

## Steps – Week 7: Fear, Grief, and Loss

Michael Snetzer – October 16, 2013

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Let me begin tonight with a prayer, and then we'll read from 2 Corinthians 1 and get into our lesson tonight on examining fear, grief, and loss.

Lord, I thank you that you are the God of comfort, that you comfort us in our affliction, that you are our God of hope, that we have hope amidst our suffering and that hope transcends our suffering. I thank you that you're a refuge we can run to. It's literally in your presence that we're healed, that we're satisfied.

We so often run other places. We so often are so quick to try to redeem this world apart from you. Lord, let our frustrations and our sufferings in this world remind us of our need of redemption and remind us of our need for you. May that draw us to you rather than push us away from you. It's in Christ's name I pray, amen.

Let's look quickly at 2 Corinthians, chapter 1, verses 3-11.

**"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.**

**If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.**

**Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many."**

Suffering is something that unites us all. It's all around us. This isn't just for Christians, though Christians experience a distinct kind of suffering. Suffering unites all of humanity. Pain is an inescapable reality of the world we live in. We all face the interplay between sin and suffering. Comingled with sin there is unimaginable suffering. Tragedy, loss, and pain are our companions.

Some suffering comes from our own sin, some suffering comes from the sin levied against us, and others the tragic results of a fallen world. With sin there is always suffering. With suffering there are always temptations to sin. So today's lesson is on examining fear, grief, and loss. This is, in part, looking at our inventory on fear, and then this new inventory on grief and loss. I feel that it fits particularly well where it's situated in this study, because so many times, as I mentioned in the opening example, our first reaction in the midst of loss is anger.

For many of us, that's an easier emotion to deal with than grief. As we have gone through our resentments inventory and shared our resentments with our sponsors and handed those resentments over to God, it gives us the ability to come to a place where we can begin to grieve the reality of the sinful world we live in rather than with that hard-hearted, aggressive, angry, "We're going to take care of this ourselves."

It puts us in a position where we can cry out to God and God, as we mentioned in this passage, can come and be our comfort. When we're out in that sinful anger, we really are trying to *be* God, and therefore, it keeps us distant and away from his presence where he can comfort us. We'll see how these kind of are mingled together, these ideas of fear, or the temptation *to* fear, and this idea of suffering and grief and loss.

First let's look at fear and anxiety. Just a few years ago, Matt Chandler, who's our lead teaching pastor here... Most of you know him, those of you who attend church here. He was walking us through the book of Hebrews, and he was talking about different types of fear. The first two types of fear he described were on a purely physical level. He described a healthy kind of fear.

A healthy kind of fear is the type of fear you experience when there is a real physical danger, a real present danger. It is meant to preserve life. It causes us to move. It is a type of fear that says, "Jump out of the way of this oncoming truck." The absence of this fear might be labeled as psychotic. If somebody just stands in front of a truck and lets it hit them, you'd probably wonder if there were some screws loose.

Lack of this fear might also be a result of presumptuousness or pride, thinking, "I can do anything without harm." We see it in adolescence, teenagers thinking that they are "bulletproof," or someone who might be in a manic episode. If you've heard of manic depressive disorder, bipolar disorder... When you're in a manic phase, oftentimes you feel as though you're invincible. So that's a healthy type of fear.

An unhealthy type of fear at the purely physical level is the type of fear that doesn't preserve your life but robs you of life. It is the type of fear that is experienced when there *is* no present danger. It is often irrational. It is worried about the "what ifs." Now this physical type of fear described both in a healthy and an unhealthy way is meant to mirror and to point to a greater reality of a spiritual type of fear.

To understand this fear we must move from a purely horizontal perspective to include a vertical element. The questions here are...*Where do I stand before God?* and...*Is what I'm doing pleasing to him?* When God comes to Adam in the garden he says, "Where are you?" not guessing about his physical location, but "Where are you in terms of your relationship with me?" The evidence is everywhere. He's covering and hiding.

As with the physical fear, there is also a healthy and an unhealthy fear of God. Matt used the physical example to explain a spiritual point. Here it is. If you live along a busy street and are playing in your front yard, you should not be paralyzed by what would happen if you were in the street. You're not in the street; you're in the front yard. However, if you're in the street, you need to move. It's dangerous.

That's a physical explanation to a spiritual type of fear. If you're under the covering of God's grace and you're walking with him, then there's no need to fear. You don't need to fear God in an unhealthy way. But if you're in the street, you need to move. So a healthy fear of God causes us to

move out of the street when we're not where we should be with him. It causes us to move, and this is a healthy fear of the Lord.

Now it's this healthy type of fear that also allows us to transcend the physical and walk in obedience even into dangerous situations, which may include suffering. It's about trusting God. If we are walking by faith in obedience to what he has asked us, we should not be afraid. He will give us whatever grace we need to endure whatever comes our way.

In fact, he has called us *to* suffering. It doesn't mean you should go looking for suffering. You won't have to. But that *is* part of God's plan, that we will share not only in the sufferings of the world, but also in the sufferings of Christ. He will give us whatever grace we need to endure whatever comes our way. Again, this allows us to walk through situations we would ordinarily flee. The unhealthy type of fear in this realm might paralyze us even when we are under the covering and refuge of God. It again is obsessed with the "what ifs."

Now an alternative to fearing God is fearing others or a self-centered fear. It's when we put others or ourselves on the throne of our lives, and then we experience self-centered or others-centered fear. Self-centered fear is birthed out of a distrust of God, dethroning him and being overly concerned about preserving my life the way I think it should go. My greatest concern is me. I sit on the throne deciding what I believe to be good for me and then becoming fearful when things don't appear to be going the way I want them to. I take control.

Scripturally, this self-concern seems to have the opposite effect. Rather than preserving my life, it robs me of life. John 12:25 says, "**Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**" Let me just say there is nothing you have been given in Christ that anyone can take from you, and there is nothing that *hasn't* been given to you in Christ that you'll be able to hold on to. You might as well let go so we can get on with the business God has at hand for us. You can't lose anything that's eternal, and you can't keep anything here.

An others-centered fear is what the Bible calls the fear of man. The Bible says this is a snare. It is when people become big and God becomes small. That's the name of a book by Ed Welch that I highly recommend: *When People Are Big and God is Small*. It is still a distrust of God. It's going to the creation or mankind for what only God can provide. It is when we place a dependence on people rather than God for our joy and our contentment.

An example of an others-centered fear or the fear of man might be lying. When I lie, the root of that is self-preservation. I'm trying to preserve my own life. I'm definitely not looking to God to preserve my life. I'm thinking that I can preserve this. In that moment, I'm more concerned about what you think than what God thinks. God is telling me not to lie, and I want you to think I'm in a different place than I am.

We'll see (and we probably have begun to see, those of you who are in your inventory) how much this idea plays out practically in our lives in conflict and resentments. So much of what we struggle with is wrapped up in the fear of man. Now I'm going to move to our PowerPoint presentation here. A lot of these ideas are biblical, but they were put together through the work of John Henderson who wrote our lay biblical counseling material called "Equipped to Counsel." He was my mentor for a while.

As he said so well, there are two most primitive expressions of a prideful heart, this heart of self-rule, and they're really two sides of the same coin. They are fear and lust. Now I know for a lot of you, you're like, "I don't lust. That's my husband. But I'm really, really fearful." I want to show you that they're two sides to the same coin. It says here at the bottom of the slide, "I fear not having those things that I lust for, so if you tell me what you fear, I'll tell you what you lust for."

We're not talking about a purely sexual type of thing here; we're talking about coveting, lusting for something, saying, "I have to have that to be okay." Where there might be a lust for pleasure, which is what we normally identify with lust, you could lust for safety, security, or for emotional connectedness. As Matt mentioned this past week... He was talking about this idea of lust and how men tend to look physically with pornography and women often dive into romance novels and other types of things to get their emotional lust filled.

It never is, because then you have to buy another book and another book or do the next soap opera or the next... You know what I'm talking about. So they're really two sides of the same coin. I really feel like it's helpful, because if we can identify it that way, that our fears are really just the other side of lust... If I can identify my lust, then I know what I'm holding idolatrously, and then I can repent of that and begin to find peace with God.

For example, if I'm lusting for security and I begin to demand security from everybody around me rather than realizing I have security in God and I can turn to him. All of the things I just said about those of us who are in Christ... Nothing can be taken from us. We have security in heaven and in our

inheritance, and there's nothing here you're going to be able to keep anyway. You're going to die...unless you are one of those who happen to be alive when Christ returns. All the more reason you should pray he returns soon.

There are really two possible motivations in the heart of a believer. What we were looking at before is an unregenerate heart. That's all that's going to come out. Everything that comes out of an unregenerate heart is going to be based in this self-centered fear, basically to meet my own needs. I don't know God, so why would I trust God to meet my needs? I'm only left here to do this on my own.

When we come to faith and we come to believe God is good and he does good to those who honestly seek him so he can be trusted... We have these two different motivations in the heart of a believer: one that's going to lead to death and stress and anxiety and one that's going to lead to life and peace. The first motive is, as I mentioned, this self-centered fear to meet my own needs. There's something I see, I think I need that, so it's up to me to get it. This other motivation is motivated by loving obedience, responding in faith to God, to his gospel, and that he's got this.

We see on this one side a distrust and rebellion against God, trying to gratify my flesh, trying to live independent of God in my own strength and obsessed with control. I'm obsessed with controlling others and outcomes, as if I have control there. I mean, I can manipulate, but I don't have in terms of destiny. On this other side, we see a trust of God, submitted to the Spirit of God, dependent on him, and in this servant-hearted mode. We've seen this before when we looked at the three circles. Remember? Circle number two and circle number three.

The mindset here on the left-hand side is to gratify my flesh. What is pleasing to me? What do I want? What's going to come out of that are the deeds of the flesh, which we've looked at before. On the other side, the mindset, the things above, is going to be surrendered to the Spirit, living by the Spirit, and what's going to come out of that is the fruit of the Spirit. Here are some examples of how this might get played out.

First of all, let's say I'm preparing for a message and I'm getting down to the wire. There has been all kind of interference coming in, so there's stress and pressure beginning to press down. In this moment, I'm being tested. Am I going to trust God? Remember in Jeremiah 17:5-8 it says, "Blessed is the man whose trust is the Lord. He'll be like a tree planted by the water." And then "Cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength." That's this dichotomy going on.

In that moment, I can continue to trust the Lord and trust he's going to provide what I need and that I can respond to other people in the midst of that in a way that is helpful and not hurtful, loving and not hateful, but if I stop trusting God in that moment, my fear will then start to manifest itself in me trying to control people around me through my anger, through letting them know they're rubbing me the wrong way. "You'd better watch out; I'm about to bite. I have stuff to do."

I'm in that place more often than I care to admit, though I'm admitting it to you. Or I can trust the Lord in that and I can really trust he's going to provide me what I need in that moment and I can respond in a way that's helpful and just say, "Hey, you know what? I really have to work on this lesson. Can you just give me...?"

You know what? Maybe they just press it even more and I just have to trust that the Lord is going to provide me what I need. Because really, my testimony in that moment, if you want to be honest, is how I respond, not in what I preach. My family can listen to me teach this all day long, but if I don't live this at home all the time, they're like, "Okay, so what good is it that you're up studying if you're not walking it out?"

Here are some other examples. Stuck in traffic. Maybe you're not studying for a message, but maybe you've been stuck in traffic before. Maybe this'll hit home. Let's say you left in plenty of time. You're headed to an important business meeting or to drop the kids off or whatever it may be. You're expected there timely, and you run into a traffic jam. It's not that you're being irresponsible. You didn't leave with 5 minutes to go and there's really a 20-minute drive, because that would be something else we'd need to talk about.

Let's say we left on time and we hit the traffic jam. In that moment, we're in a place where we have to choose. Are we going to trust the Lord or are we going to start to take things in our hands? The way we take things into our own hands is we start honking our horn and telling this guy to let us in, and if he doesn't we give him the bird. Then we jump the median and speed down the side road. Right?

Then we get there, and we're just sweaty and nervous, and they're like, "You look like you've been in a car accident." Does that look like life or death? Death. If you didn't wreck into somebody and if you didn't get a ticket... On the other hand, maybe you decide to trust the Lord and you realize he's

sovereign and that as much as you think it's good for you to be at that meeting, maybe that's not God's plan.

If he wants you to be there, he's going to provide a way for you to get there. So you can politely go, "Hey, can I get in there? No? Okay. See the fish on my car?" He's going to provide a way if he wants you to be there. You don't have to break the law. You don't have to speed. If you're supposed to have that account, you're going to get that account and it's going to be by his grace.

Finally, maybe it's a dishes thing. Dishes still plague me. I won't give a current example; I'll give an example from when I used to live with some guys in my house. We were trying to learn to live together. My expectation was to come home at lunch and be able to fix lunch in a clean kitchen. Every day I would come home and find a mess in the kitchen.

I'm thinking, "I'm going to demonstrate to these men how to do this." So I would clean up the kitchen. I'm going to show them how to be Christlike, and all this kind of stuff. They just didn't get it. Some of you have heard this before. I think the dishwasher is meant as a sanitary device. They evidently thought it was more than that, because they would take like bowls of ice cream and just stick them in the... It would just drip. And food. I'm just like, "Ah!"

Resentment began to build, because they weren't catching on. Again, I think I know what I need in order to make me happy, and when something starts to interfere with that, I start to get fearful, and then I start to take control, and then my anger starts to come out. Something shifted along the way, and at least then... I can't say I'm always able to do this. As I mentioned, I struggle with the dishes a lot.

When my heart was in the right place and when my heart *is* in the right place, I realize that when I come into that kitchen, regardless of the results, there's an opportunity for me to serve God. Whether anybody else notices or not, I can be the best dishwasher. If it's pleasing to him, I don't care if anybody else notices. I'll scrub toilets. I don't care, just as long as it's pleasing to my Lord. If I have a different agenda, if he's not the ultimate result... So that's how you can live a life of faith in the midst of this.

Let's now move to examining grief and loss. As I mentioned before, in our grief and our loss, we are often tempted to fear, but we are called to trust. In our unbelief, which is fear, we tend to take things into our own hands and attempt to resolve them ourselves. We by nature have come with

innumerable ways of avoiding pain and suffering, but with Jesus there is hope amidst our suffering. Not only will he provide what we need eternally, but he will give us the grace to suffer well as we trust him.

The truth is that our difficulties in this life serve as reminders of our need for redemption and provide us with the opportunity to call on him as the God of all comfort. Grief in and of itself, even though we try to avoid it, is not bad. It's a right and necessary response to suffering that is common to us all. But as we have seen with respect to our own sin, there's both a godly grief and a worldly grief.

Just using this example we had before, as suffering begins to press down on our hearts, it gives us the opportunity to either trust God, which leads to life, or this other, which we've already covered, which leads to death. So with suffering comes the temptation to fear. God uses this whole thing globally in his providence as a test. Satan will come in and offer us a way out rather than trusting God and his redemptive plan. "Here's a shortcut. We can fix this today."

As a heart-focused discipleship ministry, what we want to do is to examine our hearts before the Lord amidst our suffering. That's what we're primarily responsible for. All this stuff we can't control... Remember, our first response often is to try to control the circumstances to relieve the pain, and we miss sight of what God is trying to do often in our hearts. As a gospel-centered ministry, we have a hope amidst our suffering to be able to respond in a Christlike way.

First Thessalonians 4:13 says, "**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.**" We grieve, but it's a grief with hope. There is God's way, or godly grief, and then there is man's way, or worldly grief. We have said before that with secular counseling, with secular psychology, oftentimes there are right observations. They see rightly with what is observable, but it has its limitations.

Bob Kelleman examines in his book, *God's Healing for Life's Losses*, a very popular five-stage grief model in light of God's revealed plan for redeeming suffering. You guys have probably heard of Kübler-Ross' five-stage grief model. In that five-stage grief model, he says the first stage is *denial*. This is the shock reaction. It says, "It can't be true. This can't be true." Most of us have had that experience when we wake up one day and our whole reality has changed circumstantially.

One of the things I think might be worth pointing out here is that though things have changed circumstantially, as I mentioned, things don't change eternally. The thing I said before about everything we have in Christ being secure eternally. Nothing is changed in that moment from an eternal perspective, but we *do* experience significant loss in this world, and it *is* painful, and the right response *is* to grieve. But denial is when we wake up one morning and refuse to believe what has happened is true.

The next stage is *anger*, and resentment grows here. We begin to ask the questions, "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. These are right observations. Kübler-Ross is going through and observing these stages: denial and anger. The next stage is the *bargaining* stage. He says 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 it temporary truce with God.

The next stage is the stage of *depression*. Now we say, "Yes me." The courage to admit our loss brings sadness, which can be healthy mourning and grieving or it can be hopeless, which is unhealthy mourning and grieving. The fifth stage is *acceptance*. That'll be built out a little bit more here in a minute. This is when we begin to face our loss calmly. It's a time of silent reflection and regrouping. It is the idea that life has to go on. "How? What do I do now?"

So he begins to examine this from the typical grief response and then begins to look at a biblical grief response. You see there at the top it's entitled, "Sustaining in Suffering: Stages of Hurt." It says it's normal to hurt and necessary to grieve. You may remember in Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount it says, "**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**" The idea there is that if you don't mourn, you don't get comforted. If you don't cry out to God, then you're saying, "I can handle this on my own." We'll look at each stage from the biblical grief response.

Stage 1: moving from denial and isolation to candor, which is honesty with myself. It's courageous truth-telling to myself about life in which I come face to face with the reality of my external and internal suffering. He talks about the external suffering being those things that are outside of me that are going on that are causing the internal suffering, what's going on inside of me.

Stage 2: moving from anger and resentment to lament. This is getting honest with God. It's vulnerable frankness about life to God, expressed in a humble way, in which I express my pain and

confusion over how a good God allows evil and suffering. Going back to fear for a moment, I think fear happens when, again, we decide for ourselves what is good.

I think I know what's best for me, so I don't let God decide for me what's good, but I decide for me what's good, and then something starts to interfere with that, which I think is good for me. This happens often. The Enemy will use the fact that there is evil in the world and there is so much hardship and pain and suffering and will point back to God and say, "See? God must not be good because there's evil and suffering in the world."

God says the way he created things, even with the choice to sin, the ability to choose the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil... He calls that whole setting very good. So we don't come up with our own conception of good and then try to apply that to God. God is in himself the definition of good, and he decides what is good. It's in our limitedness and the fact we can't see the whole picture rightly. There will be a day when we can see, but in the meantime, there are going to be some questions we're just not going to know because we're not God.

Stage 3: moving from bargaining and works (which I think is interesting) to crying out to God, asking God for help. Not trying to work myself out of it, which is works-based religion, but crying out for God's mercy. It's coming to a place of dependence and realizing this symptom is part of a greater problem that only redemption and a Redeemer can fix. A faith-based plea for mobilization in which I humbly ask God to help based on my admission that I can't survive without him.

Stage 4: moving from depression and alienation to comfort, receiving God's help. It is to experience the presence of God in the presence of suffering so that we might be the testimony to those who suffer, just like we talked about in 2 Corinthians to open up. A presence that empowers me to survive scars and plants the seeds of hope that I will yet thrive.

If you look at this slide, it's entitled "Sustaining in Suffering: Stages of Hurt." This next one is called "Healing in Suffering: Stages of Hope." It says it's possible to hope and supernatural to grow. The typical acceptance response is the fifth stage in Kübler-Ross. We're going to break it down into four other stages.

Stage 5: rather than regrouping and pushing forward in our own strength, we wait and trust with faith when God says, "Not yet." We're all caught between the already, what God has already done and has accomplished in his coming, and the not yet, what he's yet to finish. When God says, "Not

yet," we wait with patience, as we also talked about in this text out of 2 Corinthians. It's trusting God's future provision without working to provide for oneself, refusing to take over while refusing to give up.

Stage 6: rather than deadening, wailing, we groan with hope. He says it like this: being pregnant with hope. The thought is back from Romans 8, with pains from childbirth. There's something coming that's beautiful, but it's painful to get there. Looking fervently for heaven and living passionately for God and others while on earth.

Stage 7: rather than despairing and doubting, weaving, perceiving with grace. So the idea of trying to weave my suffering into the bigger picture. It says, "Entrusting myself to God's larger purposes, good plans, and his eternal perspective that I can't fully see."

Stage 8: rather than digging cisterns... I think it's Jeremiah 2 that says we dig broken cisterns that can't hold water. Rather than coming up with our counterfeit forms of redemption, that we would worship God, who is the Redeemer, who has promised to redeem, and engaging with love. Wanting God more than we want relief, finding God even when you don't find answers. One of the Scriptures you guys will be looking at this week is Matthew 7, where it's talking about asking and seeking and knocking.

To me, it's this idea of God and asking, "Where are you?" and seeking him and, if you think he's behind that closed door, knocking. He says, "If you seek, you'll find. If you knock, the door will be opened for you. If you ask, I'll answer." It's this fervent seeking God in the midst of our difficulties. "Where are you in all this?" Hebrews 11:6 says, "**And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**"

Here are some cautions as we conclude. First, biblical platitudes. That's just taking biblical truth in the midst of your suffering and trying to apply it up here apart from you relationally engaging God and crying out for his mercy. It does not work. You just stay completely up here and you never go to God. God is a relational God. He wants you to come to him and be honest with him.

A second caution is that when things that are lost are idolatrous, grief can become complicated, leading to depression, and healing is predicated on repenting of idols. Think about this. If you worship this thing and it's lost, now there's nothing left to live for.

So a couple of things on your inventories. Once again, you can be grieved over a lot of things. You can be grieved over your own sin. You can be grieved over the sin committed against you. You can be grieved over the brokenness in this world, that things aren't the way it should be. You can find it everywhere, and there's a soft place in your heart where you can use those places where things aren't the way they are to cry out to God, to pray for his return, to ask for his help, to be comforted by him as your refuge, and to trust him that he is making all things new, that no one can thwart his purposes.

The second is that now that we've given up these resentments... These resentments often are a covering for what we should be grieved for. We're quick to anger, so we don't ever... Dad left when I was young. I can be angry about that, or I can be grieved about that and I can cry out to God and let my Father in heaven be my comfort, or I can just stay pissed and try to handle this thing on my own. It gives me a soft place to grieve and to cry out to God.

So here's a question, and then I'm going to ask you guys to do something that's not a part of the program. I went to a weekend deal not too long ago. It was a redemption ministry deal that is actually a ministry out of Mars Hill. One of the questions that struck me so profoundly was... *What hurt, what pain, what suffering do you need to get honest with God about?* It's so easy just to go, "Oh, well, he's making all things new and he uses all things for the good" but never engage God.

So what do you need to get honest to God about? Is it that your marriage isn't everything you wanted it to be? Is it family life? Is it that job? Is it loss of something? What do you need to get honest with God and cry out to him about? Maybe it's your own sin. Maybe in being wounded by somebody else you've hardened your heart toward God, and now you're at a place where you can trust him and cry out to him and let him nurture you and heal you. So that's my question for you. My assignment for you is to do what the psalmists do. They encouraged us to write a psalm.

It's hard to be dishonest with God. It's easier to be dishonest with people, but when it's just you and God... Be honest with him about your questions. Oftentimes, psalms start with questions. "Where are you?" In that God has a way of intersecting our lives and leading us to truth and reminding us. It's one thing to hear from somebody; it's a whole different thing to hear from God. Don't miss that opportunity. There is much suffering everywhere. No one is exempt from it, and God wants you to cry out to him. Let's pray.

Lord, I thank you for this time. I thank you that you're such a good God. I thank you that when no one else hears you're there and that you never abandon us; you wait patiently for us to cry out to you. You say ask, seek, knock, and you'll be there. We often want everything else but you. It's like having a child, and we're waiting for them to get up in the morning, and they get up and walk right past us, go brush their teeth, and head off to school without ever saying hello.

We're like, "I had so much I wanted to show you today. I just wanted to love you today." We go about our business with our busyness. So Lord, I pray that our frustrations and our grief and our suffering and our difficulties, Lord, would lead us not away from you but to you, and that you, in the goodness that you are, would deliver on your promises and be the comfort that you are, and you would lead us out. We trust you. It's in Christ's name I pray, amen.