Your measureless love. Amen.

I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:16-19



Come on. Admit it. You've played, too. You might even remember who you had in mind when love was still young and awakening. The game of plucking petals from a daisy, while alternating "He (or she) loves me—He loves me not" has been played by countless love-struck girls and boys hoping to discern the other's mutual affection. Do you remember the pangs of disappointment motivating you to start over with another daisy, until you got the results you were hoping for? I sure do. Like it was yesterday. The game's roots are traced to medieval Europe, with variations being found in other cultures such as Japan and Latin American countries. The common denominator across cultures is the belief that love is determined by chance. It's actually quite fitting, since fleeting human love is universally experienced as uncertain and unpredictable. It is sometimes conflicted or concealed, and its presence in another is not only difficult to discern, but impossible to control.

For decades, I struggled to feel God's love, though I believed it to be true. Much of that originated from making sense of various layers of suffering experienced from a very young age. I had it worse than some, but not nearly as bad as others. My feelings of God's love alternated, in cadence with the fluctuating good and bad experiences I, or my loved ones, endured. As I grew older, my confidence in God's love flip-flopped according to perceived successes and failures in pleasing Him. God's love, however, is not determined by chance, the lack of suffering, or my self-righteousness. God's love is not concealed; it is revealed.

His love does not fluctuate with circumstances; it is faithful and constant. God's love pursues, reconciles, and enters into permanent covenant. And it stays faithful, even when I am not. He didn't enter into covenant because it was earned, nor does He stay only if it is deserved. There is roughly one petal on a common daisy for each of the 26 verses penned by the poet of Psalm 136.

Each verse presents a different scenario by which to ascertain whether or not God loves. But unlike the familiar game, there is no alternating conclusion. Every verse declares, “He loves me!” Regardless of circumstance or suffering, the loyal, steadfast, faithful love of the Lord endures forever.

GOD CREATES US IN LOVE, REDEEMS US IN LOVE,
DISCIPLINES US IN LOVE, AND SUSTAINS
US IN LOVE.

What was able to anchor Job in the extremes of his suffering can anchor us as well. God has nothing but love for His creation, even though He is morally obligated to hold us morally accountable. God creates us in love, redeems us in love, disciplines us in love, and sustains us in love. In love, Jesus absorbed the wrathful justice of God rightly directed toward us. *“But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). When we receive Him through faith as our Savior, His work on the cross to pay for our sins in full is appropriated to us. There is no longer anything between us and God that still needs to be addressed.

Paul says it like this, *“What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:31-32, 38-39). Nothing is keeping God from relating to us in perfect love. Even when He needs to discipline us, that discipline is an expression of His love, not His anger (Hebrews 12:6). Who we are to God, through the person and work of Jesus, secures for us the faithful, steadfast, loyal love of God that endures forever.

God desperately wants us to believe this. But more profoundly, He wants us to experience His love. Paul’s prayer from Ephesians 3 that began today’s devotional, conveys God’s will that we do more than just read about or believe His love. Just as I don’t want my wife, Christy, to just read and memorize words about me and my love, God doesn’t want our experience of His love to merely be words on a page or ideas in our brains. Each word is a symbol that points to a reality behind the words. He wants us to experience Him personally—to comprehend His love. To experience a dimension of *“Christ’s love that surpasses knowledge”* (Ephesians 3:19). Dare I say, to even feel it. To be transformed and steadied by it. Even in suffering.

God’s love is stirred up for us when we suffer, and when we suffer for those that we love. “The Lord is near the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit” (Psalms 34:18). This is beautifully pictured in John 11:5 when John reports how Jesus was deeply moved with love for Lazarus, and also for Mary, and Martha. John 11 shows the love of God in suffering. Whenever suffering hits home, it doesn’t come alone. God’s love is right there in it.

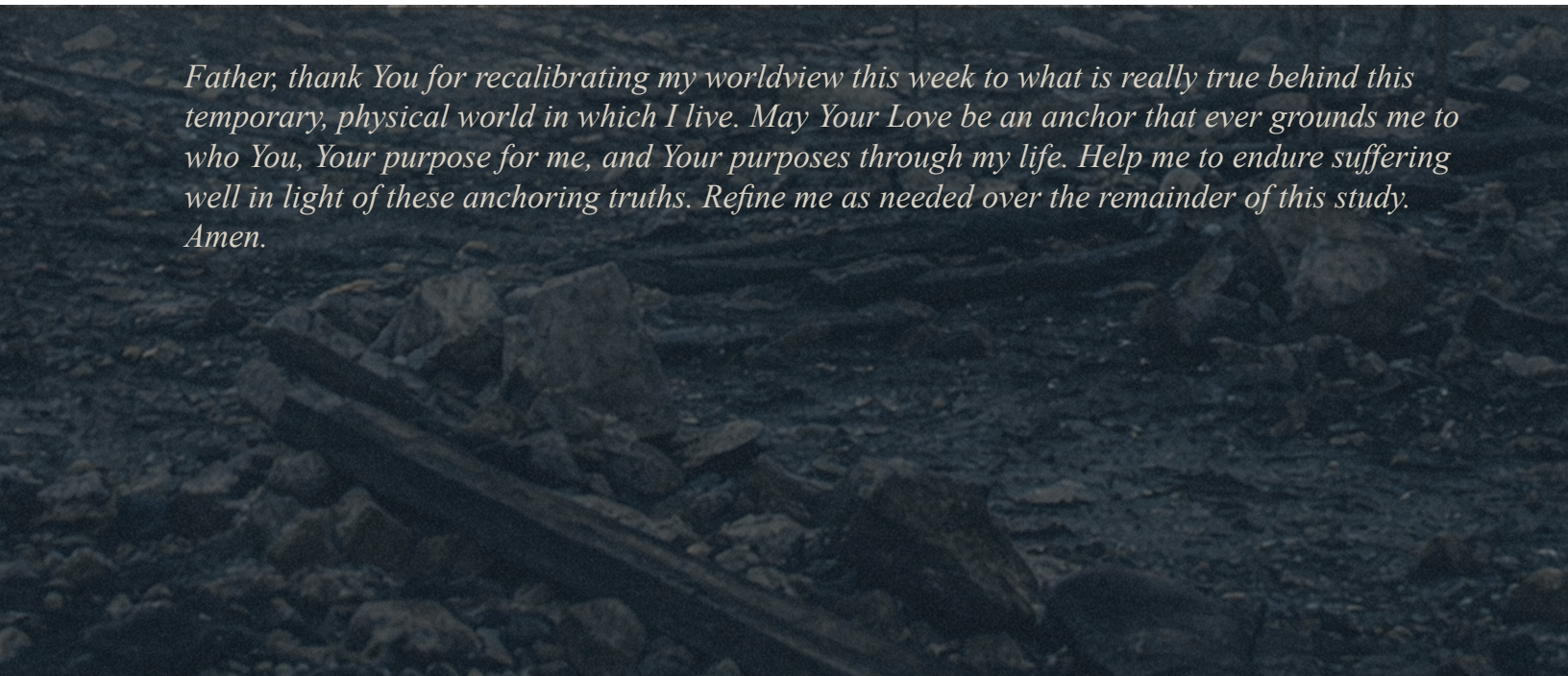
The anchor we're calling "God Creates" frames suffering against the fundamental realities of creation in which life operates. God is the first cause of creation. He created us into a story that includes us, but is bigger than us. A story in which there are two opposing kingdoms vying for our trust and allegiance, one hell-bent on our destruction, one holding out eternal life for all. God's demeanor toward us through the arc of our suffering-laced stories is redeeming love. When we anchor ourselves to these truths about creation, they steady us in our suffering, and redeem our suffering for His Kingdom purposes. Next week, we will explore the anchor we're calling "God Stays".

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Describe how you experience God's love beyond the words you read about it:

Read the opening Ephesians 3 passage again. In your own words, explain the result of experiencing God's love as deeply as He wants for you:

Father, thank You for recalibrating my worldview this week to what is really true behind this temporary, physical world in which I live. May Your Love be an anchor that ever grounds me to who You, Your purpose for me, and Your purposes through my life. Help me to endure suffering well in light of these anchoring truths. Refine me as needed over the remainder of this study. Amen.



WEEK ONE - DAY SIX

GOD CREATES

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the most significant truths from HANDLING HURT you believe God wants you to understand and apply. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

WEEK ONE - DAY SEVEN

GOD CREATES

WORSHIP & GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:

The background of the image is a dark, moody landscape. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, suggesting an approaching storm or late evening. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and debris. In the mid-ground, there are several thin, bare, vertical poles or trees that look like they might be remnants of a destroyed structure or just dead trees. The overall tone is somber and dramatic.

WEEK TWO

GOD STAYS

WEEK TWO - DAY ONE

GOD STAYS

We will begin each week by looking at an anchoring truth about God's character as seen throughout Scripture, so that we may see Him rightly, worship Him truthfully, and walk with Him faithfully. Our anchoring truth this week is God Stays.

We will do this by following a devotional pattern using the acrostic P.R.A.Y:

P - Pause

R - Reflect on Scripture

A - Ask God for help

Y - Yield to God's will

P - PAUSE

Take a moment to still yourself in the Lord's presence. Surrender your whole self—your thoughts, beliefs, feelings, burdens, and life to Him. Ask for His presence. Ask Him to renew any broken fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9). Ask Him for wisdom, insight, and guidance from His Word.

R - REFLECT ON SCRIPTURE

Know that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands. Deuteronomy 7:9

The Lord is the one who will go before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Deuteronomy 31:8

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. 2 Timothy 2:13

The one thing that most obviously stands out to me in the Old Testament is that God continues to be faithful to His people, even when they do not remain faithful to Him. We see Israel, His chosen people (set apart not because of their greatness, but to display His faithfulness and glory to the world) stray and walk away time and time again. In Exodus, we see them turn away from the God who literally freed them from slavery to turn to man-made idols and wish to return to captivity—all for cucumbers and watermelon. But instead of God walking away due to a breach of contract, He continues to welcome His people back any time they turn back to Him and repent. God stays. He stayed present and faithful despite their unfaithfulness. He is present and faithful despite ours.

While Job is nestled in the middle of the Old Testament with the other Wisdom literature, it was most likely written chronologically within Genesis. If we think about what was known about

God at this point of time, people had little relational knowledge of God, which makes Job's faith that much more remarkable.

In this week's section of reading from Job, we find him at his darkest, most raw hour. Job is sitting in the fullness of his misery. I look at his final words at the close of chapter 3 and see someone who is in absolute misery in their grief and pain.

"For sighing has become my daily food; my groans pour out like water. What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil." Job 3:24-26

Have you ever walked through a suffering season that felt like this? I find it comforting to know that Job felt this way because I know he trusts God and yet still feels the depth of the pain. I pray that my anchor-hold in God's faithfulness is strong enough that I can stay held in His faithfulness, even when I am not. I can remember that He stays faithful to me.

A - ASK FOR GOD'S HELP

We, like Job or the Israelites of the Old Testament, can lose our perspective of God's faithfulness in the struggle of our present circumstances. We can lose sight of all His active presence with us. While our heads may know that God never leaves us nor forsakes us, we can struggle to feel His presence when life's storms turn our world upside down. How do we continue to trust Him as faithful in such seasons?

As present day believers, we have the whole of Scripture that testifies to His faithfulness, but also the stories and experiences of our own lives. We have the finished work of Jesus on the cross, raised to conquer death and sin, and the promise that one day He will return to get rid of all sadness, sickness, and death.

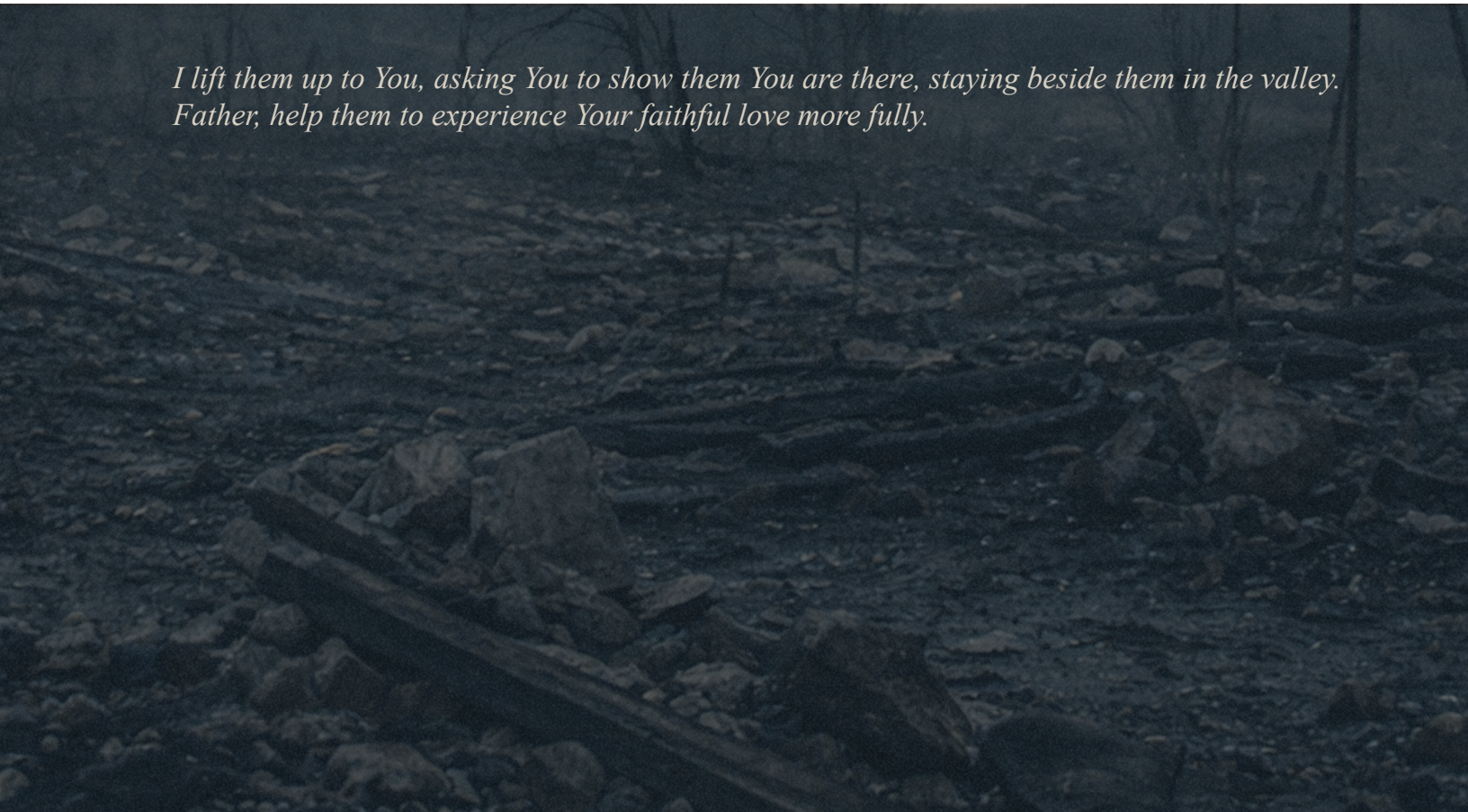
Jot down the ways you have powerfully experienced God's presence and faithfulness in difficult or devastating seasons:

Y-YIELD

Father, I thank You that You are THE faithful, covenant-keeping God! I praise You that Your faithfulness does not depend on mine. You have promised to never leave or forsake me, so help me remember Your faithfulness even in the darkest of seasons. Forgive me when my memory is short or I am blinded by the pain of these hurtful circumstances:

Jesus, tether my heart to the truth that You are faithful when my heart and experiences cause me to doubt. Thank You for helping me in my weakness. I ask that You bring to mind someone who is in the pit of grief right now (write their name(s) down):

I lift them up to You, asking You to show them You are there, staying beside them in the valley. Father, help them to experience Your faithful love more fully.



WEEK TWO - DAY TWO

PERMISSION TO LAMENT

Lord, how long will I have to face trials and pain? When I am restless and troubled, draw near to me. God, my Savior, remind me today that You are always with me. Even when I walk through the darkest places, You are there. Lord, don't let me be afraid to cry out to You. Extend Your hand of mercy to me and grant me Your peace.

For the choir director. A psalm of David. How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long will I store up anxious concerns within me, agony in my mind every day? How long will my enemy dominate me? Consider me and answer, Lord my God. Restore brightness to my eyes; otherwise, I will sleep in death. My enemy will say, "I have triumphed over him," and my foes will rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord because he has treated me generously. Psalm 13



In early 2026, the world was transfixed by the mission of Artemis II. This was the first manned mission to the moon in over 50 years. The highlight of the mission was the crew's ability to capture pictures of the "Dark Side" of the Moon. As Artemis II passed behind the moon, the crew experienced a 40- minute communication blackout. Astronaut Victor Glover shared the following message six minutes before Artemis II entered the blackout,

"As we get close to the nearest point to the moon and farthest point from Earth, as we continue to unlock the mysteries of the cosmos, I would like to remind you of one of the most important mysteries there on Earth, and that's love....Christ said, in response to what was the greatest commandment, that it was to love God with all that you are. And he, also being a great teacher, said the second is equal to it, and that is to love your neighbor as yourself. And, so, as we prepare to go out of radio communication, we're still open to feel your love from Earth, and to all of you down there on Earth and around Earth, we love you from the moon...we will see you on the other side."

The crew of Artemis II understood that they had to go through a period of being cut off from communication, and yet they were able to maintain faith that they would emerge "on the other side." When you are in darkness and feel cut off from help, remember that you too will emerge with Him on the other side.

Chapter 3 of Job is the account of Job's lament. This is Job passing through the darkest darkness. He has lost everything: his wealth, his health, his children, and even his wife has turned against him. He has lived a faithful life, and yet he is in despair. For seven days Job sits in silence. To

their credit, Job's friends sit silently with him. After these seven days, Job breaks the silence and begins to speak. What does he say? He cries out to God in lament. What is a lament? It is a form of prayer that cries out to God in agony to express deep sorrow over suffering and loss. A lament is a cry of pain. It is the deep groaning of grief. It is raw and vulnerable and never pretty.

Even though the thought of lament makes us uncomfortable, we need to understand that God gives us permission to lament. He does not shy away from our pain. Over half of the Psalms are Psalms of lament. The entire Old Testament book of Lamentations is devoted to lament. Jesus Himself quoted a Psalm of lament when He cried out, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,"* from the cross (Psalm 22:1).

In Job chapter 3, we hear Job's desperate, painful cry. Job refuses to curse God, so instead he begins by cursing the day he was born, *"Afterward, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. Job said, 'Perish the day when I was born, the night which said, 'a male is conceived.' That day let it be darkness! Let not God above attend to it; let not a ray of light shine on it'"* (Job 3:1-4). After Job curses the day he was born, he moves on to describe the agony that his life has become. In 3:24-25 Job says, *"For my shrieks come as my bread; my groanings pour out like water. What I most dreaded has come upon me, and what I feared befalls me."* Here we see an intimate and vulnerable picture of a person in the pit of despair. This is not because of any sin or

GOD WANTS TO BLESS YOU IN YOUR MOST BROKEN PLACES.

wrongdoing on his part. And Job has no answer as to why this tragedy has come upon him. All Job knows for sure is that his life is without any sense of rest or peace.

Lament brings us face to face with our weaknesses and pain. It forces us to acknowledge all the ways in which we have turmoil and rest alludes us. In the words of Job, *"I have no ease, I am not quiet; I have no rest, for turmoil comes"* (Job 3:26). The darkness of Job 3 is arduous to travel through. In this darkness, hold on to the reality that God gives us full permission to lament. God welcomes your cries of lament. He wants your sadness so He can transform it with His hope. God wants to bless you in your most broken places. In order to experience the promises of God, you will need to have the courage to lament.

One of the most difficult aspects of suffering or grief is that it can be exhausting. Job's lament in chapter 3 ends with the realization that he is physically tired. *"I have no rest"* can often feel very familiar to us. Augustine observed this at the turn of the 4th century AD: *"You have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you"* (Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1). In our most exhausting moments of lament, Jesus is whispering to us, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

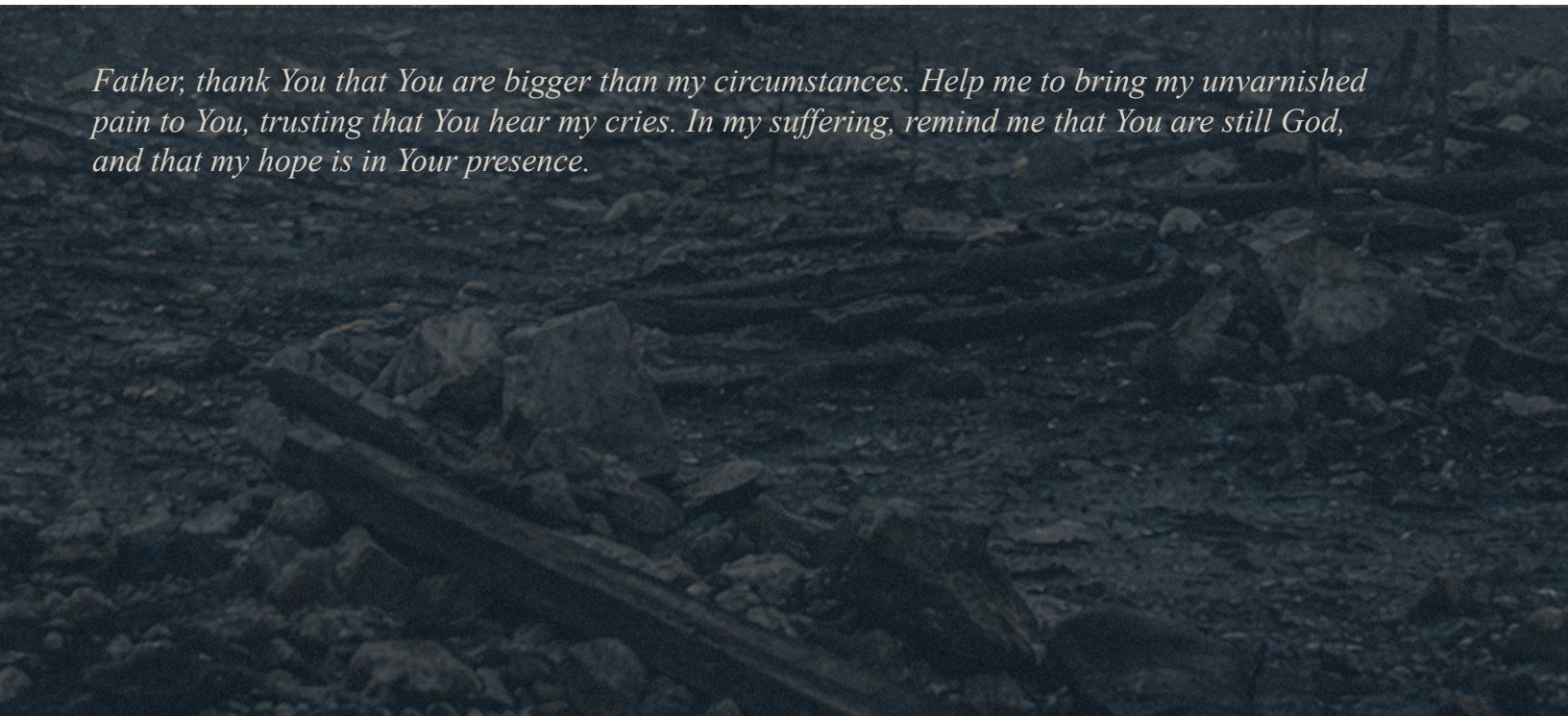
How rested would you say you are on a scale of 1-10?
(1 = “I have no rest;” 10= “I feel rested and refreshed.”)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Have you ever cried out to God in lament? What did that process feel like? Take some time to write down your feelings about crying out to God:

What “darkness” are you facing? Take your rawest emotions to God, even if they are filled with anger or confusion. You don’t need to hide your despair; you are allowed to mourn. Express that in prayer to God now, and remember that He is always with you, even when He feels far away.

Father, thank You that You are bigger than my circumstances. Help me to bring my unvarnished pain to You, trusting that You hear my cries. In my suffering, remind me that You are still God, and that my hope is in Your presence.



WEEK TWO - DAY THREE

PRACTICE OF LAMENT

Lord, we know You are good, but lamenting, hurt, and suffering do not feel good. Wherever we are today, help our hearts yield to You. Remind us that lament is good for our souls, even when it hurts. Jesus, let Your voice rise above all pain. Show us the intimacy You desire for us as we lament. Amen.

Peace has been stripped away, and I have forgotten what prosperity is. I cry out, “My splendor is gone! Everything I had hoped for from the Lord is lost!” The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin each morning afresh. I say to myself, “The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!” ... The Lord is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love. For He does not enjoy hurting His people or causing them sorrow. Lamentations 3:17-25; 31-33

Have you ever felt dread or defeat—knowing you need to act, but feeling overwhelmed, afraid, or unable to begin? Maybe it’s a task, a memory, a hard conversation, or a feeling you’d rather avoid. Facing difficult things is never easy, and making time to face such feelings is even harder.

For me, the hardest part is often just getting started—whether it’s a home project, writing a paper, facing a tough conversation, or addressing something emotional that needs attention. The idea of unpacking everything and finishing it can feel overwhelming. Sometimes I literally sense the dread in my body, questioning if I have enough physical, mental, or emotional energy. The fear of what might happen when I open up or begin can be paralyzing. Yet, even though these feelings are real and strong, I’ve found that once I start—whether it’s the task, the conversation, or the emotional work—I usually feel much better afterward. There’s often healing, relief, or a weight lifted.

LAMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR HEALING; ONLY BY
BRINGING OUR SUFFERING TO JESUS CAN WE FIND
THE REST HE OFFERS.

That same internal dread we feel when facing hard things often appears when we consider lamenting. Jeremiah’s words in Lamentations capture this feeling: “Peace has been stripped away... I have forgotten what prosperity is.” Do Jeremiah’s words of lament resonate with you? True lament means sitting with grief and pouring out our souls to God. We can “*cast all our cares on Him, because He cares about us*” (1 Peter 5:7). It’s not easy, convenient, or quick—lament is raw, honest, and biblical. Jesus prayed with fervent cries and tears (Hebrews 5:7).

Lament is essential for healing; only by bringing our suffering to Jesus can we find the rest He offers. Jesus invites, “*Come to me, all who are weary... and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). With Him, healing begins. He heals the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18), sustains us (Colossians 1:17), and restores us daily (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

Today, I encourage you: schedule time to lament and reflect, perhaps writing down your thoughts or prayers. Trust God through moments of discomfort, effort, or exhaustion, believing He has something better beyond this process. Walk this path to healing. Remember, God never wastes our pain. He works all things for our good (Romans 8:28), offers hope and purpose (Romans 15:13), promises to never leave us (Deuteronomy 31:6), and shapes us into His likeness (Philippians 1:6; Ephesians 2:10).

You may wonder, exactly how should I lament in a way that is emotionally honest and spiritually grounded? Some have suggested the following pattern to practice lament: **Turn, Cry Out, Ask, and Trust**. Let’s give it a shot:

First, turn to God—Instead of avoiding, numbing, or shutting down, gently turn toward God. He waits for us. By turning to Him, we begin to find refuge and healing (Lamentations 3:55–57; John 15:5). Prompt:

• God, here I am in the middle of... _____

• Right now I feel... _____

Then, **cry out** to God—pour out your heart honestly. Say what is actually hard. Be real. No filtering is needed. God already knows and cares for you (Matthew 6:8). He invites honesty: “*How long, Lord?*” (Psalm 13:1–2). “*Pour out your hearts to Him*” (Psalm 62:8). Prompt:

• God, I don’t understand why... _____

• I’m struggling with this because... _____

Ask God boldly—even for what feels impossible. Name your needs clearly. God, our Father, is generous and delights in giving (Matthew 7:11). Often, we miss out because we don’t ask (James 4:2). He can do more than we imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Prompt:

• God, I need... _____

• Please show me... _____

Finally, **trust** God. After you turn, cry out, and ask, trust that God's ways are higher (Proverbs 3:5–6; Isaiah 55:8–9), His character is steady (Lamentations 3:22–23), and His plans are greater than what we see (Hebrews 11:1; 2 Corinthians 4:18). Even if feelings or circumstances haven't changes, choose what is true about God. Lament moves us from expressing pain to surrendered trust - a place where lasting healing begins.

• God, even though this is hard, You are... _____

• Today, I will hold onto... _____

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

What is something you need to lament but are currently avoiding?

Which of these steps (Turn to God, Cry Out to God, Ask God, and Trust God) is most difficult for you? Why?

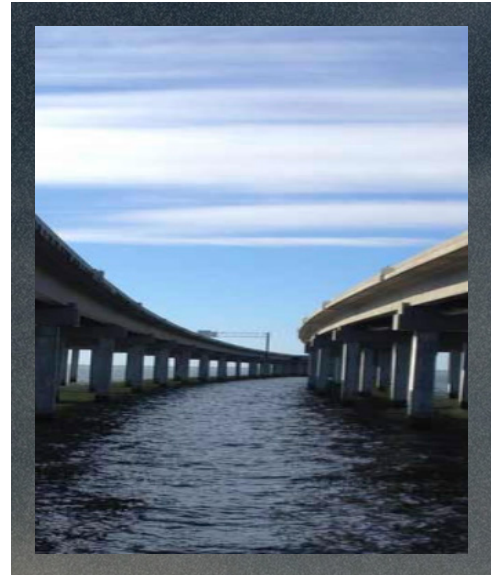
God, thank You that You are a God of lament. Thank You that I don't have to separate my feelings from You, but that You invite me to bring them to You. Thank You that Your Word tells us Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light. As I consider what lament looks like in my life, will You show me the next step I can take towards lamenting so that I may be closer to You? Thank You for being a God who stays, even when life is hard. Amen.

WEEK TWO - DAY FOUR

PERSEVERANCE IN LAMENT

Lord, You are my sustainer. Give me endurance to travel the difficult road before me. Give me courage to boast in my weaknesses. Lord, meet me in my frailty and suffering so that Your strength might be revealed more clearly.

Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:8-10



Lament has been described as a bridge between our pain and God's promises. If it is a bridge, then it has to be one of the scariest bridges around. Bridge Masters Inc. has a list on its website of "10 of the World's Scariest Bridges." One of the bridges on the list is a bridge that some of you may have driven over: The Lake Ponchartrain Causeway. Listen to how they describe this bridge, "What makes this bridge so scary? Motorists can't see land when they're in the middle of the bridge. Police have had to rescue anxious drivers who panic while crossing the bridge and stop their cars on the roadway. This bridge has been in operation for more than 60 years and rises just 16 feet above the waters of the lake. It is still the world's longest bridge over water. It gives fearful drivers the sense that it never ends. These feelings can be increased on foggy days." When I think about this description, I can see how similar it is to the process of lament. When we are in the middle of it, it feels like it will never end. We can't see the other side and the temptation is to simply stop and get stuck in the middle. What is interesting is that the article gives advice on how to navigate the bridge, "Tip for anxious drivers: Follow the vehicle ahead of you at a sensible distance and keep an eye on its taillights. This provides a guide over the bridge and can provide a sense of reassurance that you're safe." This is a great reminder to us that we don't need to try to navigate the bridge of lament alone. Find someone you can follow who will serve as a guide to the promises of God.

Look at Job 3 again. At first glance it might seem that Job is all alone during this chapter but look back at the end of Job 2. Verses 12-13 read, "*When they looked from a distance, they could barely recognize him. They wept aloud, and each man tore his robe and threw dust into the air and on his head. They sat on the ground with him seven days and nights, but no one spoke a word to him because they saw that his suffering was very intense.*" When Job is crying out to God in chapter 3, he is not alone. His three friends are sitting in the dust with him in silence. This is the best thing that Job's friends did in the entire book. They sat in silence with Job for an entire week. (Later in the study we will see that Job's friends started to try to give reasons and advice to Job, and this is when their presence went from helpful to hurtful).

Grief, pain, and suffering can breed feelings of extreme loneliness. The temptation is to withdraw and isolate yourself from the rest of the world. Unfortunately, we live in a culture that makes it easy to hide from people. We spend so much time looking at screens that we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are in relationship with others. Without others around us, it is easy to give up or get stuck. We are not meant to face suffering and pain alone. When my oldest daughter was in high school, she ran cross-country. The secret to distance running is that you have to be willing to persevere through the pain. My wife and I learned quickly that the best thing we could do to help our daughter during a race was to position ourselves at a few strategic (usually the most demanding) points in the race and shout out encouragement to her as she passed by. She would see us or recognize our voices, and it would give her some extra endurance to keep going. She didn't need us to coach her or give her advice. She simply needed to know that we were there, and that we were pulling for her.

REMEMBER, THE BEST WAY TO BE SUPPORTIVE TO
OTHERS IN THEIR HURT IS TO BE PRESENT.

When we are in the middle of grief, pain, and lament, we need to be connected with other people who are willing to enter into our pain with us. When we see friends who are going through pain, we need to be willing to sit with them in silence and simply be present. The bridge of lament can be a long one. If we are not connected to others, it is easy to get stuck or give up. The hard reality is that when we are going through lament we need to persevere and keep going.

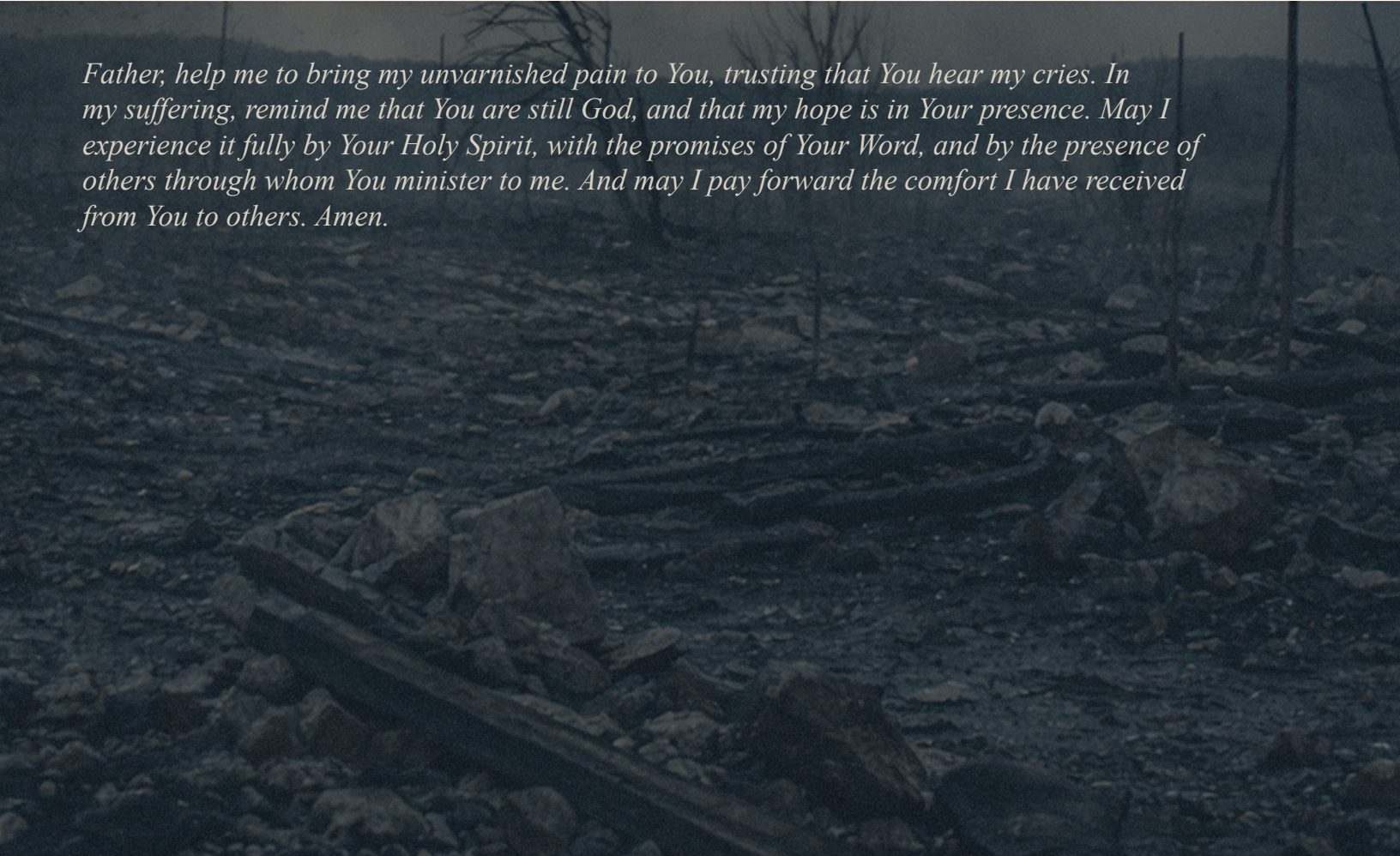
There are no shortcuts or detours available. To get to the other side of the suffering, you have to go over the bridge. It is easier to keep going when you have someone with you. Remember, the best way to be supportive to others in their hurt is to be present. You do not have to provide answers or explanations. Simply represent the God who Stays, by staying.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Think of a time in your life when someone has been with you during a trial. How did it make you feel to know that you were not alone?

At our workplaces or schools we are often asked to provide the name of an emergency contact. Take time to reflect upon who your spiritual and emotional emergency contacts are. Who would you want to sit with you during a time of crisis or grief? Make a list of names below:

Now take a few minutes to think about some of your friends or family members that are going through a difficult time. What are some ways you can be present for them during this time?



Father, help me to bring my unvarnished pain to You, trusting that You hear my cries. In my suffering, remind me that You are still God, and that my hope is in Your presence. May I experience it fully by Your Holy Spirit, with the promises of Your Word, and by the presence of others through whom You minister to me. And may I pay forward the comfort I have received from You to others. Amen.

WEEK TWO - DAY FIVE

THE PROMISE OF LAMENT

Heavenly Father, I come to You in my pain, knowing that Your Word promises You are close to the brokenhearted and close to all who are crushed in spirit. Lord, my heart feels heavy and broken. I feel the weight of this sorrow and I cannot heal myself. I thank You that You are not a distant God, but one who draws near to me in my weakest moments. I ask that You bind up my wounds and comfort my broken heart. Where I feel hopeless, fill me with Your hope. Where I feel weak, fill me with Your strength. Thank You for being my refuge and my present help in this trouble. I trust that Your love is mending me.

But I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh. I will see him myself; my eyes will look at him, and not as a stranger. My heart longs within me. Job 19:25-27



Ben Sasse is a former United States Senator from Nebraska. He has degrees from Harvard and Yale and served as the 13th president of the University of Florida. He is married and has three children—two girls in their 20s and a teenage son. Ben has lived a wonderful life, but Ben is currently in the process of dying. In December of 2025, Ben Sasse was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. He was given 3-4 months to live, but at the time of this writing he is still alive. He started a podcast called “Not Dead Yet” and has been going through his experience with cancer in a very public way. Recently, Ben sat down for an interview with Ross Douthat for the New York Times. In the interview, Ben talked about the pain that he has been going through for the past three months. He is coming to grips with the fact that his type and stage of cancer is not something you recover from. When he sat down for the interview, his face was covered with blood and open sores because the treatment he is going through has robbed his body of the ability to produce new skin cells.

During the interview, he talked about his views on politics, education, and his faith. He acknowledged the pain and suffering he is going through and his fight to stay alive as long as possible with his family. Towards the end of the interview, Ross Douthat asked him very directly, “Are you angry at God ever?” and Ben replied equally as directly, “No.” Then Ben went on to say, “I wouldn’t want a sovereign God to defer to all of my prayers with a yes. I’m not omniscient. I don’t know what the weaving together of the tapestry of full redemption should look like, but I know going through the period of suffering that I’m going through is a benefit because it is a winnowing. I’m filled with dross. This suffering is not salvific, but it’s sanctifying, and I’m grateful for it.” At the end of the interview, Douthat asked Ben if he felt ready to die. Ben’s reply brought Douthat to tears when he said, “I don’t feel ready. But to whom would I go? . . . we’re told that we get to approach the Almighty, we get to approach the divine and call him Daddy, Abba, Father? That’s pretty glorious. And I know that that’s what I need.”

Yesterday we said that lament serves a bridge between our pain and God's promises. Most of us understand what we mean when we refer to our pain, however, many times we lose sight of the promises of God. Today, we want to explore what God's promises might look like during a time of suffering and pain. It is important to realize that the promise of God does not always look like a change in our circumstances. As much as we would love for God to transform our situation right now, that is not always what God has in store for us. Ben Sasse seems to realize this. It would be wonderful for God to take away his cancer right now, but the greatest promise that he is clinging to is the realization that God is with him as a loving Father.

In Job chapter 3, we see Job in the dark valley of lament. He is crying out to God and despairing of life itself. Job has given words to his pain, but we don't get to glimpse the promise of God until we journey farther into the book of Job. We get hints and shadows of promise as we journey with Job, but it is not until the end of the book that we see God's ability to restore and make things new. One of the passages where we catch a fleeting glimpse of Job's hope is in chapter 19. Look back at our Scripture for today. Job says in chapter 19 verse 25, *"I know that my Redeemer lives, yet at the end he will stand on the dust."* Think about what Job is saying. He is confident that God will send an advocate, a kinsman-redeemer, to represent him. Job is not just saying that someday there will be a redeemer on the earth. Job is making the profound statement that the Redeemer will come and be with him in his pile of dust. Job had cried out to God from the pile of ashes and dust that he is sitting in. Somehow Job recognizes that the promise of God is for God to draw near to him and enter into his pain and suffering.

According to Psalm 34:18, *"The Lord is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in Spirit."* (CSB) When we are crushed, God is close. God enters and redeems our pain. We do not worship a God who is distant; we worship a God who stays in the dust with us. In the great messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53, the Messiah (Jesus) is described with the following words, *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like someone people turned away from; he was despised, and we didn't value him."* Isaiah 53:3. Salvation and restoration is only possible because Jesus came and took all our suffering, pain, and sin upon Himself. When we are in pain, He is with us. How do we know this? Because the last promise He gave us before He ascended into heaven is, *"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20.) Even in our darkest lament, we can cling to the promise that God is with us.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Think of a time in your life when God felt the closest. What were the circumstances you were experiencing at that time? Take a moment to reflect upon that time below:

When you are going through trials or suffering, do you feel that God is distant, or do you feel that He is close to you? Where do these feelings come from?

Father, thank You that You are with us always. There is nothing that can separate us from Your love. In our darkest nights and our deepest pain, You are there. Help us to rest in Your love.



WEEK TWO - DAY SIX

GOD STAYS

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the most significant truths from HANDLING HURT you believe God wants you to understand and apply. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

WEEK TWO - DAY SEVEN

GOD STAYS

WORSHIP & GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:

The background of the image is a dark, moody landscape. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, suggesting an approaching storm or late evening. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and debris. In the foreground, there are several large, dark logs or branches lying on the ground. In the background, there are some bare, dark trees and a distant, hazy horizon line. The overall tone is somber and dramatic.

WEEK THREE

GOD WEEPS

WEEK THREE - DAY ONE

GOD WEEPS

We will begin each week by looking at an anchoring truth about God's character as seen throughout Scripture, so that we may see Him rightly, worship Him truthfully, and walk with Him faithfully. This week, we latch ourselves to the anchor, God Weeps.

We will do this by following a devotional pattern using the acrostic P.R.A.Y:

P - Pause
R - Reflect on Scripture
A - Ask God for help
Y - Yield to God's will

P - PAUSE

Take a moment to still yourself in the Lord's presence. Surrender yourself - your thoughts, beliefs, burdens and life to Him, asking for His wisdom and guidance. Ask Him to speak to you today through His Word.

R - REFLECT ON SCRIPTURE

You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Psalms 56:8

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18

A legitimate question to ask in the Book of Job, is, "Where is God?" In chapter 1 we see Him on His throne, granting Satan permission to test Job. We will again hear from God, responding to what all that has been said about Him and His ways in Job 38, but He feels noticeably absent in the 37 chapters in between. Have you ever felt that way before?

Describe a time God felt absent when you needed Him:

In seasons when God feels absent, we need a steady understanding of His character. When our circumstances tempt us to doubt His presence or goodness, His unchanging nature becomes an anchor for our hearts. One of the most transformative shifts in my understanding of God came

when I began looking for evidence of His compassion throughout Scripture. At first, especially in the Old Testament, I often saw God as harsh or distant. But as I began reading the Bible more carefully and consistently, I started noticing His compassion everywhere. Once I saw it, I couldn't unsee it. The Scriptures cited for today, as well as many others, remind us that God's compassion is woven throughout the entire story of scripture.

Even when God seems silent, Scripture repeatedly shows us that He is neither absent nor indifferent to suffering. One of my favorite pictures of God's care and compassion in the midst of suffering, pain, and unjust circumstances is that of Hagar in Genesis 16. Hagar was a slave in Abram's household—close enough to witness God's promises, yet not someone who seemed included in them. When God's promise of a son to Abram and his wife Sarai is delayed, Sarai takes matters into her own hands in an effort to "help God along." (Spoiler alert: that never works well.) Sarai gives her servant Hagar to Abram so that she can bear him a son. Sarai becomes jealous and despises Hagar, mistreating her badly. Hagar runs into the wilderness feeling used, rejected, and alone. As Hagar sits alone in the wilderness, "*the angel of the Lord found [her]*" (Genesis 16:7). Think about this picture of God "finding" Hagar in the wilderness. He cared about her. He saw her. He pursued her. He spoke to her and even blessed her, though it did not change her immediate circumstances. I love Hagar's response, "'*You are El-roi [the God Who Sees],*' for she said, '*In this place, have I actually seen the one who sees me?*'" (Genesis 16:13).

A- ASK FOR GOD'S HELP

Can you imagine this is God's posture towards you in your suffering? He sees you. He hears you. He pursues you because He cares for you—even when He feels silent.

How would believing these things about God change the way you view Him in times of suffering? What brings you comfort?

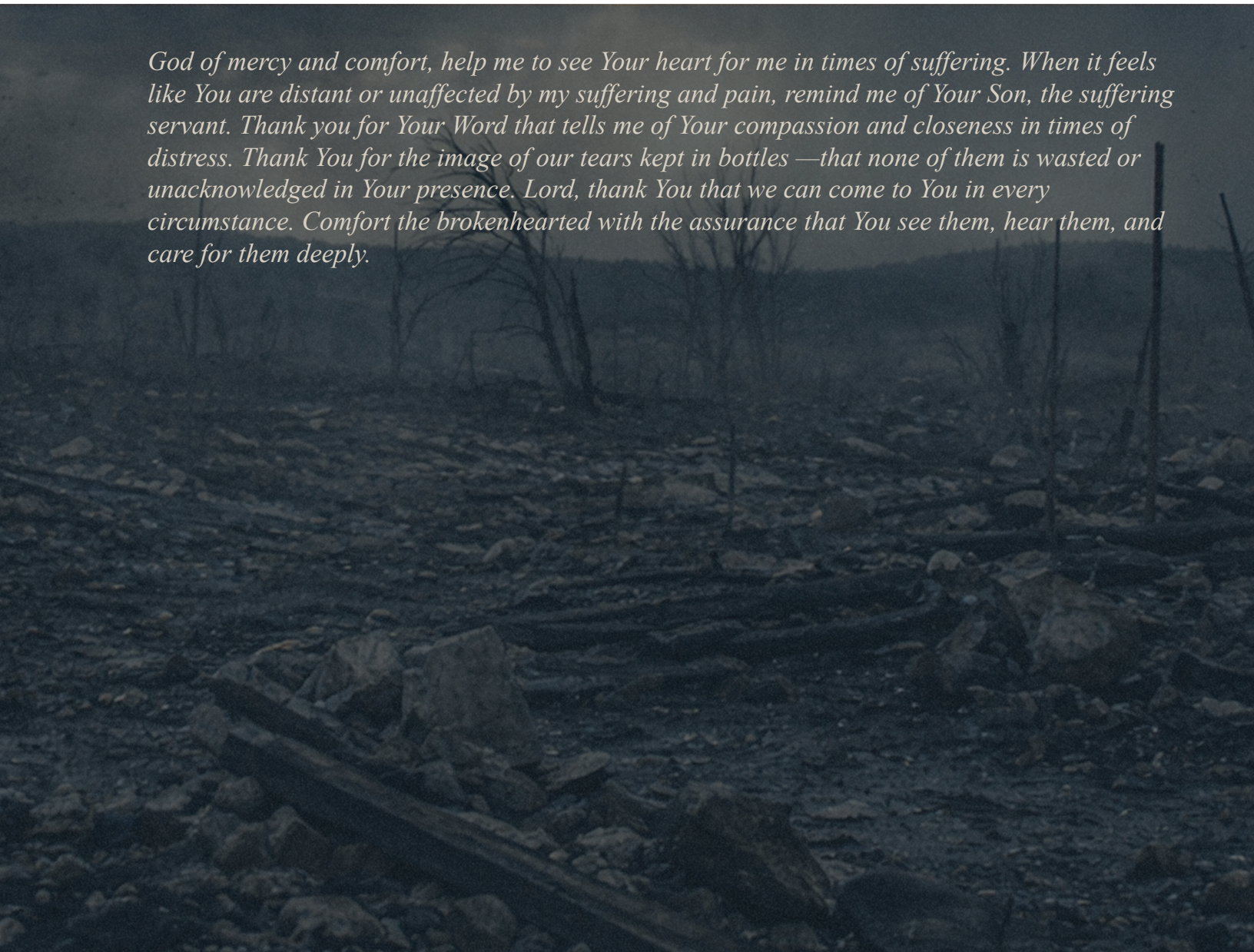
Not only do we worship a compassionate God, we have one who sent His own Son to suffer on our behalf to rescue us. He was mocked and beaten; He suffered physically, mentally, and emotionally. This means we have a God who is well acquainted with suffering.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. *Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.* Hebrews 4:15-16

What do you need to bring boldly before His throne today? Ask for Him to show you His compassion for you today.

Y - YIELD

God of mercy and comfort, help me to see Your heart for me in times of suffering. When it feels like You are distant or unaffected by my suffering and pain, remind me of Your Son, the suffering servant. Thank you for Your Word that tells me of Your compassion and closeness in times of distress. Thank You for the image of our tears kept in bottles —that none of them is wasted or unacknowledged in Your presence. Lord, thank You that we can come to You in every circumstance. Comfort the brokenhearted with the assurance that You see them, hear them, and care for them deeply.



WEEK THREE - DAY TWO

GOD CARES FOR YOU

God, thank You that You are a God who cares. You don't leave us where we are; You don't get us to "just good enough". You sit with us and care for us, even when we don't know we need it, when we don't know where to start, or when You feel so far away. God, would You use today to show me the ways You care for me, even when I struggle to see it or feel it. Amen.

My days fly faster than a weaver's shuttle. They end without hope. O God, remember that my life is but a breath, and I will never again feel happiness. I cannot keep from speaking. I must express my anguish. My bitter soul must complain. Am I a sea monster or a dragon that you must place me under guard? I think, "My bed will comfort me, and sleep will ease my misery", but then you shatter me with dreams and terrify me with visions. I would rather be strangled — rather die than suffer like this. I hate my life and don't want to go on living. Oh leave me alone for my few remaining days. Job 7: 6-7, 11-16

Have you ever felt unseen or forgotten? Or maybe you've wondered, "Does anyone see how hard this is?" Can you relate to Job when he says, "I cannot keep from speaking, I must express my anguish"? Perhaps your suffering has felt so overwhelming that you've questioned your own sanity, thinking, "Surely, God would not allow this to happen!" Have you ever felt like the pain would never end? Helping professionals have observed that one of the hardest parts of suffering is not knowing when or if relief will come.

Some of my deepest "sinking" moments were when I mistakenly expected that relief was closer than it really was. I told myself, "If I can just get to past this season, or over this hill, maybe things will feel better." However, we all know that life doesn't always go as we hope it will. Sometimes, our plans get interrupted, or worse, the outcome isn't what we were hoping for. Often, our expectations of what God should do, or will do, are a source of suffering in and of themselves. Can you recall ever thinking, "if I can just make it to ... then things will get better?" How do you feel when relief doesn't arrive when you expected it?

I can also identify with Job when he longed for sleep to bring rest, only for it to bring nightmares instead. When I am struggling emotionally, my dreams can feel so real that it is as if my mind never truly rests. And sometimes suffering feels so intense it is as though my heart is being torn from my chest. Some people are like me, turning to rest for relief. Others turn to addictions that bring temporary comfort. Many find some form of cultural distraction to numb the disappointment.

Can you relate? Is there something else you turn to, expecting comfort or relief, that is not beneficial to what God truly wants for you?

REMEMBER, WE CAN RIGHTLY INFER TRUTHS
ABOUT GOD FROM JOB'S EXPERIENCES WHEN
THOSE TRUTHS ARE CONFIRMED ELSEWHERE IN
SCRIPTURE.

Remember, we can rightly infer truths about God from Job's experiences when those truths are confirmed elsewhere in Scripture. Because God has revealed Himself to be a present and caring God (and never less than that), we can infer that God was there in Job's suffering. And in direct interactions when Job was corrected, we can rightly infer that God's availability and correction were expressions of God's care—God wasn't perturbed or impatient as we sometimes read into the text (see Preface for more on personal bias).

Whatever season you may be walking through today, how close does God feel to you right now? Suffering and hurt have the unique ability to cause God to feel either nearer than ever before or farther away than ever before. I want to take you on a journey through several passages of Scripture that reveal how God drew near to people in their suffering and cared for them in their lowest moments. This is not meant to dismiss any distance you may feel from God, but rather to help “call to mind” examples of how His compassionate heart weeps for those who suffer and have to handle their hurt.

In Genesis 16, as you read yesterday, we see that the angel of the Lord sought Hagar out in the middle of her distress, when she did not know how she would care for herself or her child. In response, Hagar called God “*the God who sees me.*” Then, in Genesis 21, Sarah (formerly, Sarai) again spurns Hagar and Abraham sends her away with bread and water. She didn't have any place to go and reached despair when “*she lifted up her voice and wept.*” Again, God heard her cries, drew near to her broken heart, and cared for her needs. In Genesis 39:2, we see that even while Joseph was treated unjustly and thrown into prison, the Lord was with him. In 1 Samuel 1, Hannah pours out her grief before God as she struggles with infertility. Rather than ignoring her pain or remaining distant, God heard her cries, numbered her tears, and drew near.

We have entire books of the Bible devoted to the cries of suffering people—Psalms and Lamentations. In Psalm 13:1-2, David cries out, “*How long will you forget me? ... How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?*” In Lamentations 1:16, we read, “*For all these things I weep; tears flow down my cheeks. No one is here to comfort me; anyone who might encourage me is far away.*” Scripture does not hide the reality of human suffering; it gives language to it.

Let's end with Elijah in 1 Kings 19, who became so overwhelmed that he wanted to die. Elijah cried out, “*I have had enough, Lord*” (1 Kings 19:4). Yet in Elijah's lowest moment, God sent an angel to minister to him. The angel told him to get up and eat, and the food provided came from the Lord. God allowed Elijah to rest and regain his strength. He did not push Elijah beyond what he could bear. He did not demand that Elijah keep striving or producing. Instead, God met some of Elijah's most basic needs—rest and nourishment.

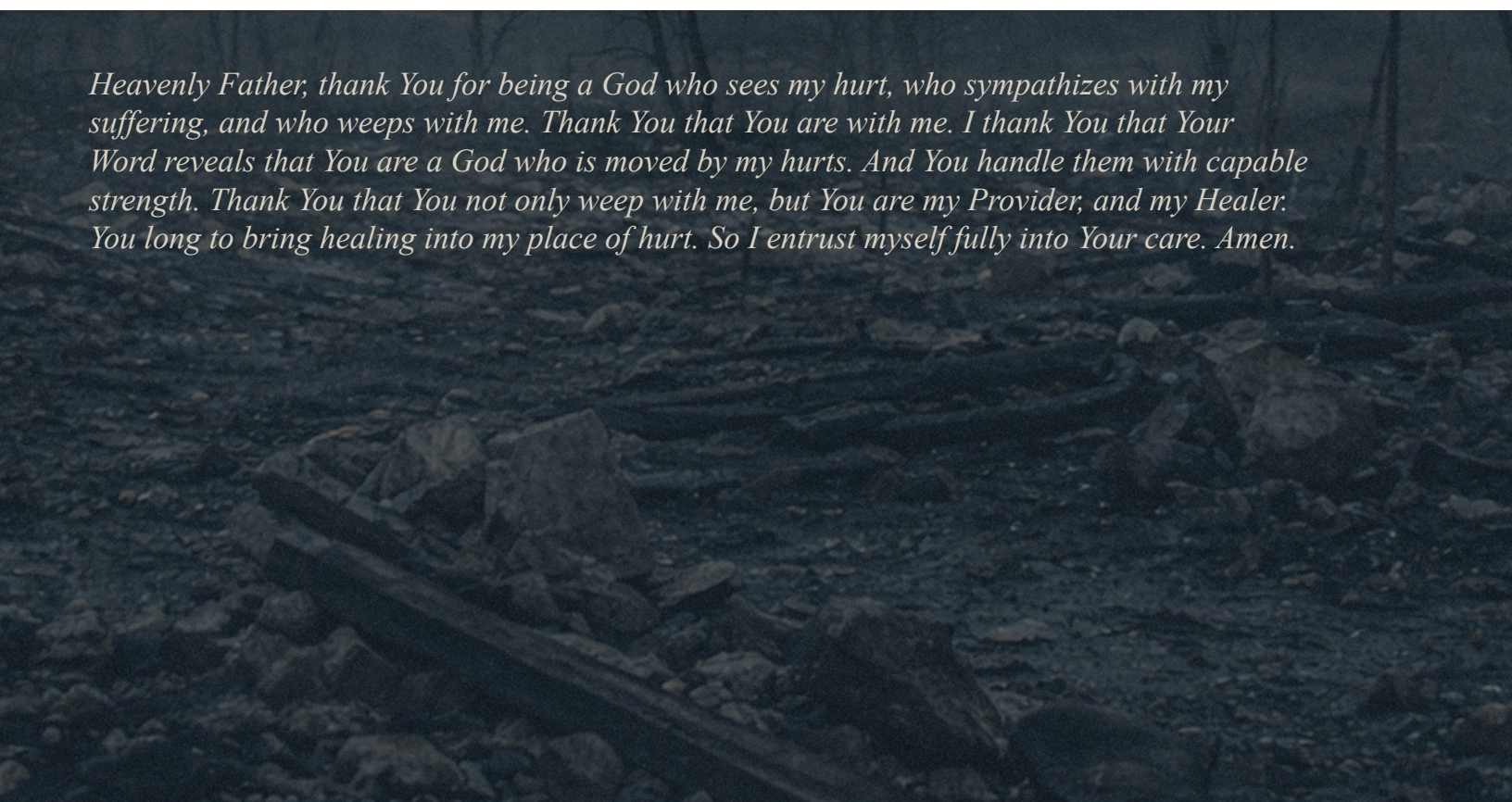
There are countless other examples throughout Scripture of God comforting those who suffer, and I encourage you to seek them out. When walking through suffering, Satan wants us to believe that God has abandoned us, does not care about our pain, or is withholding good from us. But Scripture tells a different story. Psalms 34:18 (NIV) says it beautifully: *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”* Through these passages referenced above, I hope you can see that God is with us, He see us, and more than that, He listens when we cry out. In the person of Jesus, we see his care most vividly. Just as God’s Word reminds us of His faithfulness to His people, I want to encourage you to make your own list of the ways you have seen God care for you. Then, in difficult seasons when the Lord feels distant or even uncaring, you can call to mind His faithfulness and find comfort from Him that you are not alone.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Write down any place where you are struggling to see that God cares for you?

What Biblical truth(s) about God can you cling to when you are dazed and disoriented by suffering?

Heavenly Father, thank You for being a God who sees my hurt, who sympathizes with my suffering, and who weeps with me. Thank You that You are with me. I thank You that Your Word reveals that You are a God who is moved by my hurts. And You handle them with capable strength. Thank You that You not only weep with me, but You are my Provider, and my Healer. You long to bring healing into my place of hurt. So I entrust myself fully into Your care. Amen.



WEEK THREE - DAY THREE

GOD FEELS FOR YOU

God, thank You that You are a God who is well acquainted with unjust suffering. God's first-hand experience with suffering means He can sympathize with ours, because He's been there. So, God, in my suffering, will You help me to see Your presence and nearness. Help me to know that You are not distant, but You also have wept over my sufferings with such meticulous care that no tear goes unnoticed. May that bring me comfort today. In Jesus's name, amen.

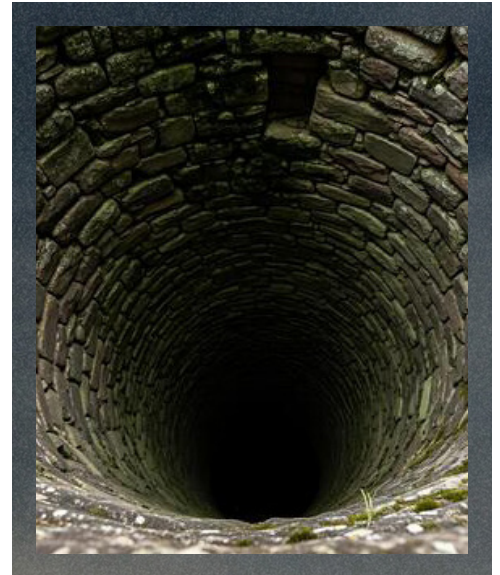
Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour: Father, glorify your name. John 12:27-28a

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16

When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled. "Where have you put him?" he asked. "Lord," they told him, "come and see." Jesus wept. John 11:33-35

A father sat across from a psychiatrist exhausted and confused about his teenage daughter. She had become distant, angry, and withdrawn. Every attempt to help seemed to push her farther away. The father offered advice, asked questions, corrected her, and tried solving the problem—but nothing worked. Exasperated, he finally asked, "What am I supposed to do? How do I help her with this?"

The psychiatrist gave him an image to inspire a different approach: Imagine your daughter at the bottom of a well, emotionally alone and hurting. Your daughter hears you standing at the top shouting down: "How'd you get yourself down there?" "Try harder," and "Here's what you need to do." But because of the nature of this well, she is unable to rescue herself. Advice doesn't help her. Shaming her for ending up in the well makes things worse and fixes nothing. She doesn't even have the strength to hold onto the rope you drop down to pull her out. The psychiatrist pivots, asking, "What if you climbed down with her? What if your presence could do more than rescue her body? What if your compassionate presence could assure her she matters, that you are big enough to handle her pain, and that you are committed to stay with her until her rescue arrives?" We have a God who sees us, feels for us, and rescues. A God who truly cares.



Have you ever felt that God is more like a distant, shaming father than a compassionate, rescuing one? That His intention is to simply fix our dilemmas and decisions without really seeing us as people needing tender care? I'm afraid that if we were totally honest, we could see that with our children and our friends, we can be more like the father at the top of the well than the one climbing down to serve. When people just want my suffering to go away, I can feel even more uncared for or misunderstood. It makes it difficult to hear good advice when unsure about the person's care. The beautiful thing about Jesus is that He does not stand at a distance shouting instruction to us. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that we have a high priest who is well-acquainted with human suffering. You might say that He gets us, and gets in the well with us.

Jesus is present with us in our grief. He listens to us in our suffering. We see this throughout the story of Job. God was not absent while Job cried out in confusion, anger, and pain. For 35 chapters, God listened to Job expressing his anguish and his anger. Likewise, God listens to us cry out. The Psalmist says He is so attuned to our suffering that He collects all our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). What a beautiful picture of God the Father, with whom no tear of mine goes unnoticed. While Jesus was here on earth, He offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue Him from death (Hebrews 5:7).

But God is not only present in our grief, He is a God that grieves. He weeps with us. This is exactly what we see in John 11. We have a God who weeps over us and with us. Jesus knew resurrection was coming, but He still "got in the well" with Mary and Martha and their grief. And He wept with them over Lazarus. He was not annoyed or in a hurry. We see Him, in all humanity, grieving with His friends in their loss. Sometimes our grief is too heavy for words. I've been there. I'm acquainted with many of your stories of unspeakable loss. Even in this place where you can find no words, the presence of God still ministers to those who take their suffering to Him. *"...The Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God"* (Romans 8:26-27).

Throughout all these passages we see the same truth repeated again and again: Jesus feels for us in our suffering. Our sufferings may look different or be in different phases, but that does not change the presence of Jesus or His care for us in our suffering. He feels with us and for us. Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus experience betrayal, injustice, rejection, exhaustion, grief, loneliness, and even physical pain. Jesus knew what it felt like to be overwhelmed with suffering, misunderstood by friends, and abandoned by those He loved. And through His humanity, we see the heart of our God who understands from experience. We see a God who does not remain distant from suffering, but willingly enters into it with us. At the cross, Jesus stepped into the deepest well of human suffering—rejection, grief, injustice, betrayal, brutality, and death itself—so that we would never suffer alone.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Just like God collects each of our tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8), I want to encourage you to make your own visual remembrance of this. Take a jar and some paper. Cut the paper into small strips and write on each one something you have cried over or carried in your suffering. Place each

strip into the jar as a reminder of what you have brought before the Lord. Let this jar represent just a portion of your story, remembering that God sees every tear you cry and cares tenderly for them. Put this somewhere where you'll see it often to be reminded of the depth of His care.

How does thinking about, or completing that activity affect the way you see Jesus and your suffering—knowing that He sees and remembers every tear?

Think of a time where you've had no words and needed the Holy Spirit to intercede for you. Are there things left unsaid that you need to express to God? Write them below and take them to the Father in prayer.

God, I am so thankful that You are not distant to my suffering. I am thankful You are patient in my groanings and crying out. Help the knowledge of what I learned today reach my heart. Help me to feel Your nearness and care in my suffering. And let that nearness and care bring me comfort and hope. Amen.



WEEK THREE - DAY FOUR

GOD COMFORTS

God, as I sit with You today, help me slow down and listen. Sometimes, when I don't know what to pray or even what to think, remind me that Your Spirit is at work in me. In the middle of hard times I'm carrying, help me to be still and trust that You see me and what I'm going through. As I open Your Word today, quiet my heart and help me see myself as the sheep You tenderly care for. Teach me to trust Your leading, to rest in Your presence, and to find comfort in Your embrace—whether I am at peace, in fear, or in pain. Open my eyes to see how intimately You know me and how faithfully You provide for my every need. Meet me here and draw me close. In Jesus's name, amen.



The Lord is my shepherd; I have what I need He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. Psalm 23:1-4

Most mornings, I'm in my favorite armchair reading the Bible and journaling when my two boys come downstairs, animating their toy cars or planes with wild hand movements and intense sound effects. I usually ask, "Did you do your morning chores?" But at times, I'll first reach out my arms to my youngest son to invite a hug. He smiles and walks into my arms, wrapping his tiny arms around me as far as they will reach. I lift him onto my lap and as I hug him, his breathing slows peacefully, and he melts into rest. He was at much at rest as the first time I held him. From the day he was born until now, he's come to me whenever scared or injured because he knows—whether at peace, in fear, or in pain—there is comfort in his daddy's embrace.

When studying the book of Job, we can be guilty of superimposing upon God's interaction with Job attitudes that God did not possess—things like punitive impatience or harshness, simply because the text does not explicitly describe God's gentle, caring demeanor toward Job. Instead of assigning God motivations and attitudes based on our own biases, we should let God's self-revelation guide our inferences. We know that God is slow to anger, abounding in love (Exodus 34:5), and we know that impatience and harshness are attributed to the flesh instead of the patience and gentleness that pour from the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). We know that even God's painful discipline is an expression of His love (Hebrews 12:5-11). So we can rightly infer God's emotional and relational posture toward Job during their encounters. It would be appropriate and fitting to vividly imagine God as Job's good shepherd administering the care Job needed.

David knew the Lord as his shepherd long before he became king, and his words in Psalm 23 reveal how deeply cared for he felt. Jesus also referred to Himself as the "Good Shepherd" who

perfectly cares for His people, described as sheep (John 10). Shepherds understand that sheep cannot care for themselves. Sheep are vulnerable creatures whose well-being directly reflects the quality of their shepherd's care.

The Lord is *your* Shepherd. In the barrenness of your suffering, He provides protection and sustenance. When you were cold, He warmed you. When you were dirty, He cleaned you. David, the author of Psalm 23, knew what it meant to be a shepherd—it was his work before he became king. He shows us how to understand God as our protector and provider, even as we walk through the darkest valleys of suffering. Your Good Shepherd provides rest and safety. In His care, He holds your past and your future. Your Good Shepherd has cleared the path and provided everything needed to renew your strength and sustain your soul.

Sometimes, a cast sheep finds itself on its back and needing its shepherd to set it back on its feet. Suffering can put us on our backs as well. When God finds you unable to move, your Good Shepherd seeks you out and sets you back on your feet. God does not look down on you when you are in a dark place spiritually, emotionally, or physically—He searches for you. This is the knowing, intimate Heavenly Father who has given us the Spirit of adoption so we can call Him Abba (Romans 8:15)—this most closely means “Daddy”.

When you are scared or facing difficulty, when you are suffocating from soul-shattering loss, He is right there with you. At your point of greatest need, He aches for you to fully receive the comprehensive care He both feels for you and extends toward you. He is not an abstract heavenly idea; He is your actual Shepherd here, in reality and in real time, and you can rest in Him. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3). He weeps with you in loss (John 11). And in the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus describes the Shepherd as one who pursues the one lost sheep, puts it on His shoulders, and carries it home (Luke 15).

Psalm 23 is more than just beautiful poetry reserved for solemn occasions and nursery decorations. It is a reminder of the love your Good Shepherd has for you in every detail David describes. Take a moment to reread Psalm 23 in its entirety from your favorite Bible. Put yourself in the place of the sheep and consider how your Heavenly Father is your Good Shepherd.

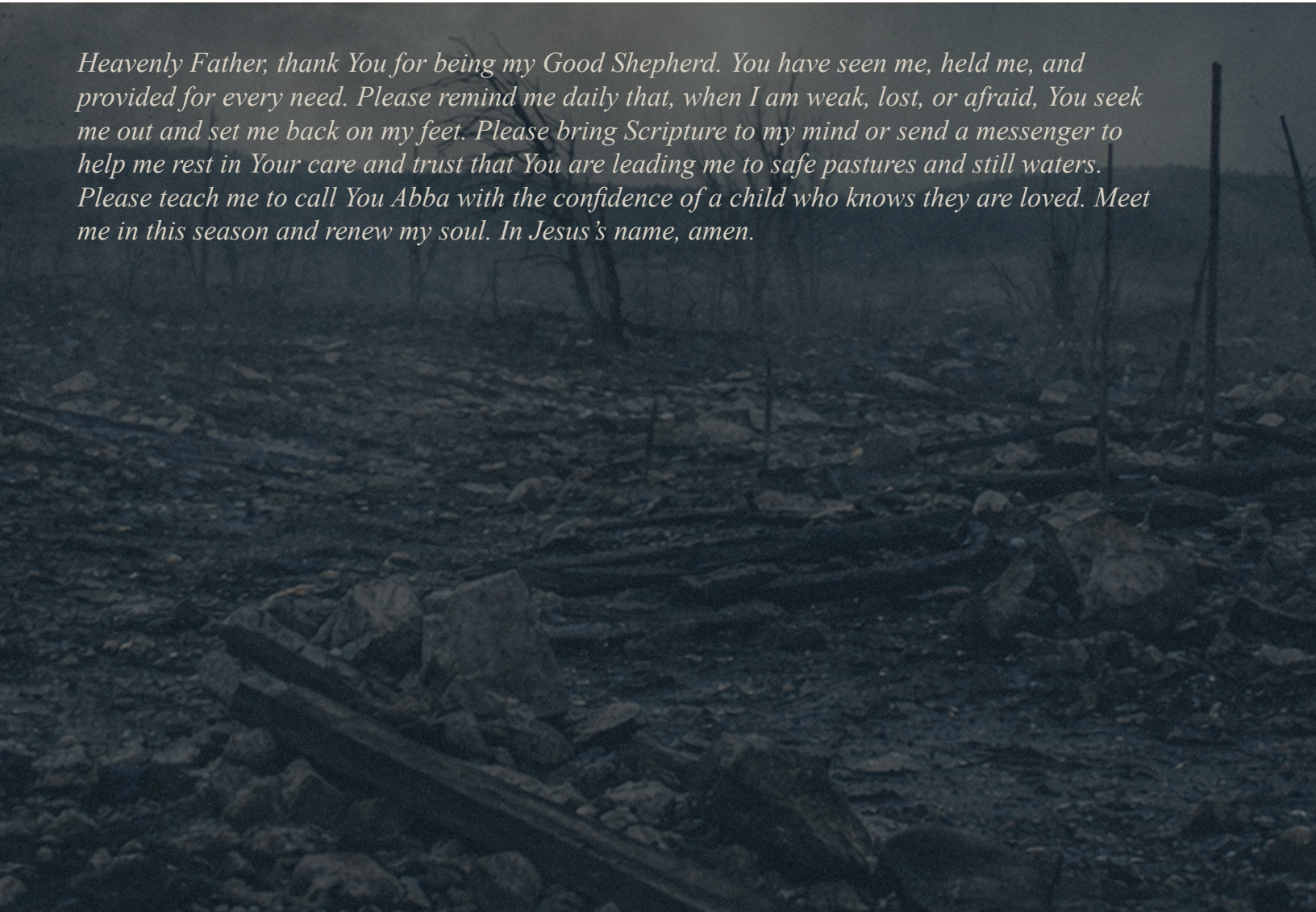
FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

What truths from Psalm 23 shed light on how God comforts you in times of suffering?

When have you most felt like a sheep in need of your Shepherd's care—and how did God meet you in that moment?

Which aspect of the Good Shepherd's care in Psalm 23 do you need to rest in today? How might God be inviting you to respond to His comfort this week?

Heavenly Father, thank You for being my Good Shepherd. You have seen me, held me, and provided for every need. Please remind me daily that, when I am weak, lost, or afraid, You seek me out and set me back on my feet. Please bring Scripture to my mind or send a messenger to help me rest in Your care and trust that You are leading me to safe pastures and still waters. Please teach me to call You Abba with the confidence of a child who knows they are loved. Meet me in this season and renew my soul. In Jesus's name, amen.



WEEK THREE - DAY FIVE

GOD HOLDS

God, thank You for giving me life, for caring for me in every moment, and for knitting me together. God, help me remember that my circumstances are never outside of Your reach. Please help me to see the character of Your love clearly. You are the creator and sustainer of all life, and I humbly seek to know You more deeply. Please meet me here today. Steady my heart and calm my heart so I can clearly hear You. In Jesus's name, amen.

Into your hand I entrust my spirit; you have redeemed me, Lord, God of truth. Psalm 31:5

One afternoon recently, I was walking my two youngest children to the neighborhood park, as they love to do after school or on a weekend. We excitedly left the house by sprinting out the door and down the street. With a firm call of my voice, we all gather together to travel safely down the sidewalk. There are several intersections to cross. I have the expectation that we will cross them together to ensure their safety. As we were nearing a larger intersection, I began to say to my 5-year-old son, "Take my hand so we can safely cross together." However, no sooner did the sound "Ta..." come out of my mouth, I felt his little hand nestle itself into the palm of mine. I didn't have to reinforce a lesson about safety or caution; he simply knew where he needed to be and in whose hand he needed to rest. He had no foreknowledge of the potential dangers that lay ahead, but trusted that I had him securely in the palm of my hand. Many "Daddy" moments like these make me smile, give me joy, and remind me that I, too, have a Good Father who holds me securely in the palm of His hand.



Psalm 31:5 reminds us that God's love notices and cares for us when we feel pain or distress. David is crying out to the Lord for a rescue from those trying to take his life and then declares, "Into your hand I entrust my spirit." Even in the middle of overwhelming circumstances, David surrenders his very life and spirit into the hands of God. David goes on to further describe his confidence in the Lord, "*I will rejoice and be glad in your faithful love because you have seen my affliction. You know the troubles of my soul*" (Psalm 31:7).

The posture of open-hearted communication and whole-hearted trust is the same posture we see in Job. Job begins by recognizing that his very existence is not an accident, but a direct act of God's careful work. He says to the Lord, "*You clothed me with skin and flesh, and wove me together with bones and tendons. You gave me life and faithful love, and your care has guarded my life*" (Job 10:11-12). Even in confusion and pain, Job looks back and remembers that God formed him and has been watching over him from the beginning. Job rests in the knowledge that the same hands that formed him continue to hold and sustain him. Even before he hears a reply from God, Job has faith that his life is not outside of God's faithful care. "*The life of every living*

thing is in his hand, as well as the breath of all humanity” (Job 12:10). If every creature and every human breath is held in God’s hand, then Job’s breath—and ours as well—are there, too.

JOB RESTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE SAME HANDS THAT FORMED HIM CONTINUE TO HOLD AND SUSTAIN HIM.

God doesn’t just notice your pain—He feels it. Psalm 56:8 says, *“You yourself have recorded my wanderings. Put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your record?”* Your tears are not wasted. They are being saved. God sees every one, collects every one, and cares deeply about what causes them. You don’t have to perform or fix yourself. You can simply rest in Him, because He comforts you and feels for you.

God doesn’t want you to endure troubles on your own. Instead, He invites you to humbly *“cast all your cares on Him, because he cares about you”* (1 Peter 5:7). When you carry your own burdens, your independence is saying to God, “I can handle this.” But when you cast them on God, you’re saying, “You are able, and I entrust my suffering into Your care.” Lamentations 3:22 assures us, *“Because of the Lord’s faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end.”* No matter how deep the pain or how long the season, God’s compassion never fails. They are new every morning. His love notices. His love cares. His love acts.

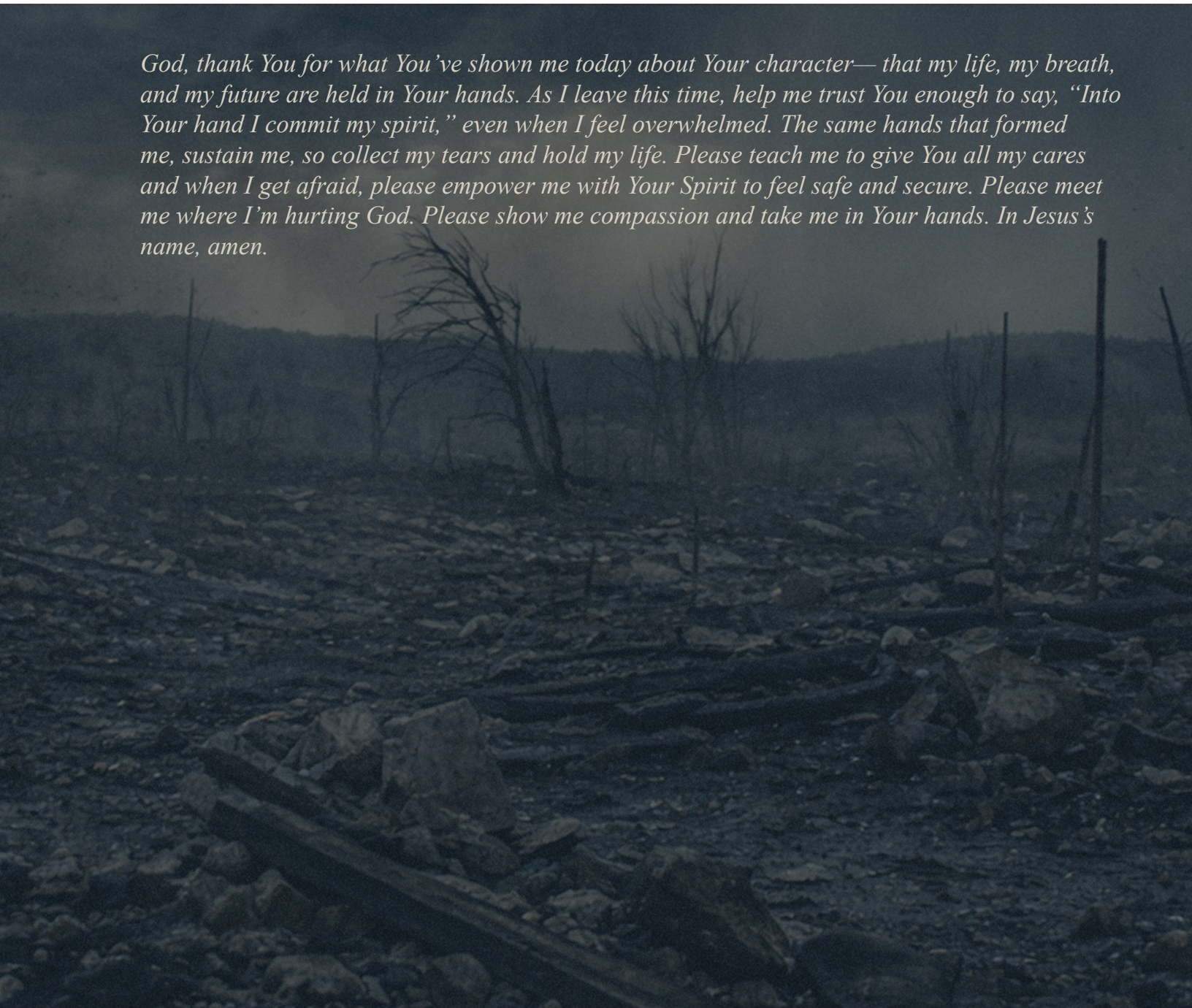
When we put all this together, a beautiful and challenging picture emerges. The God who knit you together in the womb is the same God who holds your breath today. The God who collects your tears is the same God who invites you to cast every anxiety on Him. As you consider your own suffering, remember that your story is held within much larger hands than your own. Your life has been granted by God, your spirit is being preserved by His care, and your future is secured by a loving Father who will not let you go. He’s not surprised by the circumstances of your suffering, and He weeps with you in them. Hold on, and be held by your Father who is eager to enter into your hurt with healing and into your suffering with sustaining strength.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

David and Job both chose to entrust themselves to God in the midst of overwhelming pain. What does it look like, practically, for you to open yourself up to the Good Shepherd and entrust your spirit to Him?

First Peter 5:7 invites us to cast all our cares on God because He cares for us. What burden are you carrying right now that you need to release into His hands?

God, thank You for what You've shown me today about Your character— that my life, my breath, and my future are held in Your hands. As I leave this time, help me trust You enough to say, "Into Your hand I commit my spirit," even when I feel overwhelmed. The same hands that formed me, sustain me, so collect my tears and hold my life. Please teach me to give You all my cares and when I get afraid, please empower me with Your Spirit to feel safe and secure. Please meet me where I'm hurting God. Please show me compassion and take me in Your hands. In Jesus's name, amen.



WEEK THREE - DAY SIX

GOD WEEPS

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the most significant truths from HANDLING HURT you believe God wants you to understand and apply. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

WEEK THREE - DAY SEVEN

GOD WEEPS

WORSHIP & GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:

The background of the image is a dark, atmospheric landscape. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, suggesting an approaching storm or late evening. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and debris. In the mid-ground, there are several thin, dark, vertical poles or trees that appear to be dead or skeletal. The overall color palette is dark, with shades of grey, black, and muted brown, creating a somber and dramatic mood.

WEEK FOUR

GOD REIGNS

WEEK FOUR - DAY ONE

GOD REIGNS

We will begin each week by looking at an anchoring truth about God's character as seen throughout Scripture, so that we may see Him rightly, worship Him truthfully, and walk with Him faithfully. This week we look at the anchor God Reigns, which brings into focus the sovereignty of God.

We will do this by following a devotional pattern using the acrostic P.R.A.Y:

P - Pause

R - Reflect on Scripture

A - Ask God for help

Y - Yield to God's will

P - PAUSE

Take a moment to still yourself in the Lord's presence. Surrender your whole self—your thoughts, beliefs, feelings, burdens, and life to Him. Ask for His presence. Ask Him to renew your unbroken fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9). Ask Him for wisdom, insight, and guidance from His Word.

R - REFLECT ON SCRIPTURE

But I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh. I will see him myself; my eyes will look at him, and not as a stranger. My heart longs within me. Job 19:25-27

We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be displayed in our body. . . 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 17-18

For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:8-11

In the midst of Job's struggle to understand the wisdom and goodness of God in his circumstances, Job's confession in Job 19:25 is the climax! Despite all the mystery and doubt about how God rules the world, Job ends with a solid confession that His God is sovereign, eternal, and will be the last one standing victorious over all. Job's confession is not only a challenge to my faith when pain is great, but is also a reminder that our present experiences are not the end of the story. His story is still unfolding, but we have the best spoiler there ever was! He will bring His Kingdom come in fullness!

As we turn our eyes to Jesus, we see that His death on the cross was not the end. He was resurrected and ascended to heaven's throne, where He reigns now with full authority. The Father is bringing all things under the footstool of His reigning Son. One person at a time, Jesus is transferring men and women from the kingdom of darkness into His own Kingdom. When Jesus comes again, His redemption of all of those who will receive Him, and all creation itself, will be made new. His Kingdom will be ushered in with no more hurt, sickness, pain, suffering, or death. Lord, come soon!

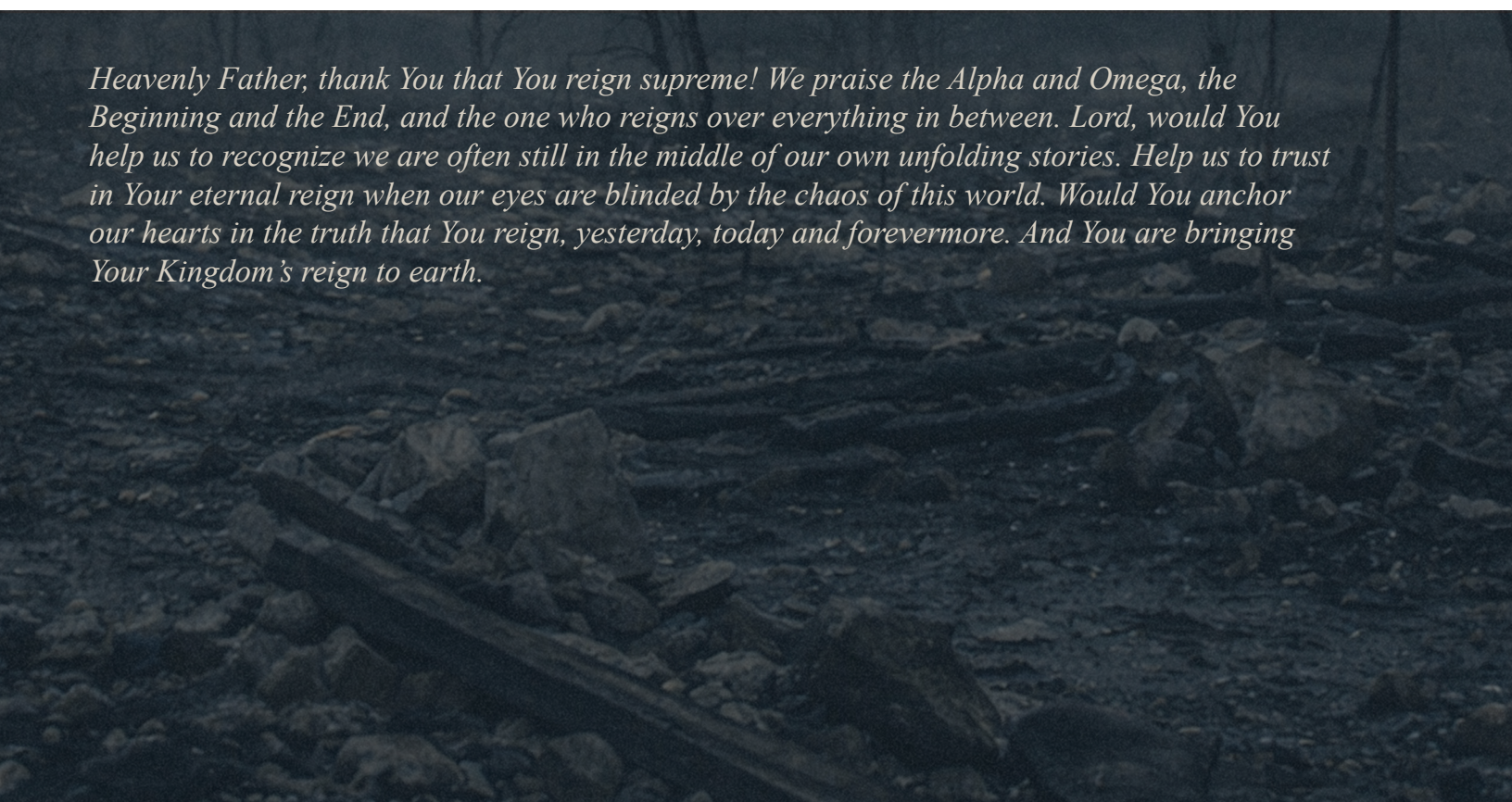
A - ASK FOR GOD'S HELP

Do you find that your perspective of your past sufferings changes as you get further into your own story? While the pain of some seasons never leaves, we gain new perspectives on God's presence and activity in our lives at a time we couldn't recognize it in the moment.

Would you help us live today, having fully surrendered the deepest, darkest days of our past? We want to see You reign in all glory, power, and authority in our lives and in our world.

Y - YIELD

Heavenly Father, thank You that You reign supreme! We praise the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and the one who reigns over everything in between. Lord, would You help us to recognize we are often still in the middle of our own unfolding stories. Help us to trust in Your eternal reign when our eyes are blinded by the chaos of this world. Would You anchor our hearts in the truth that You reign, yesterday, today and forevermore. And You are bringing Your Kingdom's reign to earth.



WEEK FOUR - DAY TWO

GOD REIGNS

Lord God, You are majestic and mighty. I humbly bow before You today, seeking Your face. Reveal to me the enormity of Your Holiness, Your Sovereignty, and Your Omnipotence. Remove any preconceived notions that I may have about You and replace them with a deeper understanding of who You actually are. May Your grace, mercy, and love be revealed to me through our study today. I pray this in Jesus's name, AMEN.

Then Job replied to the Lord: I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, "Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know. You said, "Listen now, and I will speak. When I question you, you will inform me." I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes. Job 42: 1-6



Earlier this year, we woke up to the concerning news that 2 U.S. airmen whose F-15E jet (call sign Dude 44) was shot down over Iran. The pilot was quickly rescued, but the weapons system officer (WSO) remained missing for 48 hours. The injured Colonel was able to ascend a nearby 7,000-foot ridge line, evading hostile forces by hiding in a crevice. To confuse the Iranians in pursuit, CIA operatives spread false messages that both crew members of the downed jet had already been found, hoping to buy the search more time. The airman activated an emergency beacon that aided U.S. forces in locating him. In spite of all that he had experienced, his radio communication simply said, "God is good."

The airman's assertion about the goodness of God in dire adversity is fitting for today's devotional. Though Job was in the epicenter of the fiercest, most disorienting storm of suffering and loss, he found audience with the Lord in the whirlwind. Even in the midst of his unchanging calamity, Job's encounter with God expanded and enlarged his assessment of God, which changed how he weathered his sufferings.

Today, we will look at Creator God's response to Job's questioning and persistent requests for an audience with God. In Job Chapter 38 we read, "*Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me*" (Job 38:1-3). Following these words is God's lengthy discourse recounting the depth of understanding that went into creating the universe and tending to the diversity of life within it. Through this encounter with God, Job's understanding of God is enlarged and refined. Job comes to a deeper understanding of who God is, and how His reign is a critical anchor for the one who suffers.

THOUGH THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES ARE
WITHOUT ERROR, OUR INTERPRETATION AND
UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE
ARE VULNERABLE TO ERROR AND CHANGE.

It's important to understand what sovereignty is, what it isn't, and what remains in mystery. Embedded in the word "sovereign", is the word "reign". God's "sovereignty" is simply the umbrella term used to describe the comprehensive rule, or reign, of God over His creation. We see in God's discourse with Job, and in the whole of Scripture, that God's reign is exhaustively comprehensive—every single facet of creation, whether seen or unseen, without exception, is seen by God, yields to His power, and answers to His authority.

Yet, within God's reign, we find the anomalies of sin and suffering. Mankind, who abuses God-given moral freedom, is responsible for much of that. Suffering is also brought about by unseen causes of which man is not responsible. Regarding sin and suffering, the Scriptures reveal what sovereignty is not: God does not cause evil nor temptation, even though temptation, evil, and suffering are firmly under His reign.

The mechanics of how God's sovereignty, evil, and suffering coexist is where mystery lies. And it's this exact conversation that forms the subject matter of the book of Job. There are two primary schools of thought for how God expresses His sovereignty over suffering. There are certain Scriptures that can support each of these explanations, though full understanding and consensus remains elusive on this side of heaven.

1) One view is that God's sovereignty operates:

- by extending to mankind moral freedom to sin
- by His omnipresence (He sees it all) and omniscience (He knows it all)
- by allowing fallen nature and the enemy to cause suffering and death
- by His healing and restoration overcoming sin, suffering, and death
- by redirecting sin and suffering to fulfill His ultimate outcomes
- and by His final, perfect justice for sinful actions and actors

In this view, nothing escapes God's sovereign rule, even the free will of mankind. It stops short of asserting that God sovereignly ordains and controls even sinful actions and suffering. Concerning salvation, persons are free to receive or reject the gift of eternal life offered to all.

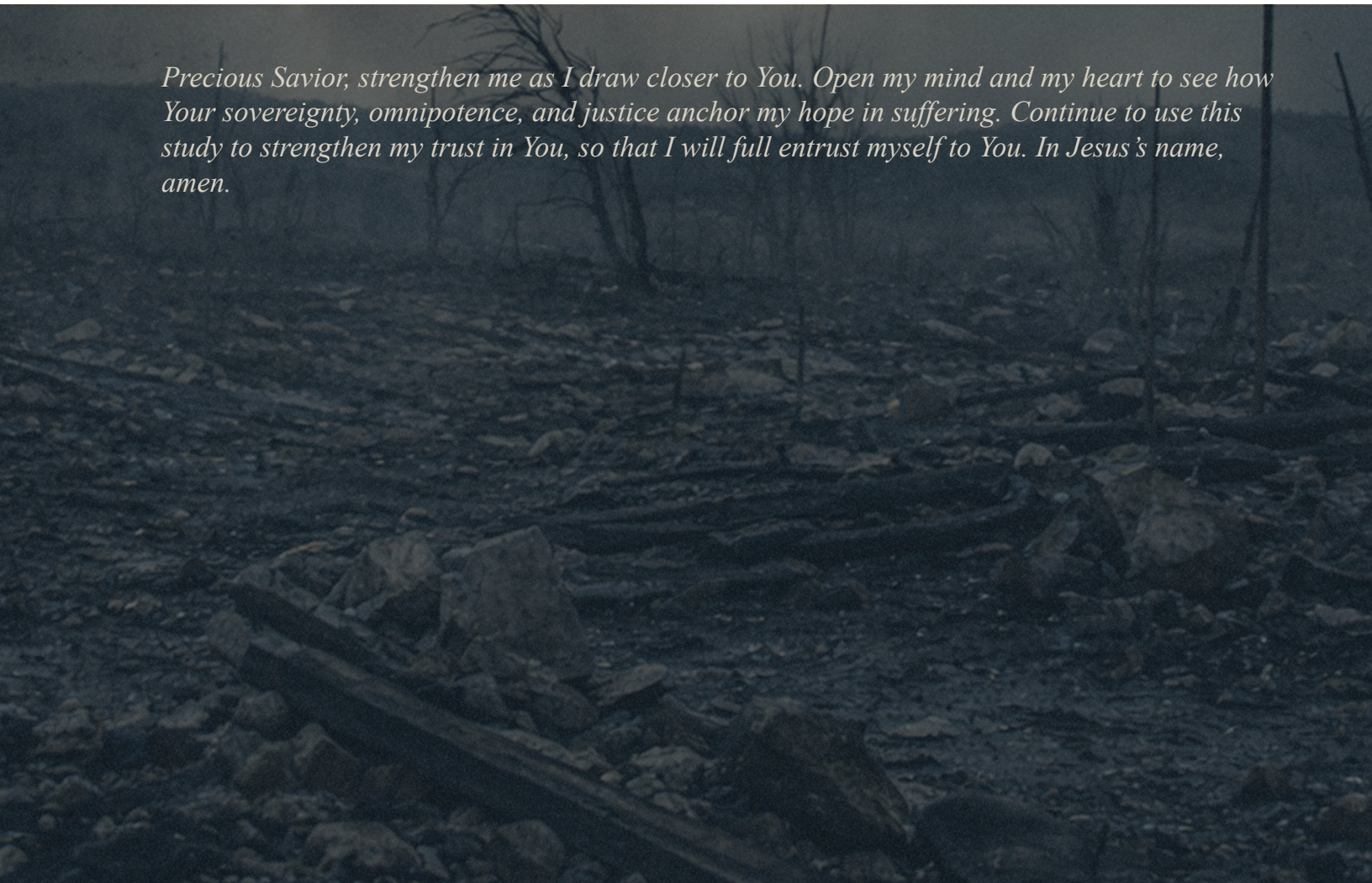
2) Another view is that God's sovereignty is expressed by God decreeing every choice and event—even evil and suffering. Proponents of this view would argue that the actors themselves are still morally responsible for sinful actions. In this view, God causes everything to happen (good and bad) for unknowable, mysterious reasons tied to His greater glory. In this view, even eternal life is available to, and received by, only those God determines.

Historically, Southern Baptists have humbly embraced the mystery we find in the book of Job, and have resisted rigid theological systems purporting to understand the things only God fully understands. Though the Scriptures themselves are without error, our interpretation and understanding of the truths of Scripture are vulnerable to error and change. We can affirm God's sovereignty, the sorrows of evil and suffering, and salvation by faith without a full understanding of how they are interconnected. Similarly, we can acknowledge and make use of our smartphones without fully understanding the mechanics of how Apple Inc., the hardware, the circuitry, and software work seamlessly together. This posture of humility serves to keep pride in check and welcomes the fellowship of unity between believers who affirm God's reign over sin, suffering, and salvation, but differ in their beliefs about how His reign operates.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

How does God's sovereignty anchor us to hope in the midst of suffering?

Precious Savior, strengthen me as I draw closer to You. Open my mind and my heart to see how Your sovereignty, omnipotence, and justice anchor my hope in suffering. Continue to use this study to strengthen my trust in You, so that I will full entrust myself to You. In Jesus's name, amen.



WEEK FOUR - DAY THREE

JOB'S LIMITED UNDERSTANDING

Lord God, today, I must confess that I do not fully understand many of Your ways. I can barely comprehend what You place before my eyes, much less the depths of Your mysteries. As I continue to study Job's suffering, deepen my understanding of who You are. As my understanding grows, help me to respond with absolute trust and total abandonment to Your good purposes for me.

You asked, "Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" Surely, I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know.
Job 42:3

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6



I will be the first to admit that my understanding of God is limited, to say the least. Many times in my life, I have found myself asking God "Why this?" or "Why that?" for events that took place. God rarely answers my questions in the ways I wish He would, but over time, He reveals more of Himself to me. In time, I come to see the worst of my life in the light of the glory of His goodness.

In 1982, after graduating from the University of Arkansas (Woo Pig Sooie!) with a B.S. in Business Administration, I began working for JCPenney. This may not sound like a big deal to many of you, but it was to me. I was a third generation Penney's manager—my grandfather and father were both JCPenney managers. It wasn't just a job; it was a continuation of my family's legacy. I worked for Penney's in high school and some while in college, but now it was my forever career, or so I thought. I was moving up in the ranks, and after more than 20 years of faithful service, received a promotion to manage the College Station store. Three years into that role, things changed quickly. The company changed their business model, and I was no longer a good fit. I was "let go" in the spring of 2003. I had no idea what was on the horizon. I was unemployed for the first time in my life, with no income, three young kids, and in a seemingly hopeless situation.

It was during this struggle that God interceded for me and my family. I came to know Him by experience as the God who provides. Little did I know that what seemed like a tragic closed door, was God opening a new door for the next season of my life. I was encouraged to apply for the Church Business Manager role at First Baptist Bryan and was hired in 2003. I have been in full time ministry ever since, moving to the Singles Pastor role, and now serving as the Senior

Adult Pastor. None of this would have been possible had God not redirected my firing for His Kingdom purposes for me and my family.

I share this story as an example of the limits of our understanding. We see the events in our life, good and bad, as through a tiny small keyhole. God's discourse with Job brought him to that realization. God asks, "Who is this who conceals my council with ignorance?" Job's response was perfect. He closed his mouth and opened his ears to God's response. Soon, he came to realize that remaining in ignorance of who God is conceals the understanding he seeks and that his heart desperately needs. We can eavesdrop on that conversation in Job Chapters 38-41.

...REMAINING IN IGNORANCE OF WHO GOD IS
CONCEALS THE UNDERSTANDING HE SEEKS AND
THAT HIS HEART DESPERATELY NEEDS.

Job quickly discovered that there are some things that he did not have the capacity to understand. As the limits of his understanding were plumbed, the unlimited wisdom and power of God were showcased. God, in great detail, paraded before Job His creation, its natural processes, and its teeming creatures—none of which Job could design, make, animate, nor control. If Job had possessed the capability of understanding this creation parade and how God governs it, I don't doubt in the slightest God would have explained how suffering, evil, and sovereignty can simultaneously coexist. Rather, Job rightly recognized he was outmatched for that depth of understanding. His physical posture is telling. *"I place my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not reply; twice, but now I can add nothing"* (from Job 40:4-5). Like a school boy caught red-handed by his teacher, Job is left speechless and helplessly at God's mercy. Without God having to say it outright, Job understood that he didn't possess what was needed to understand the mysteries of creation, sovereignty, or suffering. God would answer his questions about suffering with more revelation about Himself.

By receiving the limits of his own understanding, Job obtained a posture that is critical in suffering—the posture of trust in the safety of God's goodness and ability. When tragedy strikes, we can follow Job's example of seeking God, listening, and adjusting to Him. Job wasn't always there, but he got there. We can take our refuge in the shelter of the Almighty, too.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

From Job 38 - 41, skim the examples from nature God uses to recalibrate Job's outlook on God, Himself, and his circumstances. Which references to God's creation make the most impact on your outlook?

Why do you think God does not answer Job's questions about his suffering and the justice of God directly?

God, thank You for revealing Your redemptive plan to us from creation to resurrection. Thank You for Your Word and how it teaches us of Your love and care on every page. Continue to use the story of Job to reveal to us not the “why” of our suffering, but the “who” of who You are. May this study create in us a theology-formed lifestyle that will grow us into strong men and women of faith, trust, and obedience. In so doing, allowing us to build testimonies of Your faithfulness with which we can share You with those in our various places of influence. In Jesus's name, amen.



WEEK FOUR - DAY FOUR

JOB'S REVELATION

Lord God, I pray that my study in Job this week will give me a more complete understanding of You. So many times, when facing hardships, I question You and Your motives. "Why God?" is my heart's cry. Give me comfort in Your presence as You minister to me just how I need You to. Use today's study to encourage me in times of joy and times of hurt. Amen.

You said, "Listen now, and I will speak. When I question you, you will inform Me." I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. Job 42:4-5

If you are an Aggie baseball fan, you must be excited about their recent series victory over Texas. If you are not an Aggie fan, just bear with me. It's Saturday, April 12th, a day that will live forever in Aggie baseball lore. A&M beat the Texas Longhorns, 9 to 8, the night before. In game 2, there was a definite interruption in the game. The skies opened up with heavy rain and play halted with one out in the bottom of the first inning. The Aggies were ahead 2-1 before the 1-hour, 38-minute delay. Something fantastic happened at the beginning of this interruption. As the grounds crew struggled to roll out the tarp, the Aggie baseball players ran out on the field, grabbed hold of the tarp and pulled it over the field. You might say the Aggie baseball team came to the rescue. The interruption caused by the rain and the excitement generated by the players helped propel A&M to victory. Coming out of the break, A&M scored six more runs, taking an 8-1 lead before the second inning began. A&M never trailed in Game 2, securing their first series win over the Longhorns since 2012. This was the first Longhorns series loss this season. This sports story plays out how an interruption can lead to a great victory.



Life is full of interruptions. Some are little more than minor inconveniences. Other interruptions change the course of our lives forever. There's a universal lesson that we see from our study in Job—God intends to use the interruption of suffering as a platform to accomplish something uniquely beautiful. He will, if we'll entrust ourselves to Him. The book of Job itself is a massive interruption. Every interruption is subject to the sovereignty of God, and is an invitation to draw near. God repurposes the suffering intended for evil to arrest our attention, reveal more of Himself, heal our wounds, and transform us in the deepest places. Interruptions are unique platforms of God's attentive care, presence, and sustaining grace. God is working every interruption, minuscule or mammoth, to reveal more of Himself for our good.

Just think about the interruptions that intruded into the lives of biblical characters throughout history. Each of these characters were interrupted; the interruption revealed an invitation; a choice had to be made:

- Abram is asked to move to an unknown land
- Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery
- Moses encounters God in a burning bush
- David sees Bathsheba on her rooftop
- Saul sees Jesus on the Damascus road
- Jesus agonizes in the Garden of Gethsemane

In Job 38-39, God reveals His glory, power, and rule in a series of questions for Job. God employs beautiful word pictures and focuses on His creation and rule of the natural world. God rips back the curtain so that Job can experience the magnitude of who God is and what He does. The Bible is God's autobiography, written by those He directed by His Spirit to reveal Himself more fully. There is a compassionate grace in this self-revelation. God lets Job know that, given who God is and who Job is, Job has little ground to question or debate one of such glory.

Today, we also find comfort and confrontation in God's revelation of who He is and what He does. God comforts us in the fact that He is our ruler and Creator, the rock of our salvation. He invites us to rest and refuge in the shadow of His presence. It's fitting to rest in the impeccable credentials that support His sovereignty. But God's revelation also lovingly confronts our propensity to seek comfort and meaning apart from Him. It would not be loving for God to allow any of His children to consign God to the periphery of our hearts and lives. As God said to the prophet Jeremiah, *"For my people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves — cracked cisterns that cannot hold water"* (Jeremiah 2:13). Our greatest good, deepest comfort, and abundant flourishing is found precisely in the place where we most glorify Him.

In Chapter 42, Job says *"I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you"* (Job 42:4-5). In the darkest despair of Job's suffering for the loss of his children [let that sink in], his health, his resources, and his community standing, Job sees the Lord so clearly that he describes his prior knowledge of God as little more than hearsay. God reveals Himself profoundly to those who are suffering. Why is that? Suffering is unlike anything else in opening and enlarging our hearts to experience God.

In Ephesians 1:18-19 Paul writes, *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength."* Paul's prayer emphasizes that we need to be enlightened, and that is a work of the indwelling Spirit. Spiritual eyes are opened in the presence of God's Spirit and His living Word, allowing believers to deeply grasp the person and love of God. Unlike Job, we have greater revelation through God's Word and His indwelling Spirit. Remarkably, Job was faithful to respond to the little amount of revelation he was given before and within his suffering. In contrast, consider the vast resources of revelation we possess. We can join Paul in praying that we will not only be enlightened, but that we would respond to it with open-hearted faithfulness.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

“There was no bigger or better interruption than the incarnation of Jesus. God invaded human history to do for us what we never could have done for ourselves. He sent His Son to conquer sin and death, so that rather than being slaves of sin we can know freedom of His grace and life now and forever. May God, in wisdom and power, continue to grace us with divine interruptions until His final interruption, when all things will be made new again” (Tripp, *Everyday Gospel Bible*, p. 381).

Write down how you, or someone you know, has experienced God more deeply through the interruption of suffering?

Lord God, thank You for not keeping me in the dark, through Your Word and Your Spirit, particularly in the hardest times. Thank You for the final and greatest Word, Your own Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we can profoundly know the Father and experience the Spirit. In Jesus's name, amen.

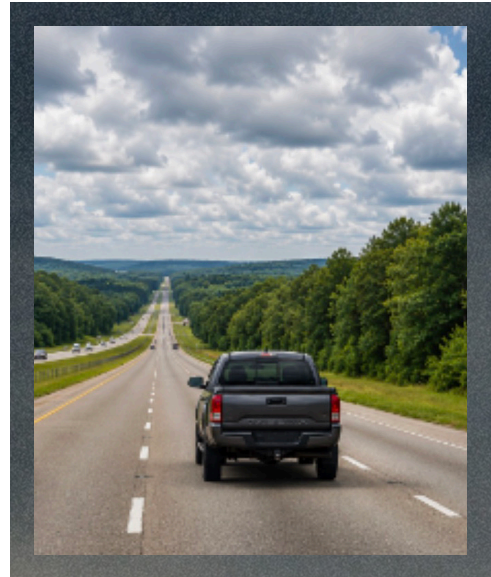


WEEK FOUR - DAY FIVE

JOB'S REPENTANCE

Precious Lord, thank You for revealing Yourself to me through the study of Job. Continue to allow me to work out my understanding of Your sovereignty. Reveal to me my ignorance, what I don't know or understand about You, so that I will full trust You, and entrust myself to You. Help me to come to You with my questions, my sorrow, my anger, my regret, my guilt—whole-heartedly; all of me—for the comfort and healing You so long for me to receive. Teach me what it means to be still before You. Amen.

I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted... Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes. Job 42:2, 6



In 2019 my world would be rocked over the next three and a half years. My mom, little sister, and dad would all pass away. In the months leading up to their deaths, I was constantly on the road between here and Arkansas, but it didn't really matter because of my love for my family. In November 2019, my mother passed away from complications related to an earlier stroke. Two years after my mom passed away, my little sister, Mary Ann, was diagnosed with an aggressive blood cancer. She passed away sixteen days later. My dad, Jerry, who suffered from dementia, was devastated by the loss of his wife and daughter—Dad passed away in June 2023, one and a half years later. God gave me a peace beyond any human understanding to get through those days. That peace was anchored to His capable sovereignty and to His presence as He personally walked with me through the valley of the shadow of death.

We are not built to carry the weight of suffering alone. The effects of trying to do so are disastrous. The devastation the enemy intends through suffering is magnified many times over when we attempt to bear it alone. We seem to be designed by God to expect the world He designed us for—a world free of suffering. So we can find ourselves rewinding and replaying losses over and over to try to make sense of the suffering we were never built to experience.

This is why Jesus said, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Let's not misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. He's not saying that your suffering is no big deal. Or that your loved ones shouldn't be grieved and remembered. Nor is He trivializing suffering by telling us to get our thinking squared away by reading a handful of Bible verses about suffering. No, Jesus is telling us to bring our suffering-induced broken hearts and disoriented minds to Him. When we do that, He bears these heavy burdens with us, and keeps them from crushing us. Jesus is simply doing what God has always done. He invites us to come to Him with our suffering, and in doing so, find deep healing and steadying rest.

Job found an audience with this burden-bearing God. In the Old Testament time of Job, this was absolutely remarkable. Since the cross, we have the priceless gift of constant access to God's presence. Do we deserve it? No. But Jesus wants it so badly for us that He gladly paid in full to give us the right to have constant access to God's presence. The grace we don't deserve always welcomes us into fellowship with God Himself, even when our sin still distances us from abiding fellowship with Him. But in Job's day, this couldn't be taken for granted. So when God finally speaks, Job discovers that the deepest need of his soul was not making sense of suffering, but the presence of God Himself. Job stops talking about God and suffering, and finally talks to God about suffering. The two couldn't be more drastically different.

That's why this day is titled "Job's Repentance." Repentance means nothing more than turning back to God. Consistent with who we must return to, we have to turn away from the sin of independence from God in its various manifestations. For Job, he needed to turn away from his indictment that God was unjust (Job 40:8), his overinflated view of his own understanding (Job 42:3), and the pride with which he impugned God's sovereign rule (Job 9:22-24; 10:30; 21:7-9). Job didn't just turn away from these things—he turned toward someone. You may have noticed that Job transitions from talking about God with his friends in third person, to talking directly to God. God wants us to turn back to Him, and endure suffering in His healing presence. After chapter upon chapter of grief, anguish, questioning, and sorrow, Job finally becomes quiet before the Lord. Job's silence is not hopeless resignation. It is surrendered trust. It is the stillness that comes when a person realizes that understanding every mystery is not necessary in order to rest securely in the hands of God.

GOD WANTS US TO TURN BACK TO HIM, AND ENDURE SUFFERING IN HIS HEALING PRESENCE.

This nearness that God invites us into is a critical dimension of His sovereignty. Our world is filled with suffering from the proliferation of violence, abuse, sickness, unfaithfulness, tragedy, and consequences. In such a world He reigns, in part, through proximity. He is near. Regardless of what we are going through, or why, He indwells us and stays near us in our suffering. He is close to us, and yearns for us to wholeheartedly come to Him. He's the only one able to stay with us everywhere without leaving—the only one strong enough to carry even the worst of the enemy's blows. Paul reminds us that we are more than conquerors through the love of God that never shrinks back, no matter what we are facing (Romans 8:35-39). Even death itself does not have the final word.

God's sovereignty is expressed by His nearness, but it is also expressed in His comprehensive justice. The wounds we bear from the worst of this world are simply unbearable if suffering, injustice, and death have the final word. Many of us know exactly what it feels like to be there. Suffering exposes the ache in us for justice, restoration, and peace. We can be sure in the end that "God will repay" in full (Romans 12:19, Revelation 6:10, Deuteronomy 32:35), and we don't have to carry that burden. In God's sovereignty, He will repay every wrong, He will wipe

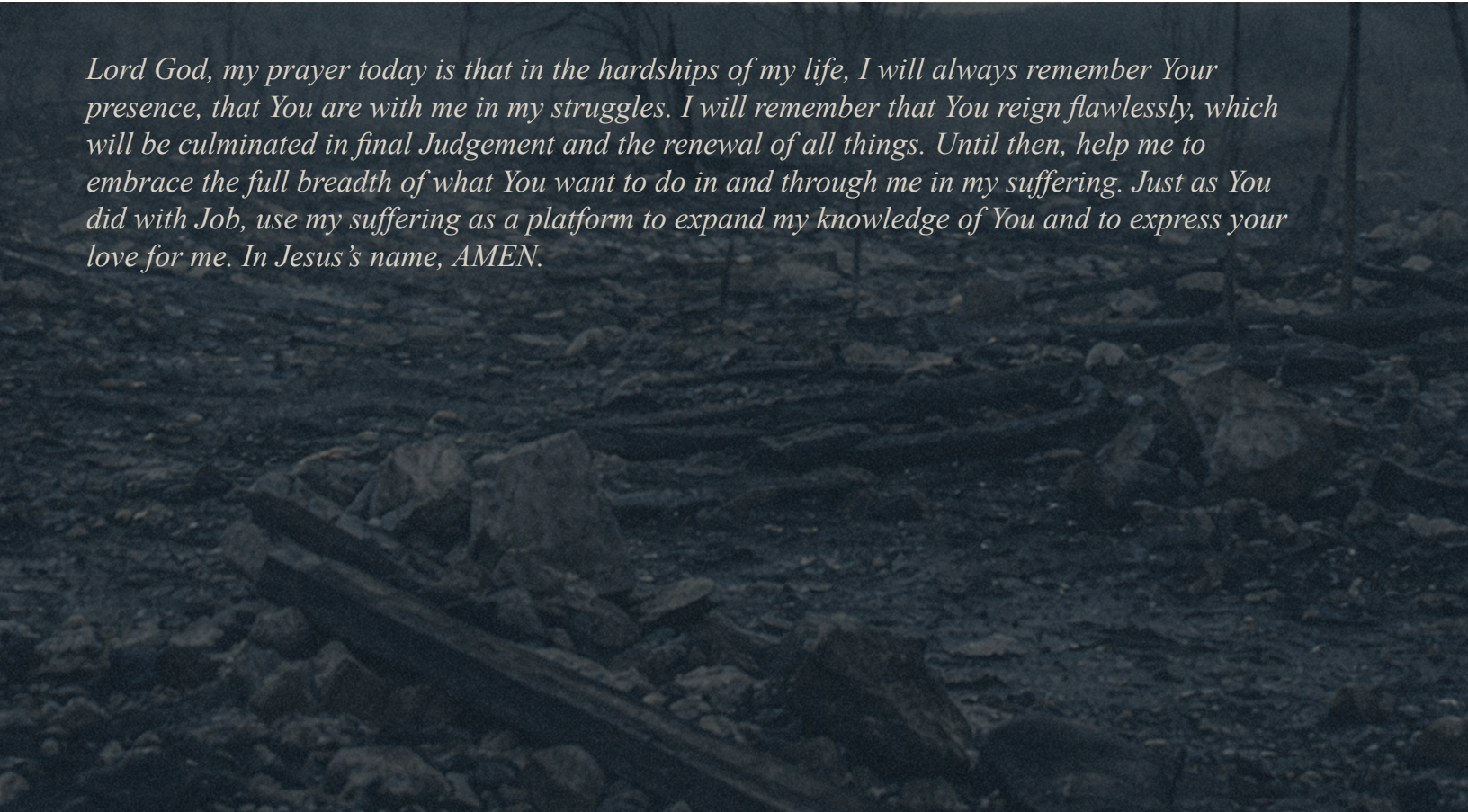
away every tear, and He will make all things new. “*And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’*” (Revelation 21:5, NASB).

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

What things do you need to turn away from, and turn towards (repentance) as it pertains to suffering?

What about God’s sovereignty uplifts you the most? Write it down, and identify how this anchors your heart and mind in the midst of suffering?

Lord God, my prayer today is that in the hardships of my life, I will always remember Your presence, that You are with me in my struggles. I will remember that You reign flawlessly, which will be culminated in final Judgement and the renewal of all things. Until then, help me to embrace the full breadth of what You want to do in and through me in my suffering. Just as You did with Job, use my suffering as a platform to expand my knowledge of You and to express your love for me. In Jesus’s name, AMEN.



WEEK FOUR - DAY SIX

GOD REIGNS

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the most significant truths from HANDLING HURT you believe God wants you to understand and apply. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

WEEK FOUR - DAY SEVEN

GOD REIGNS

WORSHIP & GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today’s sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:

The background of the image is a dark, moody landscape. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, suggesting an approaching storm or late evening. The ground is covered in dark, jagged rocks and debris. In the foreground, there are several large, dark logs or branches lying on the ground. In the background, there are some bare, dark trees and a distant, hazy horizon line. The overall tone is somber and dramatic.

WEEK FIVE

GOD RESTORES

WEEK FIVE - DAY ONE

GOD RESTORES

We close our study this week by looking at our final anchoring truth about God's character as seen throughout Scripture, so that we may see Him rightly, worship Him truthfully, and walk with Him faithfully. This week's anchor is God Restores.

We will do this by following a devotional pattern using the acrostic P.R.A.Y:

P - Pause
R - Reflect on Scripture
A - Ask God for help
Y - Yield to God's will

P - PAUSE

Take a moment to still yourself in the Lord's presence. Surrender your whole self—your thoughts, beliefs, feelings, burdens, and life to Him. Ask for His presence. Ask Him to renew your unbroken fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9). Ask Him for wisdom, insight, and guidance from His Word.

R - REFLECT ON SCRIPTURE

Then Job replied to the Lord: "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know."
Job 42:1-3

The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.
1 Peter 5:10

This week we are looking at the God who Restores. What does it mean to restore something? Perhaps restoring a piece of furniture or a classic car comes to mind. The intent of such projects is to return something to its original condition—or better. What can we infer about the kind of restoration work God would undertake, having become well-acquainted with Him in this study?

A - ASK FOR GOD’S HELP

Restoration is central to God’s heart for His people. The whole of Scripture shows a loving, faithful God who uses every resource at His disposal to redeem and restore relationship with His people. We can so often miss God’s restoration because we expect a tidy ledger of accounts. Sometimes we see what was “lost” on one side and we expect an equal replacement on the other. But some things cannot be replaced. If we look at Job’s story simply, we can say that he lost wealth, health, and his children, and that wealth, health, and children were restored, end of the story. But we know from our own experience that a simple, detached oversimplification is not how God restores. Through Job’s suffering and struggle to make sense of God, we see him ultimately restored in wealth and health. Job’s children were still gone. But God healed Job’s soul and restored his opportunity to father again. Most importantly, God expands Job’s capacity to experience Him.

We can’t overlook the gravity that the God of the Universe is present to listen and hear Job and his friends’ many words about Him. But even more incredible, God speaks to Job to correct his understanding about Himself. Job’s “sight” of God is restored after his circumstances and these conversations clouded it.

Ask God to help you see Him rightly. Don’t ever get over the fact that we serve a God who listens to and speaks to His people.

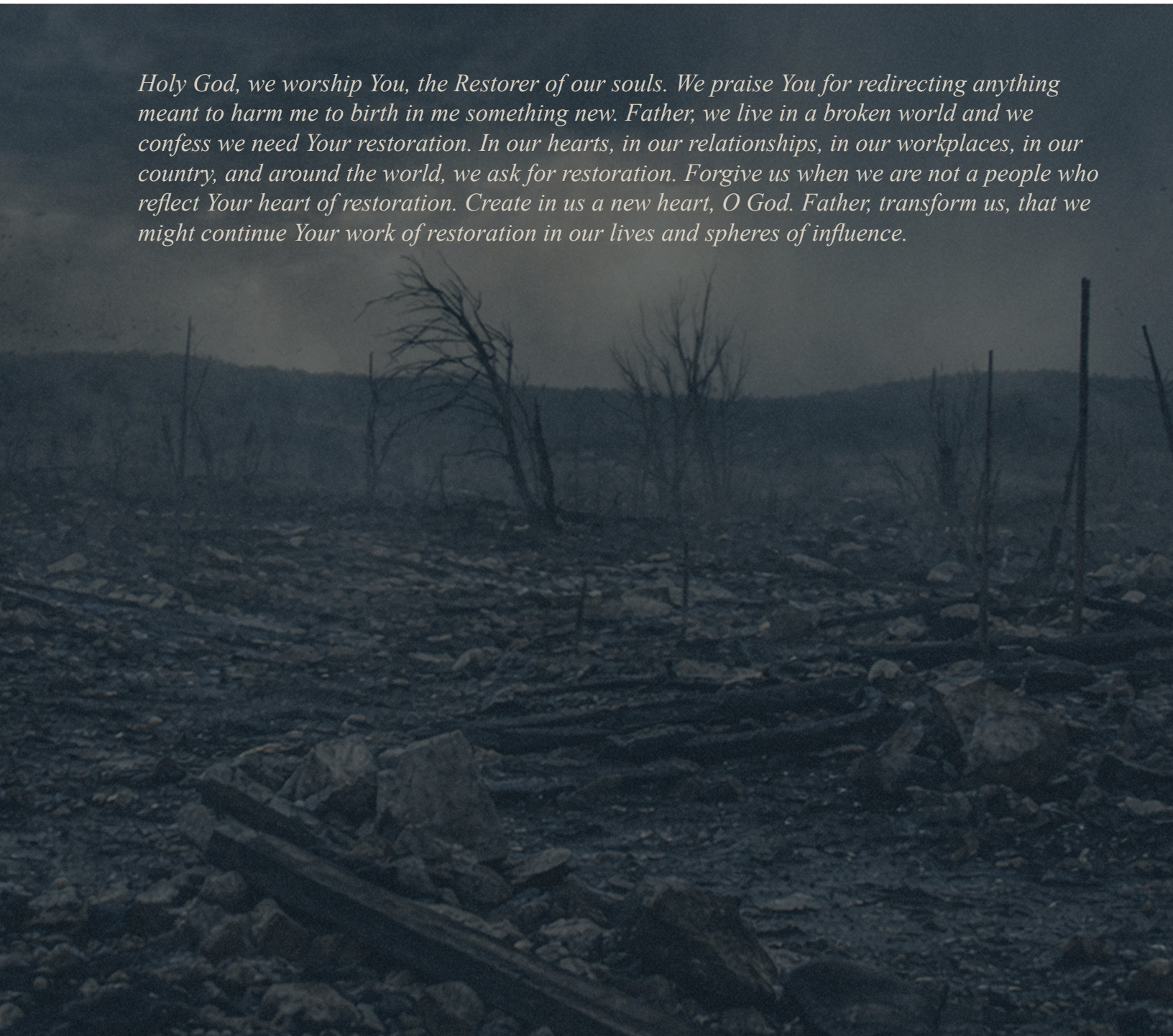
When have you “lost sight” of who God is?

What truths about God cause your heart to melt before His loving and present power and glory?

Where do I need to experience God's restoration in my life?

Y - YIELD

Holy God, we worship You, the Restorer of our souls. We praise You for redirecting anything meant to harm me to birth in me something new. Father, we live in a broken world and we confess we need Your restoration. In our hearts, in our relationships, in our workplaces, in our country, and around the world, we ask for restoration. Forgive us when we are not a people who reflect Your heart of restoration. Create in us a new heart, O God. Father, transform us, that we might continue Your work of restoration in our lives and spheres of influence.



WEEK FIVE - DAY TWO

GOD RESTORES THROUGH OBEDIENCE

Father, still my heart and quiet my soul as I come to You now. Please rid of me any distractions and speak to me through Your Word. As I continue to read Job's story in light of any hurt and suffering I've experienced, help me to remember Your grace and mercy. Open my eyes to Your character and help me to trust You. In Jesus's name, amen.

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and doubled his previous possessions. All his brothers, sisters, and former acquaintances came to him and dined with him in his house. They sympathized with him and comforted him concerning all the adversity the Lord had brought on him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold earring. So the Lord blessed the last part of Job's life more than the first. Job 42:10-12

When I was a sophomore in high school, my Dad and I had a falling out in our relationship. After my parents got divorced, circumstances certainly made things more difficult for us. Eventually, that came to a tipping point and we didn't speak to one another for quite some time. Year after year, I felt as though I had tried to make amends, but it wasn't until five years later, after my junior year of college, that I realized I was going about it all wrong. I wanted my relationship with my father to be restored, but I had never fully forgiven him. I asked God to fix things, but I was busy attempting to mend things in my own ways. I had been hurt, misunderstood, and worn down. The last thing I expected was for God to call me to love, serve, and intercede for my Dad. In Job's story, we see that restoration doesn't begin with new blessings. It begins with Job's obedience. Before anything is restored to Job, God needed to reshape him internally, not only his approach to suffering, but extending to his relationships as well. Job helps us see that when God restores things, He is less focused on the material restoration and more focused on who we are becoming as we trust and obey Him.

JOB HELPS US SEE THAT WHEN GOD RESTORES THINGS, HE IS LESS FOCUSED ON THE OUTCOME AND MORE FOCUSED ON WHO WE ARE BECOMING AS WE TRUST AND OBEY HIM.

In the context of our story (Job 42:1-6), Job has just repented before God and it was right for him to do so. While he had done nothing to invite these difficult circumstances into his life, he did have to repent of his wrong response and wrong attitude throughout these circumstances. Job repented that he spoke beyond his knowledge and ability to know. Romans 2:2-4 encourages us to know "that God's kindness is meant to lead [us] to repentance." Repentance was Job's first response of obedience amidst his suffering.

After this, the Lord vindicates Job among his friends. As God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, God gives them a path of their own towards repentance, and it goes through Job (Job 42:8). Job's restoration continues by praying for his friends—the same friends who misjudged and wounded him. The forgiveness Job extended to his friends, though undeserved, was the doorway to God's continued restoration of Job and his life.

The New Testament helps us to put into words what we see in this story. Consider the following passages: Luke 6:27-28; John 16:33; 1 Peter 5:10; Romans 8:28. Through Jesus's words in Luke 6, we can conclude that Job models the very behavior Jesus calls us to in loving our enemies and praying for those who mistreat us. Furthermore, these other Scriptures offer assurance for our faith amidst handling hurt. By Jesus's promise of peace in John 16, our suffering becomes evidence of God's Word being true. We aren't promised the absence of suffering, but rather, peace and courage in the midst of it. Sister, you and I may find confidence in knowing restoration will follow our suffering. Brother, you and I may find assurance knowing God will work all things together for our good. Though few losses can be reversed, God purposes to redeem suffering for your good. He specializes at this, if we'll let Him. And when we do, He will receive much glory.

Job's life, and these New Testament passages, don't promise that all loss will be restored materially in this life. Job 42:10-17 indicates a replenishing of blessings, but not an erasing of pain. Job still lost his children. No future blessing on this side of heaven can replace them. But we can look forward to the making of all things new—including the glorious reunion of all those who are in Christ. Until then, we can take courage knowing that Jesus will leave no stone unturned until every part of you and your story heals in His restoration.

The imperfect relationship I have with my Dad was preceded by my parents' divorce. My story is marked by these two realities. Without a doubt, by worldly standards alone, it's impossible to see the father wound from divorce as anything other than bad. In knowing the redemptive and restorative character of my Father in heaven, I wouldn't change my story one bit. My relationship with my Dad may still be a little rocky. There continue to be negative effects of my parents' divorce in each new stage of my life. In all of it, I see what God did. The summer after the divorce was announced, I was introduced to Jesus for the first time and surrendered my life to Him. In the midst of my hardship with my earthly father, my heavenly Father opened my eyes to the relationship available to me through Christ. He showed me through the brokenness of my relationship with my Dad that Jesus isn't just a ticket to heaven, but the Way to my perfect Father.

God's goal isn't to merely restore our circumstances, but to restore right relationship, trust, and worship. Job 42:5 indicates Job's story ends with a deeper intimacy with God—*“now my eyes have seen you”*. God doesn't guarantee us perfect circumstances, but He will sustain our faith in suffering. He will mold and shape us into the image of His Son as He walks with us through our hurt.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

When I experience hardship and don't respond well, I tend to:

- a. Withdraw from God**
- b. Attempt to fix everything myself**
- c. Other:**

Write down the names of anyone in your life you need to forgive, even though it would be undeserved, or even unrequested:

In every situation, in every circumstance, a step of obedience we can take is to ask God "What are you doing right now that you want me to see?" In light of the previous question, write down any promptings to action you are discerning:

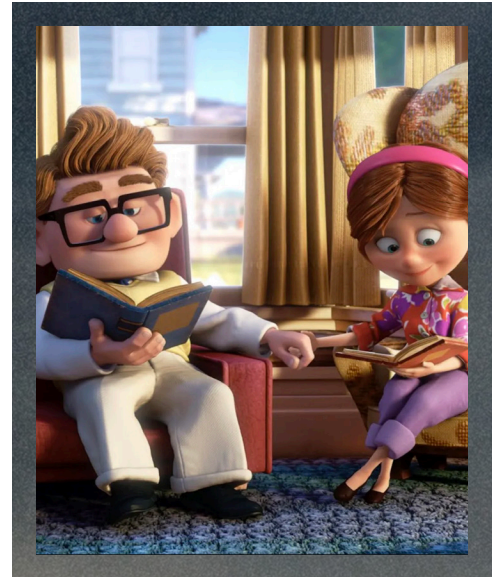
Lord, I confess that it is easy for me to measure Your goodness by what You give and take away, rather than trusting in who You are. By Your grace, teach me to obey You even when it's hard, confusing, or costly. Where I've held onto resentment, help me to release it. Where I've doubted Your nearness, remind me of Your presence. Shape my heart to trust You through my hurt and pain. Restore what You desire, not just around me, but also within me. I surrender to Your restoration. In Jesus's name, amen.

WEEK FIVE - DAY THREE

GOD RESTORES AS REDEEMER

Father, still my heart and quiet my soul as I come to You now. Please rid of me any distractions and speak to me through Your Word. Have mercy on me as I seek You today. Lord, help me to be honest about where I feel empty, discouraged, or unsure of what You're doing. Open my eyes to Your character and help me to trust You. In Jesus's name, amen.

Naomi and Ruth] traveled until they came to Bethlehem — 'Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara,' she answered, 'for the Almighty has made me very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has opposed me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?' Ruth 1:19-21



The women said to Naomi, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel.' — The neighbor women said, 'A son has been born to Naomi,' and they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:14, 17

In the opening scenes of Pixar's animated masterpiece, *Up* (2009), Carl and Ellie dream about the life they will build together. This film is arguably one of the sweetest little storylines because of how beautifully their marriage and Carl's strong love for Ellie are depicted in the opening scene. There's excitement at their wedding. They buy and renovate their dream home and live what appears to be a perfect life...until loss finds its way home. First, there's tragedy in trying to expand their family. Later, Ellie passes away. Carl is left alone, holding onto what was, and unsure of how to move on. The movie itself is a beautiful story of life with all its ups and downs. In just this brief wordless opener, we see that sometimes life doesn't turn out the way we hope or expect. Many of us know this feeling. Maybe there isn't a defining moment, but a series of circumstances; either way, we lament, "This is not how I imagined things would go."

That's where we meet Naomi. Her story begins with fullness and quickly turns to loss, which leads her to question God. Through her story, we see that behind the dark clouds of hurt is a God who is actively working for the good of His children.

In the beginning of her story, Naomi leaves home with a husband and two sons. Shortly after, she returns home with none of them and only her daughter-in-law, Ruth. In her honest grief, Naomi wastes no time letting Bethlehem know how hard life has been. The name Naomi means "pleasant," but she quickly announces she'd like to be called Mara, meaning "bitter." Her story becomes simple: Naomi's time away from the God of Israel had not been pleasant, it was bitter. She didn't hide behind a lie, or pretend everything was fine. She was honest and said, "Here I

am and my life has been bitter; I'm not happy." The beginning of Naomi's story is an honest reminder to us—we can be honest with God, even when our emotions feel heavy. The balance of Naomi's emotions is her understanding of God's control over her life. At the same time, she struggles to reconcile her pain with His sovereignty.

THROUGH HER STORY, WE SEE THAT BEHIND THE
DARK CLOUDS OF HURT IS A GOD WHO IS ACTIVELY
WORKING FOR THE GOOD OF HIS CHILDREN.

What Naomi can't see in chapter 1 is how God is already moving in the heart of her Moabite daughter-in-law and the kindness of a man named Boaz. The story of redemption through Ruth's loyalty and ordinary faithfulness connects to a pattern we see all throughout the Old Testament. Even when God's work isn't immediately visible, He is near and present. Furthermore, Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us of how He often works in ways we can't predict or expect; *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways. This is the Lord's declaration. For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* There is great assurance to be found in knowing that God is not limited to our thinking. There is great assurance in knowing my life is better off in His hands than my own. Paul David Tripp in *Everyday Gospel* writes, "God regularly takes His children places they never would have planned to go in order to produce in and through them things they never could have produced on their own."

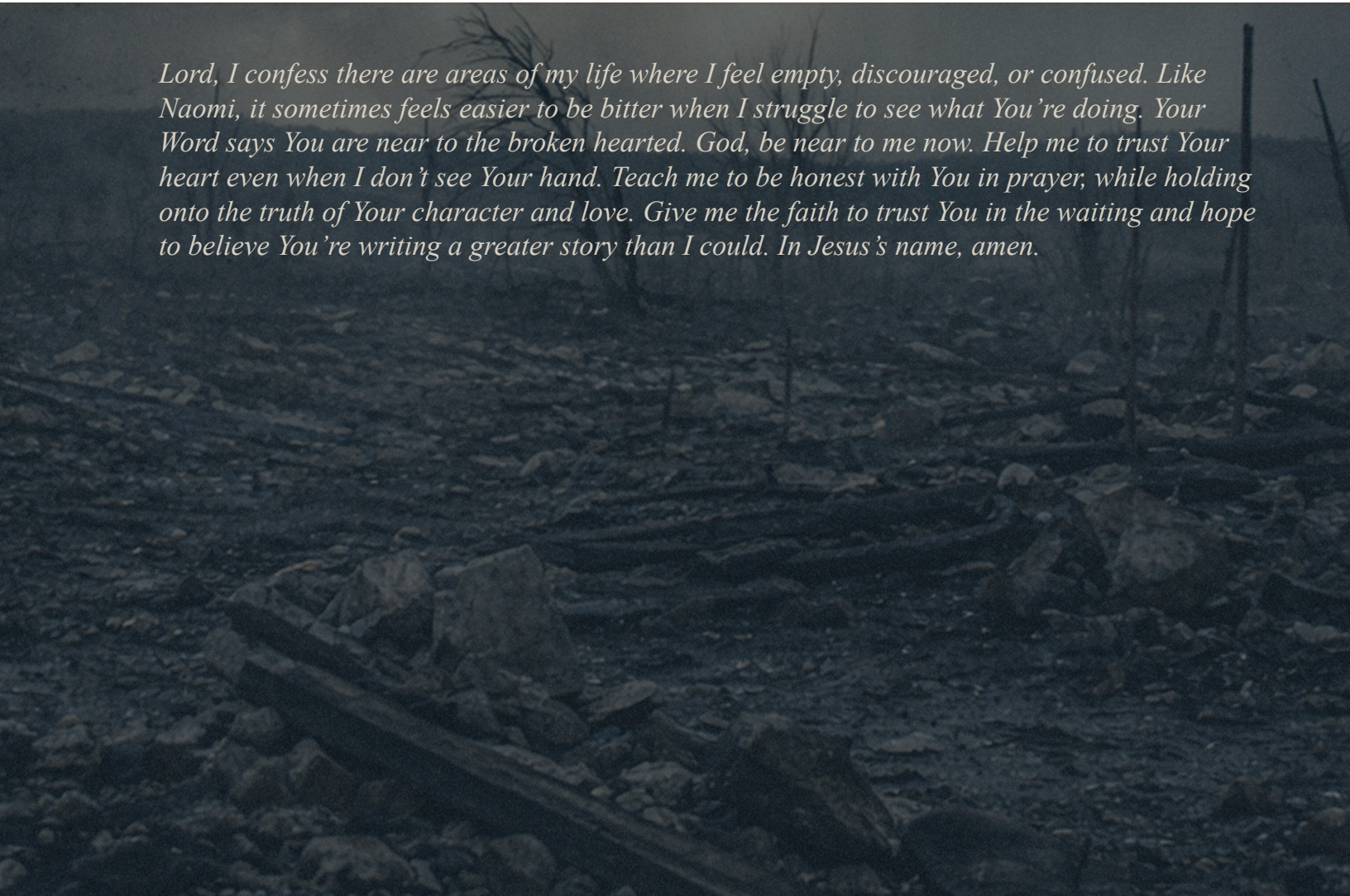
As Naomi's story continues, her emptiness is filled, her bitterness is resolved—but likely not in the way she imagined. Her husband doesn't come back. Her sons don't come back. Instead, God uses Ruth and Boaz to propel His mission of grace and give Naomi new life through a grandson. Her restoration isn't about getting her old life back, or even getting what she may have imagined. Rather, God starting a new chapter marked by redemption. Her story is a good reminder to us: God's restoration is not always marked by a return to what was, but often a transformation into something new. For Ruth and Naomi, Boaz becomes a picture of redemption; he is not the great Redeemer, but Ruth 4:17 is clear to tell us out of his family, the great Redeemer will come. Naomi's story, like our own, is a part of God's restoration of all things in Jesus.

It is in this historical story that we see God's work in real time, through real people, to affirm His promises to us. God doesn't just deliver Ruth, He delivers to this family a son in Obed. Obed will have a son, Jesse, and Jesse will have a son, David. To David, God will promise to *"raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son — Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever;"* (2 Samuel 7:12-16). From Naomi's hurt, we get a glimpse into God's redemptive plan to bring about the Son of David, Jesus. Through this story of hardship and love, God continues to bring about His ultimate promise, the Savior, Jesus Christ, through whom God's redeeming love will rescue and restore.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Where in my life do I feel “empty” or “bitter” right now?

Naomi couldn't see what God was doing in the moment. As you look back on your life, where can you now see God was at work even though you didn't realize it at the time?



Lord, I confess there are areas of my life where I feel empty, discouraged, or confused. Like Naomi, it sometimes feels easier to be bitter when I struggle to see what You're doing. Your Word says You are near to the broken hearted. God, be near to me now. Help me to trust Your heart even when I don't see Your hand. Teach me to be honest with You in prayer, while holding onto the truth of Your character and love. Give me the faith to trust You in the waiting and hope to believe You're writing a greater story than I could. In Jesus's name, amen.

WEEK FIVE - DAY FOUR

GOD RESTORES AS INTERCESSOR

Father, still my heart and quiet my soul as I come to You now. Please rid of me any distractions and speak to me through Your Word. As I consider the work of Jesus on my behalf, open my eyes to the depth of Your love and mercy through His intercession. Strengthen me to walk faithfully in the midst of my days with hope in what You have promised. In Jesus's name, amen.

Now take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and offer a burnt offering for yourselves. Then my servant Job will pray for you. I will surely accept his prayer and not deal with you as your folly deserves. For you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. Job 42:8

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

My God has done a great thing for me in giving me my wife. We often joke that she is the love and compassion to my truth. Kendall increases the ministry God does through our family by the way she loves others and extends grace so well. If I may be so bold, I claim that God gave me to my wife, so that I could be her secretary. For our wedding, she empowered me to bring her vision to fruition. In our marriage, she empowers me to bring her thoughts to words. There have been moments where we need to send a text or email, and we both know it's best if I'm the one to write it. There's something powerful in having someone speak for you. I found it brings Kendall a sense of relief and gratitude, knowing I'm representing her well in a moment where she feels she may fall short. In Job 42, we see that the path to forgiveness for Job's friends doesn't come through their own words, but through a prayer by Job on their behalf. Job becomes their intercessor, and for us, anticipates the final intercessor who was to come. Job's intercession foreshadows Christ who *"always lives to intercede"* (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus, our greater Intercessor, restores us to right relationship with God and gives us a secure hope of complete restoration to come. In Job 42:8-9, God makes it clear that Job's friends cannot approach Him as they may want to, but rather, a blameless friend must stand in the gap for them—Job. The very man they misunderstood, accused, and gave wrongful advice to is now the one God appoints to pray for them. God also promises to accept Job's prayer as an approved intercessor. As significant as Job's role is in restoring their friendship, and in his own vindication, his more significant role is as intercessor. Job's intercession is a shadow of the ministry of Jesus.

JOB'S INTERCESSION FORESHADOWS CHRIST WHO
"ALWAYS LIVES TO INTERCEDE" (HEBREWS 7:25). JESUS,
OUR GREATER INTERCESSOR, RESTORES US TO RIGHT
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND GIVES US A SECURE HOPE
OF COMPLETE RESTORATION TO COME.

Where Job stands in the gap for his friends, Jesus fills an even greater gap for us. Jesus does more than just pray for us—He gave His life for us. God created us with purpose, to be in relationship with Him and to enjoy all the fullness of life with Him. There’s a problem though, and it’s sin. Romans 3:23 says, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* and Romans 6:23 says, *“the wages of sin is death.”* Like an arrow missing its target, we fall short of God’s standard of righteousness for us. As sinners, we cannot be in the presence of a perfect, holy God. Our sin separates us from God for eternity unless we are somehow released from paying the price for it. And so, *“God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Because of our sin, we cannot build a bridge to God, so Jesus stands in that gap for us. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”* Jesus’s death and resurrection allows us to be with God now on Earth and forever on New Earth because Jesus conquered both our sin and death by dying and rising again. *“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved,”* (Romans 10:9). Through Christ, we have been saved, restored, and made new. The separation caused by sin has been dealt with by Jesus and our right relationship with God, the Father, has been restored. Through that restored relationship, God delights in restoring every person from the lingering effects of sin. We will experience that restoration to the degree that we yield every compartment of our inner lives, outer behaviors, and relationships to the Lordship of Jesus.

There is also a “not yet” to our salvation. While our relationship with God is restored, the fullness of that restoration is still to come. In John 17:3, Jesus makes it clear that in Him we have eternal life. That eternal life is knowing God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. But, we still experience suffering, brokenness, and the effects of sin in this world. This means we live in the middle—no longer our old selves, made spiritually alive, but not yet living with Christ as fully restored in spirit and body. Our hope is not just in what God has done, but also in what He’s promised to do. One day, Jesus will come back and make all things new.

This is where 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 gives us hope today. Jesus isn’t a distant Savior who only offers a ticket to heaven; He is also present with us in our current suffering. God is the *“Father of mercies and the God of all comfort”* (2 Corinthians 1:3), who meets us where we are and loves us enough not to leave us there. Even more so, the comfort we receive from Him becomes the comfort we extend to others. Through the power of the Gospel we can now share with Christ in His suffering. In light of God’s redemptive and restorative character, our suffering is not wasted. Rather, it’s a platform to showcase His love for us. Just as Job’s pain positioned him to intercede on behalf of his friends, our suffering also becomes a means through which God works in and through us.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

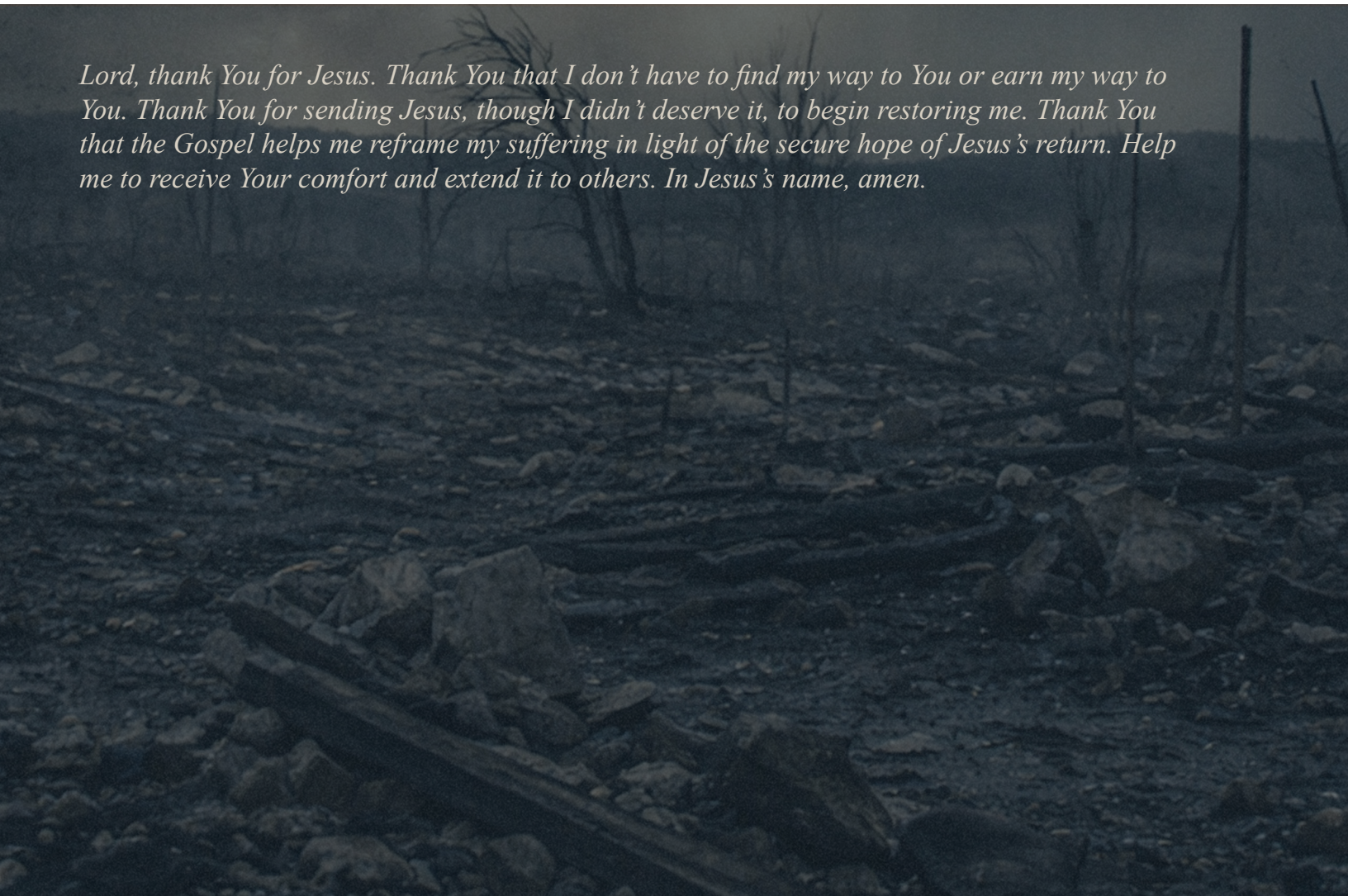
When I think about my relationship with God, I tend to:

- a. Feel confident because of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection**
- b. Feel unsure, as though I need to earn His favor**
- c. Drift between both**

In what area(s) of your life are you feeling the tension of “already, not yet”?

How has God met you in suffering in the past? How might He want to use that to comfort someone else this week?

Lord, thank You for Jesus. Thank You that I don't have to find my way to You or earn my way to You. Thank You for sending Jesus, though I didn't deserve it, to begin restoring me. Thank You that the Gospel helps me reframe my suffering in light of the secure hope of Jesus's return. Help me to receive Your comfort and extend it to others. In Jesus's name, amen.



WEEK FIVE - DAY FIVE FINAL RESTORATION

Father, as I conclude this study through the book of Job, anchor my heart in the hope of restoration. In every season of suffering, remind me that You are not absent, uncaring, or defeated. You are the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Restorer of all things. Teach me to trust You in the unanswered questions of life, and help me to live with confidence that Jesus Christ is presently caring for me, and will one day make all things new. Rivet my heart and mind to the final restoration You have prepared for all of Your children. Amen.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will freely give to the thirsty from the spring of the water of life. The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be my son." ... Then he showed me the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the city's main street. The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more; people will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever. From Revelation 21 & 22

There's something universally human about attaching our present experience to future hope. As Americans, we experience this on many levels every four years, with our presidential elections. Regardless of whether blue or red blood runs through your veins, we interpret our present reality in the light of future promise (or lack thereof). For example, when we are at the gas pump in December of an election year, we experience financial optimism or despair based on who got elected. On an infinitely grander scale, we do the same with our suffering. We attach our optimism and ability to endure to the hope that Jesus Himself will completely restore all of creation. When our present reality is anchored to future hope, we can endure with a greater peace. We can forgive, let go of injustice, mourn losses with anticipation, and embrace healing—all in light of the fact that the Kingdom of Jesus will break loose, leaving no stone unturned, until every facet of you, me, and the physical creation itself is remade entirely new, whole, and restored. *For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely*



incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Like Job experienced in real time, our study of Job did not directly answer the hardest questions that arise when people suffer: Why do good people suffer? How can a good, just, all-powerful God allow horrific things to happen? Does my suffering indicate that God is untrustworthy? We pray however, that, like Job, your faith in the God who reigns with perfect justice, power, and love has swelled. We pray that your heart and mind have been fortified and encouraged, and that your enduring strength has been renewed.

Indeed, Job's questions were answered. In a better way. God could have answered Job in the way Job wanted. Instead, God chose to answer Job (and by extension, you and me) according to what he needed the most. Just imagine with me if Job's questions had been answered like Job wanted. God could have said, "Okay, the reason I allow suffering to happen is because of these three reasons: x, y, z." Would that actually be helpful? I don't believe so! Why? Because we don't handle hurt very well when we get an answer; we handle hurt well when we are healed. An answer to why something happens doesn't change the fact that it did. And because it did, we need God more than ever. We don't need His answers, we need Him. We need Him now, and we need Him to make things right in the end.

...WE DON'T HANDLE HURT VERY WELL WHEN WE GET
AN ANSWER; WE HANDLE HURT WELL WHEN WE ARE
HEALED.

Job has provided for us a template of handling hurt well. We've watched Job suffer through devastating loss, grief, lament, questions, and repentance. We finally watched Job recalibrate his relationship of trust with God. In Week 1, we anchored ourselves to the truth that God Creates this world and a bigger redemptive story, in which we play an important part. Therefore, God has the capacity to handle our hurt and bring about a final chapter of beauty and restoration. In Week 2, we unpacked the anchor that God Stays near to us in our questions, loss, and grieving. In Week 3, we studied how God Weeps with us, and finds solidarity with us as a God who feels for us and a God who is no stranger to suffering. Week 4 showcased the anchor that God Reigns capably and rightly from heaven's throne, even though the world is not yet fully restored. Finally, Week 5, we see the end of the story—the final restoration of all things. Justice will have its final word, and those who have been bought with the price of Jesus's blood will be totally free and healed of suffering at last! And we will enjoy face to face relationship with our Creator, and His redeemed, forevermore.

FOR REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

How does the promise that God will restore all things reshape how you feel and experience hurt and suffering?

Which anchor from this study has encouraged your heart the most? How has your relationship of trust with the Lord changed?

Father God, thank You for walking with me through every season of suffering and loss. Thank You that You are faithful, compassionate, sovereign, and near. Thank You for sending Jesus to conquer sin and death through His crucifixion and resurrection. Thank You that He will return and bring glorious restoration! Help me to handle hurt and the hardest parts of my story in light of the promise of the day You will wipe away every tear and make all things new. Until that day, regardless of my hurt, keep my eyes fixed on Jesus. For Your glory! Amen.

WEEK FIVE - DAY SIX

GOD RESTORES

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the most significant truths from HANDLING HURT you believe God wants you to understand and apply. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

WEEK FIVE - DAY SEVEN

GOD RESTORES

WORSHIP & GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:

APPENDIX: GROW IN GROUPLIFE

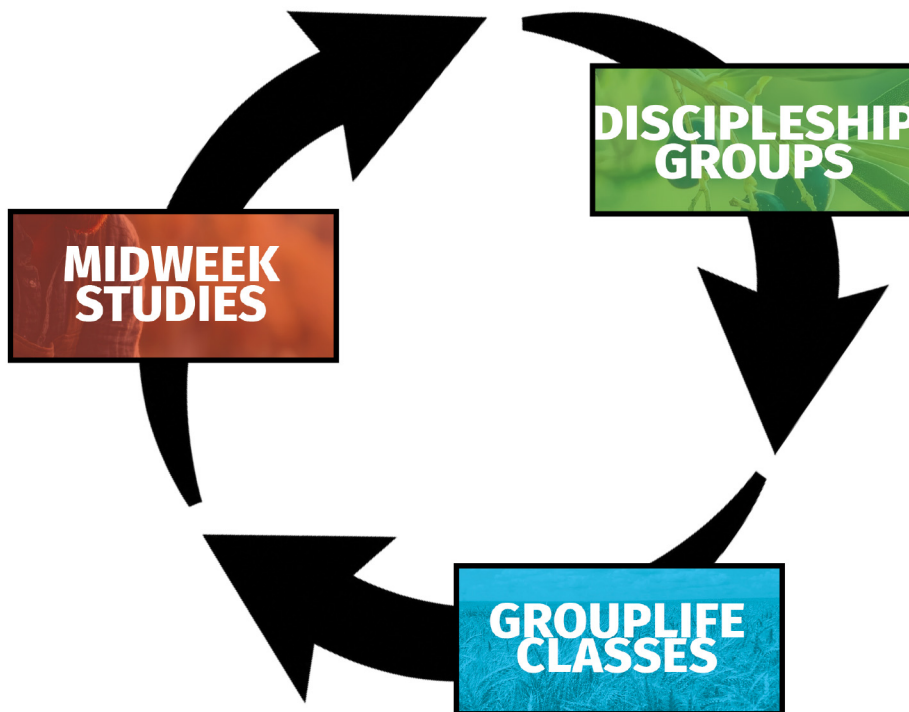
“GroupLife” refers to 3 essential types of groups at First Baptist. Each type is unique in form and emphasis. Groups can be on-campus, off-campus, on-going, long-term, or short-term. All group types play an important role in Christian growth, building community, and ongoing maturity.

Where should I start?

Build the foundation of your walk with Jesus
in a **DISCIPLESHIP GROUP**.

Build the foundation of community and
Bible Study in a **GROUPLIFE CLASS**.

Strengthen your whole-person development with
a balance of **MIDWEEK STUDIES** over time.



DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

How's your discipleship foundation?

Any type of builder knows that the stability and quality of a building starts with a proper foundation. This is also true of your discipleship growth.

Journey Discipleship Groups build a solid foundation for lifelong closeness with God, continuing growth, and influencing others toward Jesus.

We strongly recommend that you build this important foundation very early in your development as a follower of Jesus. Many discipleship opportunities build on the foundation laid in Journey Groups. So if you are new in your walk with Jesus, or your walk has become stale, sign up for a Journey Group to develop a vibrant, transforming walk with Jesus.

Head to our church website at fbcbryan.org/grow to find out more about Journey Groups and to sign up. Someone on our Discipleship Team will reach out to answer any questions you have and help you get started.



GROUPLIFE CLASSES

How are you connected?

We encourage every member of FCBryan to find community in a Sunday morning GroupLife Class and make it a part of their weekly Sunday morning rhythm*. GroupLife Classes conveniently take place weekly, at 10:10 am and 11:30 am on Sundays, adjacent to the Worship Service of your choice. These weekly groups are where you build community with others as you travel through life's seasons. There are GroupLife classes for everyone—babies through Senior Adults.

GroupLife Classes provide opportunities for relationship connections, foundational Bible study, and being be on-mission together.

There are over 50 adult classes in which you can build community, grow in your faith, and be on mission together. Most adults prefer building community with others in their life stage. However, we also have classes for those who prefer building intergenerational connections.

You can find a complete listing of Sunday Morning class descriptions and locations for each GroupLife hour at fcbryan.org/grow.

***Some GroupLife Classes meet virtually or in homes during the week.**



MIDWEEK STUDIES

Is your growth balanced?

Our MidWeek Adult Grow Studies are built around Jesus's Great Commission to go and make disciples, and His Great Commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind—and to love our neighbors. The essence of these commands shapes and drives our church's mission statement to *Make Jesus Your All and Share Him with All.*



Every Spring and Fall semester, MidWeek will offer Adult Grow Studies that correspond to each critical area of discipleship growth: **HEART, SOUL, MIND, and NEIGHBOR.**

We encourage you to select MidWeek Studies that will nurture growth in every area of your growth as a disciple. God calls us to whole-person surrender, so we encourage you to give balanced attention to each area over time to best steward your discipleship growth.

Also during MidWeek are studies that walk you through difficult seasons like loss, divorce, addiction, unwed pregnancy, and others—these studies are a part of our “**Living Well Ministries**”, which brings hope, healing, and well-being through gospel-centered, needs-based ministries. Believers overcome prevailing obstacles that have interfered with their abundant life in Christ.

You can find information about all MidWeek Studies at [fcbryan.org/grow](http://fbcbryan.org/grow).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



David Booth was led by his father to faith in Christ at 8 years old at their home in Norfolk, VA. He has served on the pastoral staff at First Baptist Church Bryan since 2016 and serves as our Discipleship Pastor. You can find David's primary contribution in Week 1, throughout *Handling Hurt* as General Editor, and in GroupLife Teacher resources.



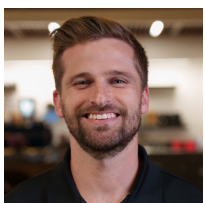
Renee Brady accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord during Vacation Bible School as a child. For 18 years, Renee has served First Baptist Church on staff, now serving as our Women's Pastor. You can find her primary contribution to *Handling Hurt* on day one of each week and contributing to Week 5.



David Gusewelle was led to faith in Christ by his father at age 12. He has served on full-time staff at First Baptist Church Bryan for nearly 25 years, now serving as our Senior Adult Pastor. David's primary contribution to *Handling Hurt* can be found in authoring Week 4.



Matthew Marion accepted Jesus at the age of 12. He has been serving First Baptist Church Bryan as its Families Pastor since 2025. Matthew's primary contribution to *Handling Hurt* can be found in authoring Week 3 and in giving shape to the GroupLife Teacher resources.



Ryan Oakes became a Christian at the age of 16. He has been serving First Baptist Bryan as our new College Pastor since 2026. You can find Ryan's primary contribution to *Handling Hurt* in authoring Week 5 and in giving shape to our GroupLife Teacher resources.



Gary Peil accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior when he was 9 years old in Bellaire, TX. Gary has served as First Baptist Church's Singles Pastor since 2024. His contributions to *Handling Hurt* can be found in authoring the Preface and Week 2 devotional readings.



Laura Bauer, LCSW, accepted Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior when 7 years old. Laura has served on staff at First Baptist Church Bryan as our Living Well Ministries Associate since 2022. She serves as a contributing advisor to *Handling Hurt*, primarily collaborating with the Pastors who gave shape to Weeks 2 and 3.

