

# GROWING AS A DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

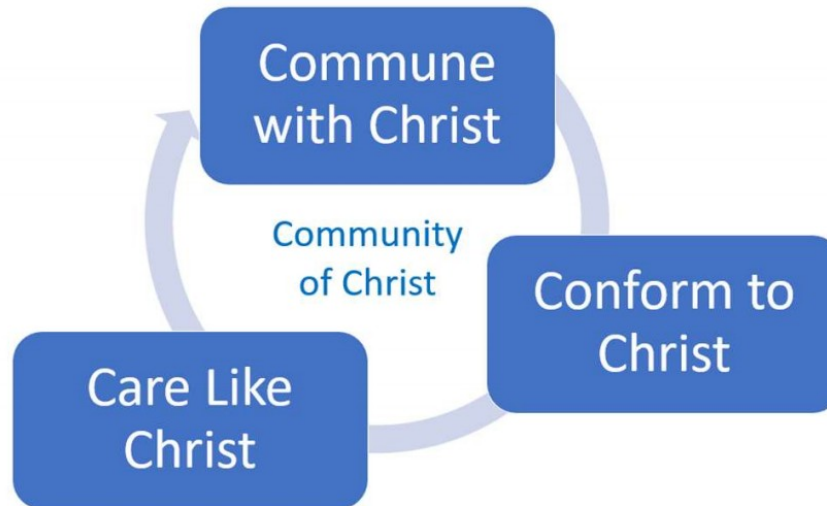
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WALKING THROUGH CRISIS, SUFFERING AND GRIEF AS A DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY

07 MAY 2022

1. REVIEW  
on Growing The Heart and Habits  
of Listening Presence  
for  
**Walking with Those in Sufferings**

A Listening Presence Is about the 4C's of Discipleship  
**So Is Walking with a Fellow Sufferer**



Like Listening Presence, **Faith and Hope amid Suffering Come from** →  
 Reading Our Small Stories in God's Big Story through Gospel Lenses

## Review: 8 Existential Questions

1. Where do we find wisdom for life in a broken world?
2. What comes to our mind when we think about God? (Is it Satan's or Christ's view?)
3. Whose are we? (Whose story have we embraced? Who am I?)
4. What is the root of our troubles?
5. How did Christ change our situation?
6. How does our future in Christ empower our present?
7. Where can we find a place to belong and become?
8. Why did God put us here?

Adapted from Bob Kellemen

## As Listening Presence Seeks to Correct What Has Gone Wrong—**Walking with Sufferers Seeks to Restore God's Shalom** Despite Wounds And Scars.

We embody our calling “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2–3). The people of God magnify the triumph of God by being communities of restoration, reconciliation and unity. And leaders are to cultivate and direct communal life to this end.

... According to God's created design, humanity was supposed to flourish in God's world by enjoying a variety of rich relationships with others. Humans were to share themselves fully with one another—their thoughts, discoveries, enjoyments of the world, delights in creation. And humans were meant to be intensely interested in others, searching out one another's feelings, impressions of the world, random thoughts and new experiences. This dynamic of giving and receiving, welcoming and entering, was to characterize human conduct in God's good world.

This is so tragically far from our experience, however. Because of the brokenness of creation and the perversion of the present evil age by the powers, humanity has been set against one another. Now that shame has entered the world because of sin, we no longer welcome others freely into our lives, to know our thoughts and experiences. We are afraid that others will use such knowledge inappropriately—and perhaps they have, so we do not trust them. And because we are selfish, we do not seek out others to discover them, to learn their stories, to understand their experiences, how they have been hurt and blessed and how we can fruitfully participate in their lives. Or we do seek others out, but only for selfish purposes or to gain leverage in a relationship. Or we seek to know more about each other than we ought to know. With the emergence of the Internet as a constant presence in our lives, we are subject to overpowering fascinations with others' lives but with very little commitment to those people.

- Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 141–142.

## Walking with a sufferer Requires the Heart and Habits of Listening Presence

An emphatic understanding with

- Willingness to see through another's eyes,
- to suspend self-centeredness,
- to receive respectfully what they have to offer,
- and to desire their well-being—a commitment to understand their suffering and to lighten it

these are habits of mind and heart that underlie and motivate empathic understanding.

It is Covenantal Love in practice

- William R. Miller, *Listening Well: The Art of Empathic Understanding* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

All the above for “the Heart and Habits of a Listening Presence” apply to “Walking with Sufferers as A Discipleship Community” and more

## Content

1. Review on Growing the Heart and Habits of A Listening Presence
2. Understanding Suffering And Its Causes
3. Understanding and Responding Biblically to the Grief Process
4. A Twin Approach to the Recovery and Healing Process
5. Practices for Walking with Sufferers through Crisis and Grief as A Discipleship Community
6. Concluding Encouragement in Facing Suffering

## Suffering and Death are Given Realities after the Fall

- CONSIDER THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FIRST FIVE WORDS AND the last five words of Genesis. “In the beginning God created” (Genesis 1:1). “In a coffin in Egypt” (Genesis 50:26).
- The Bible begins with life. Within two chapters it introduces death
- Kellemen, Robert. 2020. [\*God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting\*](#). Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

## A Biblical Example of Losses and Grief

The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33)

## Theological Foundation and Pastoral Care In Face of Sufferings and Losses

Every minister of God's grace must be committed to establishing a doctrinal foundation for his people that will provide them with an anchor to grip during the storms of life. They also need the deep theological roots that grow by means of regular preaching on the absolute sovereignty of God over every event in our lives, along with teaching on the personal care that God has for His children—from the day of our birth to the day of our death.

- Tautges, Paul. 2009. [\*Comfort Those Who Grieve: Ministering God's Grace in Times of Loss. Ministering the Master's Way. Leominster: Day One.\*](#)

## Every Believer is Called to walk with those in Suffering

- *Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. (Matt 25 : 40)*

## 2. Understanding Suffering And Its Causes

### All Suffering Is a Form of Death

“Suffering is so dreadful because suffering is death. All suffering is the dying, separating, and severing of relationships.”

*“In suffering, God is not getting back at you; He is getting you back to Himself.”*

“Healing medicine for what? For our ultimate sickness—the arrogance that we do not need God.

Suffering causes us to groan for home and to live in hope.”

*“He allows suffering—daily casket processions—to blacken our sun so we cry out to His Son”*

- Kellemen, Robert. 2020. . Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

## Suffering—What Happens to us

### *Level One Suffering: External Suffering – (Horrors)*

- Circumstances: What Happens to Us—*Relational Separation*
- Theological Reality: Our World Is Fallen and It Often Falls on Us

### *Level Two Suffering: Internal Suffering—(Trauma)*

- Condemnation: What Happens in Us—*Spiritual Depression*
- Personal Reality: Our World Is a Mess and It Messes with Our Minds

Kellemen, Robert. 2020. [\*God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting\*](#). Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

E1

## Suffering—What Happens in Us

*Our world is a mess and it messes with our minds.*

- Spiritual Abandonment: “I feel forsaken.”
- Social Betrayal: “I feel betrayed.”
- Self Contempt: “I feel ashamed.”

- Kellemen, Robert. 2020. . Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

“O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed.”  
Jer 20:7



E1 Edward, 7/5/2022

## Horrors and Trauma

- Because the human individual is made in love, he or she is whole.
  - Harrower, Scott. 2019. [\*God of All Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of This World\*](#). *Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- We are created in the image of God to flourish as persons in the presence of God and one another.
- Immoral use of powers lead human to become horror makers
- Horror prevents, destroys or degenerates our capacity as God's image bearers for relationships, moral living, and creative acts in **irrecoverable manners until death**.
- **Trauma is usually a response** to horror, in the aftermath, an evidence of horror
- **Horrors are traumatising events**.
- Death and dying is a gross horror, ending the life and purpose God has created us for, underscoring the greatness of what is lost when a person dies.

## Horror

- Example: A person brutalized in a violent attack, lost his teeth, fractured his facial bones.
- Due to absence of teeth, his face and smile are not the same as before. His fractured skull and neurological damage compounded the distortion of what was once a beautiful face made in God's image, now no longer available to him and his community.
- His sense of well being, his ability to function and relate are degenerated.
- A horror has taken place.
- Horror is **a permanent loss** and degradation of God's original creative intent for the well-being, the SHALOM (wholeness), of persons from being images of God in the fullest sense.
- **Horror is an intrusion of death into life**
- Life becomes unstable, unpredictable, unsafe.

## Trauma

- Trauma of an affected person results in cycles of fears and helplessness, overwhelming and disrupting his/her normal mental processes.
- The mind couldn't take in the appalling nature of the horror when it occurs, the traumatic effect becomes perpetually present and recurring.
- The distorted reality becomes the only reality, and a permanent mark in the person's life.
- The fullness of their being is now less available to God and others.
- Life is distanced and thinned out, haunted by the horrific events.
- Relationship with God and others is deeply impacted and distorted by a phantom worldview.

## God Calls the Church to Make a Difference

- Rom 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.
- 1Co 12:26 If one member suffers, all suffer together . . .
- Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- All members in the body of Christ need to know trauma is "not just your problem. It's our problem—my problem, the church's problem, God's problem. You don't need to be alone, and I hope we can work on it together. That's what faith communities do."  
Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 7
- *How? Begin by offering the gift of presence and attentive listening.*

### 3. Understanding and Responding Biblically to the Grief Process

According to attachment theory, when a loved one dies, the attachment system is triggered. The response is similar to the response children exhibit when they experience their mother to not be there for them. The distressed child, or the bereaved, attempts to restore the bond by first protesting, then clinging, then becoming angry. If the bond is not restored, the anger gives way to sadness and despair, and finally to resignation and defensive detachment.

- American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. [\*Caring for People God's Way\*](#). Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.

## A Researched-Based Model of a typical Grief Process/Response

1. **Denial:** This is the shock reaction. "It can't be true." "No, not me." We refuse to believe what happened.
2. **Anger:** Resentment grows. "Why me?" "Why my child?" "This isn't fair!" We direct blame toward God, others, and ourselves. We feel agitated, irritated, moody, and on edge.
3. **Bargaining:** We try to make a deal, insisting that things be the way they used to be. "God, if You heal my little girl, then I'll never drink again." We call a temporary truce with God.
4. **Depression:** Now we say, "Yes, me." The courage to admit our loss brings sadness (which can be healthy mourning and grieving) and/or hopelessness (which is unhealthy mourning and grieving).
5. **Acceptance:** Now we face our loss calmly. It is a time of silent reflection and regrouping. "Life has to go on. How? What do I do now?"

- Kellemen, Robert. 2020. . Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

## Augmenting the Typical Response by Encouraging a Biblical Grief Process

Sustaining: IT'S NORMAL TO HURT & NECESSARY TO GRIEVE

Healing: It's POSSIBLE TO HOPE & SUPERNATURAL TO GROW

Stage	Typical Grief Response	Biblical Grief Response
1	Denial/Isolation	Candor: Honesty with Myself
2	Anger/Resentment	Complaint: Honesty with God
3	Bargaining/Works	Cry: Asking God for Help
4	Depression/Alienation	Comfort: Receiving God's Help
5	Acceptance	Growth

Adapted from a proposed 8 stages response by Kellemen, Robert. 2020. God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting. Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

## 1. Candor vs Denial

- Psalm 42:3-5.
- My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?
- 1Thess 4:13
- Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you will not grieve as also the rest, who have no hope.

## 1. Candor-Honesty with Self

what are your external losses—what has happened to you and around you?

- a. What is missing?
- b. What has been robbed from your life?
- c. What are you grieving over the most?

what are your inner crosses—your feelings about your loss and the trials of your faith?

- a. What feelings do you associate with these losses?
- b. Have you ever faced anything like this before? How did you feel then?
- c. How has your suffering impacted your relationship with and your attitude toward God?
- d. How has your suffering impacted your faith, hope, and love?

- Kellemen, Robert. 2020. . Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

## Types of Losses

- i. Real Concrete Losses: tangible, loss of loved ones, status, income.
- ii. Intangible Losses: loss of hope, ambition, confidence in people, meaning in life.
- iii. Imagined Losses: only in the mind and emotions, not based on reality, yet are powerful influences on the grieving process.
- iv. Threatened, Anticipated or Feared Losses: such as not being able to love again, or be happy again.

They all trigger emotional responses and need to be distinguished, understood and put in perspective.

- American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager.

## 2. Complaint: Lament for Losses versus Anger

- Lam 3:4 He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones;
- Lam 3:5 he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation;
- Lam 3:6 he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago.
- Lam 3:7 He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy;
- Lam 3:8 though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer;

## Complaint—Honesty with God

Complaint is *vulnerable frankness about life to God in which I express my pain and confusion over how a good God allows evil and suffering.*

- Destructive anger or constructive complaint/lament?
- Will we be disappointed with God or disappointed without God?
- Do we complain with and to God, or we can complain without and about God.

- Kellemen, Robert. 2020. [\*God's Healing for Life's Losses: How to Find Hope When You're Hurting.\*](#) Ashland, OH: BMH Books.

- Help the sufferers understand the link between their behavior and their emotions. Some subconsciously express their grief through anger.
- Sometimes the unspoken messages from family and friends include “get on with your life,” “snap out of it,” or “pull yourself together”
- Stifling emotions does not help the mourning process. Yet, not everyone will express emotions the same way. Respect the quiet, gentle grievers.

- American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. [\*Caring for People God's Way.\*](#) Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.



### 3. Crying—Asking VS Bargaining with God

- *People try to recover the lost person by bargaining with God. In addition, the grieved is often obsessed with meta-questions such as “Why?” “How could You let this happen, God?!” and “Why me?” Sufferers may also get trapped in “If only...” thinking: “If only they had done this that day...If only I had said [something different].”*

American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. . Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.

Psalm 34: 6

This poor man called and Yahweh heard,  
and saved him from all his troubles.

Psalm 34: 18-19

Yahweh is near to those who are heartbroken  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.  
Many are the distresses of the righteous,  
but Yahweh delivers him out of them all.

## Bargaining's Operating Framework

- Eg of Bargaining: Job's friends advised him to behave well and God would be good to him.
- Other well-meaning advice—Have faith or behave rightly and all will be well.
- → **Good things happen to Good people, bad things happen to bad people.**
- This Framework can be there even if we are not aware of it.
  - Dave Wenzel says this was the framework he operated from when his wife was critically ill **because if this is true, it would give him control over his life.**  
Wenzel, Dave. 2020. [Counseling Suffering People](#). Logos Mobile Education. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- It's "Salvation by works".
- It says pray hard enough, long enough, believe enough → my will be done.
- It's a tempting escape path from our fear, confusion, grief, and pain.
- It's an attempt to manipulate God and control circumstances
- It's a lie

## Crying—A Child's Dependency on the Father

- Crying is reaching up with open palms and pleading eyes in our darkness and doubt.
- Crying empties us so there is more room in us for God.
- Suffering is God's primary way of uprooting our self-reliance and complacency.
- Crying out to God is our admission that God has our attention, that God has us.
- *Crying to God replaces our bargaining, our works, our self-sufficiency, to control and manipulate God by humbly looking to God's sufficiency and grace*
- *Crying is saying to a trusted friend, you can't handle this grief yourself, to find in your friend the presence of God.*

Kellemen, Robert. 2020. God's Healing for Life's Losses

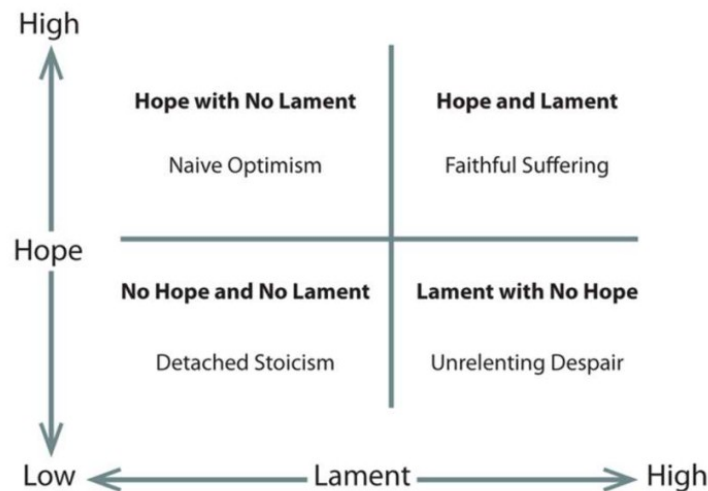
## 4. Comfort: Moving from Depression/Alienation to Communion & Connection

- Depression is grief without hope, without a higher plan in sight.
- Hope says the wound is not fatal nor final.
- Comfort is having the seed of hope planted amid the wound/scar.
- The source of comfort is outside of us—in Christ.
- Comfort develops through **communion with Christ** and through **connection to the Body of Christ**.
- *In Cry we ask for God's help, in Comfort God comes.*
- *Communion and connection provides the support needed for recovery*

## We Grieve not as those without Hope

- 1Th 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, **that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.**
- 1Th 4:14 For **since we believe that Jesus died and rose again**, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.
- Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

## The Hope Lament Quadrant



Kapic, Kelly M. 2017. *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

## The Ground of Our Comfort and Hope—the Cross

The death and resurrection of Christ stand as a sure and reliable promise that someday death will die.

The comfort and hope he provides does not remove your grief, but they allow you to grieve in a brand-new way. And he promises one day to take you to a place where you will never cry again.

Tripp, Paul David. *Grief: Finding Hope Again* (p. 8). New Growth Press. Kindle Edition.

*but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)*

## The Resurrection

- The resurrection of Jesus . . . demonstrates his perspective on horrors. He rejects death as the great horror that it is.
- The dominion of death is broken; death no longer has the last word
- God may bring about life where there is death
  - Harrower, Scott. 2019. [\*God of All Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of This World. Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology.\*](#) Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

1Co 15:55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

1Co 15:56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

## For Now, we find Comfort in God with Us

"A suffering person might exclaim, 'Why!' but the answer is rarely 'Because,' but 'Here I am.' ... In the book of Job, it is YHWH who answers, 'Here I am.' "

- Ham, "Gentle Voice of God," 541.

Mat 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

Mat 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

## God Comes

Why did my daughter's husband break her heart?  
I know, little child  
Won't you tell me, Father?  
I won't, my son

Why does my wife have to live in pain?  
I know, little child  
Won't you tell me, Father? It would make it easier  
It wouldn't, my son

Why do parents have to bury their children?  
It isn't right  
It isn't, little child  
Then get rid of death, Father  
I am, my son

Why are your people abused, persecuted and killed?  
Can't you protect them?  
I can, little child  
Then do something  
I did, my son

Why do my parents need to finish their lives in  
unrelenting misery?  
How is that merciful?  
It is, little child  
Then I don't understand mercy  
You don't, my son

But it all hurts so much sometimes  
I know it does, little child  
How do you know Father?  
I have felt all the pain of sin, my son

Can't you make it all stop?  
I can, little child  
Then do it, Father  
I started 2000 years ago and will finish soon, my son

I believe you, Father, help my unbelief  
I love you, my son

Kapic, Kelly M. 2017. *Embodied Hope: A Theological  
Meditation on Pain and Suffering*. Downers Grove, IL:  
IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

Section Break

## 5. Healing : Biblical Recovery & Growth vs Typical Acceptance through Regrouping/Despairing

Recovering by Restoring Faith Hope and Love, through the Larger Gospel Story of God's Grace towards Us

## 4. A Twin Approach to a Biblical Recovery and Healing Process

- I. Re-establishing Faith and Hope (Theological Foundation)
- II. Recovering Love and Community (Theology Applied thru Care & Support)

## **The Process of Healing/Restoring: Addressing the 3 Questions Sufferings—Horror and Trauma, raise in the sufferer.**

1. Can I trust God's character and power? (Spiritual Abandonment)
2. Is there meaning and value in life? (Social Betrayal/lost of confidence)
3. Is there hope for recovery? (Self Contempt)

## **A. Recovering Love and Community: Regain meaningfully connection and participation in God's kingdom through personal ministry**

### **We Mediate**

- God's Presence
- God's Actions
- God's Encouragement
- God's Perspective
- God's Power through Prayer



## Jesus Risen Presence in the Spirit, in believers and the Church Invites Our Participation As Mediators

- “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20)
- God dwells every person baptized into his name and receives a new way of life from him through the indwelling presence of the Spirit.
- The Spirit is God’s active presence restoring the fullness of God’s image in us.
- This image gives an imperfect and indirect vision of God and of his desires for the world
- The resurrection of Jesus and His indwelling Spirit is also a corporate reality.
- The total church with its members’ diverse gifts embodies the fullness of Christ through its members’ presence and service to one another.
  - Harrower, Scott. 2019. *God of All Comfort*
- the Church is not a religious community of worshippers of Christ but is Christ Himself who has taken form among men ... incarnate, sentenced and awakened to new life.
  - Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, Simon and Shuster, 1995), 84–85.

## We Mediate God’s Presence with Our Presence

“What can we do to help those experiencing grief? First we must be where we can see the problem—in contact with those we suspect are hurting. One of the most important things we can do is just to be there. **Our presence speaks louder than words.** There are two things we need to take them every time we go—**hope and a tender, listening heart.** We don’t have to come up with flowery phrases. **Sitting quietly with them is more comforting than preaching sermons to them.** And sometimes we can gently direct their thinking toward the faithfulness of God.”

- Deborah Howard, *Sunsets: Reflections for Life’s Final Journey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), p. 43.

## We Mediate God's Action by Caring Like Christ with Pastoral Sensitivity

- Careful arguments about human agency, contingency, and evil did not give hope or rest. It was not that his previous philosophical efforts were unwise or wrong, but they did not reach the places of his and his family's pain. The theories could not plumb the depths of human sorrow. They needed pastoral care. They needed the quiet presence of others around them. They needed glimpses of God in his goodness and love, truths often only made believable through personal tenderness and gentle grace extended to them by others. This family needed the warmth of God's presence rather than the cool calculations of logical deductions.
  - Kopic, Kelly M. 2017. [\*Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

## We Mediate God's Encouragement

- Through Speaking or Singing God's word in a hymn

"This gospel-centered hope faces the reality of death head-on by holding forth the gift of eternal life that Jesus purchased with His own blood. If we fail to gently speak the truth of the gospel at a time like this, we have not made death our servant as we ought.

. . . we must correctly seize each divinely ordained ministry opportunity by utilizing earthly pain to redirect the bereaved to focus on eternal matters."

- Tautges, Paul. 2009. [\*Comfort Those Who Grieve: Ministering God's Grace in Times of Loss. Ministering the Master's Way\*](#). Leominster: Day One.

## We Mediate God's Perspective—See our Identity, our present and future thru Jesus' eyes

- Joh 17:20 "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
- Joh 17:21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, . . . .
- Joh 17:22 **The glory that you have given me I have given to them**, that they may be one even as we are one,
- Joh 17:23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and **loved them even as you loved me**.
- Joh 17:24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, **to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me** before the foundation of the world.
- Joh 17:25 O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.
- Joh 17:26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that **the love with which you have loved me may be in them**, and I in them."

## We Mediates God's Power through Prayer

- Prayers not only invokes God's powerful intervention, prayer is the all-encompassing means through which we can mediate God's presence by entering His presence, taking the sufferer with us, mediating God's action, God's encouragement and God's perspective, calling upon and allowing the Holy Spirit to work with His power in the sufferer.
- We do so by praying through a biblical grid and framework through which we see God's sovereignty in our sufferings.

## B. Re-establishing Faith and Hope through the Gathering of the Church in Worship

Through the Gospel of God's Word (seeing thru Biblical Lenses)

- With the help of the Holy Spirit
- In Our Communion
- In Our Baptism

Rituals facilitating God's bigger narrative in which sufferers can develop their own trauma narrative is a key step towards healing.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Rom 5:3-5)

## How did the Psalmist find God?

Psa 73:14 For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.

...

Psa 73:16 But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,

Psa 73:17 until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.

## What did the Psalmist find?

Psa 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and **my portion forever**.

## The Turning Point

Lam 3:19 Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall!

Lam 3:20 My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.

Lam 3:21 **But this I call to mind**, and **therefore I have hope**:

Lam 3:22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

Lam 3:23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

## What did the Author of Lamentation find?

Lam 3:24 “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

Lam 3:25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

Lam 3:26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Lam 3:27 It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

Lam 3:28 Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him;

## A Trauma Narrative—Placing Our Trauma in God’s Bigger Story

- a person may include their story in the larger story of what God is doing in the world. This is the first step in recovery from trauma: developing a personal trauma narrative
  - Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 133

Confidence in God’s character and his works of renewal is an important step toward living well in the aftermath of trauma. God’s providential preservation of Abraham’s descendants, his incarnation in Jesus, the resurrection, and promises for the future place our present personal and communal trauma within a larger story that enables meaning making to arise. This is called a trauma narrative.

- Harrower, Scott. 2019. *God of All Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of This World.*

## 5. Practices for Walking with Sufferers through Crisis and Grief as A Discipleship Community

### Becoming A Caring Community Serving as A Support System

- Most people come to counseling to make sense of the intense and confusing emotions they experience. Research and experience has found that most people are able to adapt to their loss. **Key to their healing is an adequate and stable support system.** Your ability to listen and enabling them to give their grief a voice will be very healing.
  - American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. [\*Caring for People God's Way\*](#). Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.

## Planning for the church community to walk with someone in grief

- Have a weekly plan to touch base with the person in grief through the small group. Begin with the Pastor/Elder/Deacon/Leader of the group for the first month, then bring in others.
  - Varied between lunch, coffee time,, phone call, send a card, send a text message, send a booklet like "Grief: Finding Hope Again" by Paul David Tripp, send a list of comforting Scriptures.
- From the third month onward, touch base once a month through the small group members and others in the church.
- One year anniversary. Ask a close friend to provide some form of personal physical contact, in remembering God's faithfulness to carry them through the past year.
- For the next six months, involve others in the church to provide monthly contact.

## What leaders and members can do

- Commit to the sufferer
- Lament with the Sufferer
- Bring Hope with you
- Wait in Silence
- Participate in Grieving Rituals, wakes and funerals.
- Listen and Reflect (refer to Session 3 in this series)
- Pray with them. Sing a hymn.
- Provide Biblical Guidance at the appropriate moment
- Encourage the sufferer to commune with Christ and stay connected with the Church, to find comfort in Him and through partaking of the sacraments.



## Using Faith Questions at Appropriate Moments to Reframe One's Outlook

- What is God's purpose in this suffering?
- What is God teaching me?
- How can we make His glory known?
- How can share God's love and comfort with others?
- How can the church respond as God's community?

## Remembering We Are Embodied Beings

- This is the context for shalom. Man and woman needed each other, . . . to delight in their Creator and in one another **through their bodies**. **Here was the life they were called to live**. This view of the creation of man and woman as dust and breath, in fellowship with each other and with God, stands at the core of a Christian conception of the body

- Kopic, Kelly M. 2017. [\*Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

## Looking after the Physical Body

- there is a high correlation between physical ailments or illness, and the loss of a loved one. Mourning . . . can be physically draining, is linked to a weaker immune system, and brings with it medical conditions of many sorts.
  - There are times that medications are necessary to assist in a good night's sleep, or enable the bereaved to function in everyday living. Yet, there are other times when the numbing of the grief experience can complicate the healing process.
  - explore more natural and holistic methods to aid in stress reduction and sleep disturbances such as relaxation techniques and soothing rituals before bedtime, like taking a bath or listening to music.
- American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. *Caring for People God's Way*. Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.

## Looking after the Physical Needs

- Encourage decision-making and follow through on the little things that keep day-to-day life functioning in at least a minimally healthy way.
- Help out and make sure the grieving person is eating properly, maintaining personal hygiene, keeping bills paid, and basic appointments kept.
- Discourage major decisions and action on big changes until the crisis event has subsided and some time for perspective is gained
  - American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. *Caring for People God's Way*. Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.

## Helping Children in Grief

1. Have the child describe the loved one who died, how they died and how they heard about the death. This can be done verbally, through art, writing of a play, or putting together a scrapbook.
2. Examine thoughts and feelings about the funeral and other rituals that the family shared to confirm the death of the loved one.
3. Discuss changes that have occurred in the family since the death, and how the changes feel. As you listen to the child, assess for coping strategies, family support of their experience, and how the child is making sense of life without the loved one.
4. Discuss the future and what it will look like without the loved one.
5. Find ways that the child can still feel connected with the loved one. Through the enjoyment of memories and the review of hopes the loved one had for them, the child can sense the loved one's continued security and comfort. This can be done through the writing of notes, putting together a scrapbook, or recalling how the loved one valued them and hoped they would do well in life.
6. Again, be creative and allow the child to lead you. Begin each session with play therapy, art work, story writing, or some form of activity that allows the child to express himself creatively.

- American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. [\*Caring for People God's Way\*. Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.](#)

## Self-care for Counsellors As a Helpful Reference for Those Supporting & Caring for Grieving Sufferers

Like vicarious or secondary trauma, counselors working with the bereaved are susceptible to carrying too much of their client's grief within themselves. It is important to be able to distinguish between empathic grieving—burden-bearing within proper and manageable limits—and being overladen with sorrow. Unfortunately, this boundary is rarely clear, so counselors need to engage in ongoing self-assessment of the impact of grief work. So then:

1. Do your own grief work. What losses have you faced, or are you facing?
  2. Be aware of your limitations. Be aware when the story of your client is affecting you and you can't seem to leave it behind at the office. Also, be honest when you need further training or need to refer your client to someone with more experience. Growing your skills as a counselor will make you more effective.
  3. Find your own support system where you can share your concerns, emotions and experiences.
  4. Always check your stance in the room. Don't be condescending. Your client is the expert of their own experience; respect that. No matter how many degrees you do or don't have, remember that it is the Holy Spirit at work in your client, not you. You are about the work of the Lord, so allow God to use your expertise to do His work. Bless you. Sitting with the pain of the bereaved is not always easy.
- American Association of Christian Counselors. 2005. [\*Caring for People God's Way\*. Edited by Tim Clinton, Archibald Hart, and George Ohlschlager. Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference and Electronic.](#)

## 6. Concluding Encouragement in Facing Suffering

### Beloved, and Yet Afflicted (Pastoral Message 30/4)

... we may wonder why God allows suffering in a world He has created in Genesis 1 and pronounced as good.

Isn't God sovereign, wise, and loving enough to stop all the sufferings in our world and to do so now?

Perhaps, we will find the answer if we continue reading through the whole Bible.

- In Genesis 1, God brought order out of chaos, and light in darkness.
- In Genesis 2, God brought life in Adam out from the dust.
- In Genesis 6 to 9, out of the flood, God saved Noah and his family.
- In Exodus, out from Egypt and the Red Sea, God formed Israel into a nation.
- Into the New Testament, out from the greatest evil in the suffering and death of His Son, God brings forth the church.

**From the bad, God always brings out the good.**

## Beloved, and yet Afflicted (cont'd)-

- Hence James 1:2 calls believers to trust God, to count it all joy when we meet various trials.
- God uses suffering to discipline and purify our hearts from sin, to wean us from this world and its passing pleasures.
- Suffering makes us grateful for the little things in life.
- Suffering makes us know and love God more.
- We pray and search out His promises in suffering.
- Suffering reminds us to store up treasures in heaven.
- Suffering equips us to comfort others with the comfort we have received from God and His people.
- Suffering perfects and prepares us for the glory to come.
- Our faith during suffering, therefore, bears witness before a watching world to Christ's faithfulness.

## Beloved, and yet Afflicted (cont'd)

Charles Spurgeon in his sermon "Beloved, and Yet Afflicted" says,

- If Jesus loves you, and you are sick, let all the world see how you glorify God in your sickness. Let friends and nurses see how the beloved of the Lord are cheered and comforted by him. Let your holy resignation astonish them, and set them admiring your Beloved, who is so gracious to you that he makes you happy in pain, and joyful at the gates of the grave. If your religion is worth anything it ought to support you now, and it will compel unbelievers to see that he whom the Lord loves is in better case when he is sick than the ungodly when full of health and vigour.

So by His grace, may we through our sufferings, declare the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

## Serving as Christ's Ambassadors in the Church Discipleship Community

God now calls you to share this comfort with others.

- Who near you is discouraged and ready to quit?
- Who is struggling to hold onto hope?
- Who is dealing with the pain of disappointment?
- Who is struggling with problems so large that they can't see God?

You are God's agent of help and hope. God entered your darkness, not just to give your heart rest, but to equip you to share that rest with others.

- Tripp, Paul David. *Grief: Finding Hope Again* (pp. 13-14). New Growth Press. Kindle Edition.

## Living Out Christ's Words

- Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
- Joh 13:35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

