

Tragedies of Life



The things that God Allows and
Blessings from Heaven's Perspective

The Tragedies of Life, April & June 2015
from the pulpit ministry of Christ E Free Church

Jesus Christ

Our Highest Calling

Our Greatest Purpose

Our Soul's Source and Joy

And Our All Consuming Passion

Table of Contents

Introduction, p7

Tragedy of Life Without Hope and Peace,. P8

Tragedy of Life Without Love and Joy, p19

Tragedy of Life Without Faith and God, p31

Tragedy of Life Without Pain and Suffering, p42

Tragedy of Life Without Worry and Anxiety, p53

Tragedy of Life Without Meaning and Purpose, p66

Tragedy of Life Without Kindness and Encouragement, p80

Free Resources, p93

INTRODUCTION

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away
“from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.
“--2Thessalonians 1:9 ESV

Turmoil and peace. Death and life. Sadness and joy. Despair and hope. Hate and love. Aimlessness and meaningfulness. Rejection and acceptance. Faith and doubt. Light and darkness. Health and affliction. Need and grace. Confidence and dread. Encouragement and discouragement.

God's holy word refers to the untold, unnamed and unimaginable blessings we have in Christ. [Eph.1:8] We don't know exactly what those blessings are. But hardships and the Tragedies of Life may help identify those blessings, as God withholds those blessings, in order for us to experience what life would be like without them.

In allowing these kinds of experiences, we see in an abbreviated and temporary fashion, what life apart from the presence of the LORE might be like.

"The Tragedy of Life without Hope & Peace"

Text: 2 Kings 5

April 12, 2015

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit
you may abound in hope. -- Rom 15:13 (ESV)

The longing for peace is rooted in the hearts of all men. But the striving,
which at present has become so insistent, cannot lay claim to such an
ambition as leading the way to eternal peace, or solving all disputes
among nations.

---Alva Myrdal

INTRODUCTION

*"The Outcome From Things that God Allows and Blessings From
Heaven's Perspective"*

When God gives specific instruction, he expects specific
obedience.

The Tragedies of Life, can be viewed as the blessings from God, if we can view those tragedies as being experienced within the sovereign plan and merciful compassion of God.

Apart from the Sovereign purposes of God, there is no hope in any circumstance, no matter how strong, that false hope may seem.

And yet, faith in God and in His sovereign plan and the things that He allows, are His blessings and plan from heaven's perspective.

“The Tragedies of Life” is not intended to be a focus on hardships and trials in particular. It is intended to be a focus on what our life could be with God, and what it will be without Him.

Part of this series stems from the concern within in the lives of some Christians, that life can be enjoyable and wonderful and blessed, while living apart from God's word and will. This series is also intended to help us work through together, how we can experience joy and hope and peace and blessedness, even in times when we don't have what we may want, or feel the way we wish we felt.

Today's focus is on The Tragedy of Life without Hope & Peace.

First, we look at a man named Naaman.

NAAMAN'S HOPELESS SITUATION

[READ 2Kings 5:1-14]

What happens when God's plan doesn't meet our expectations?

One Hopeless Situation

Leprosy is like cancer today. It brought fear and dread to those who had it. Naaman had leprosy and His leprosy was hopeless. Leprosy was referred to as a “smiting,” because the disease was regarded as a direct providential infliction. This designated the disease from its scaliness. We know from accounts in Scripture, that in advanced cases, it involved a deeper than skin irritation; a rotting of the flesh, and ultimately death.

Naaman's Good Things

How do unexplained interruptions and undesirable circumstances affect you? How do you view God's sovereign purposes when they conflict with your own personal plans?

2Ki 5:1 ESV Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper."

1) Naaman had position and power. 2) He was known as a mighty (3) He had a good reputation. 4) He was blessed by God in battle. But – *But*, he was a leper. What a terrible situation! What a terribly *hopeless* situation!

Naaman's Anger at Gods way

2 Ki.9-12 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. (10) And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." (11) But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. (12) Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.

His specific instruction was to "go wash seven times". His promise was that his "flesh would be restored". Naaman went to Elisha. Elisha did not come out of his house, but instead sent a messenger out to meet him and relay Elisha's instruction and promise. But Naaman became angry and "went away in a rage".

Naaman's Expectations (v11-12)

How ought God to work? How should things go? Naaman did not appreciate the process Elisha had shared. He was angry because he wanted things to work out differently. His expectations were not being met. What would you have done? How would you have responded?

There was no personal meeting or attention. There was no dramatic ceremony or fancy prayer. There was no miraculous on the spot healing - not even directed to the rivers that Naaman preferred to wash in.

* How easy it is to detest God's ways in preference to our own!

Naaman's Encourager

2 Ki.5:13 But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

In other words, *why not take God's word at face value?* God has offered what you requested. He has given specific instruction. Why not respond with specific obedience? Why fight for things to be done our way?

NAAMAN'S HOPE RESTORED

We tend to think of God's promises as unconditional, but not so. In the Bible, nearly every promise from God is dependent upon a command to be obeyed.

So was Naaman's hopelessness changed? Ye it was! But His hope was not restored automatically. Something was required of Naaman which was obedience. The promise of healing came with a condition or a price. That is, it must be done God's way.

Naaman's obedience

When it comes to trusting God's promises, How God chooses to fulfill that promise is important. If God offers a promise with specific instruction, we should respond with specific obedience.

Naaman dipped Seven Times

2Ki 5:10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean."

2Ki. 5:14 So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

SEVEN = in Hebrew culture and language referred to perfection or completion or even abundance.

But that is not all of the story. In vs. 11-13 Naaman battled within himself. Most likely a battle that each of us have fought.

Naaman's battle was not in fighting with God to give him what he wanted. Naaman's battle was within himself and for hope, which He almost lost. Should he accept the message and do it GGod's way or was he going to walk away and never know what true obedience might bring?

Here, hope is dependent upon what Naaman knows needs to be done, and his own willingness to do what is required of him.

Lev 8:11 And he sprinkled some of [the blood] on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.

This instruction with the assurance that it would complete God's requirement. The altar was not wholly consecrated until it was done in full obedience to God's directions.

Jos 6:4 Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

Jos 6:20 ESV So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.

Here, Seven, was full of symbolism and assurance.

In 1Ki.18, it had not rained for 3 yrs.

1Ki 18:43-45 ESV And [Elijah] said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again," seven times. (44) And at the seventh time he said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.'" (45) And in a

little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

Sometimes hope comes not merely as a result of what God does, but when He does what He does. Sometimes, God's hope is conditional to our obedience to Him.

What if He only washed 6 times? Some say "the devil is in the details", but God's details matter. And when God gives specific instruction, we must respond with specific obedience.

God requires faith, obedience and more faith. Seven times – nothing more and nothing less.

* How often we fight against doing things God's way, when it is His way that He has promised to bless. How often Christians have lost hope, not because God has been unfaithful, but because Christian has been unwilling to be obedient to God's specific known will and instruction.

The Tragedies of Life, can indeed be viewed as the blessings from God, if we can view those tragedies as being experienced within the sovereign plan and merciful compassion of God.

Apart from the Sovereignty of God, there is no hope in any circumstance. And yet, faith in God and in His sovereign plan and the things that He allows, are His blessings and plan from heaven's perspective.

For Naaman, Leprosy was a Tragedy of Life. But the greatest Tragedy would be to experience it without hope or to have missed it by refusing to do it God's way!

JAIRUS AND HIS HOPELESS SITUATION

[READ Mk 5:22-24/35-43]

When God should work.

Mar 5:22-42 ESV Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet (23) and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point

of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." (24) And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. [woman with an issue of blood]

Mark 5: (35) While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" (36) But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." (37) And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. (38) They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. (39) And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." (40) And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. (41) Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." (42) And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

Jairus' Hope For His Daughter

* His hope was in Christ and His ability to heal. Did Christ fail him? *No*. Was his hope tested? *Yes*. God often allows our head knowledge to be tested by practical life experience. We must be faced with an opportunity to choose to believe God for the outcome.

Jairus' Hope Interrupted

* Jesus help for the girl was delayed by the woman with an issue of blood. But Jairus did not give up.

The Tragedy of Life for Jairus, would have been if He had given up. *The Tragedy of Life* without hope, is that Jairus' daughter would have remained dead and all hope would have been lost. How God works is important. But also *when* God chooses to work is equally important. God's timing is always part of His will. For now, it seems as though God is unintentionally delayed.

WOMAN WITH HER HOPELESS SITUATION (Mark 5:25-34)

* This brings us to the woman with an issue of blood, which delayed Jesus from healing Jairus' daughter.

Mark 5: (25) And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, (26) and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. (27) She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. (

Her Hopeless Issue of Blood

- * She had medical problems for 12 yrs (v.25)
- * she had seen many physicians (v.26)
- * She had spent all the money she had (v.26)
- * She only got worse,
- * She was without hope.

Hope out of desperation

*"If I could only touch the edge of His garment."

Mark 5:28-34 (28) For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." (29) And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. (30) And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" (31) And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" (32) And he looked around to see who had done it. (33) But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. (34) And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Jesus said to her, "go in peace". Her hope was in Christ. She reached out in hopeful desperation and was healed.

Go In Peace (v34)

Exo 4:18 Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, "Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace". (that is without worry or anxiety)

Jdg 18:6 And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD."
(or under the care of God Himself)

Mar 5:34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Act 16:36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." (that is, being relieved of guilt and free from condemnation)

As great as her physical healing was, the greatest blessing was the peace she received from her hope in Christ.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

* Hope = Truth + Faith + faith testing experiences. This is not a magic formula but an effective recipe of specific obedience to God.

Rom 5:2-5 ESV Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, (4) and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, (5) and hope does not put us to shame,

Hope is the result of our faith in God, having been tried by fire, but being found as pure as gold.

Peace = the effect of hope within the soul of a person, which brings about rest and comfort, evidencing even greater faith.

Peace is a soul at rest, as a result of divine intervention and the formation of hope. "Go in peace". In other words go relieved of your affliction; Go freed from your worry – released of your life of deep anxiety. Leave your life of hopelessness. Go in peace!

This peace is the stillness and comfort of the soul, based on the hope that is found in the assurance in Christ.

APPLICATION:

THE BIBLE DESCRIBES HOPE AS CONFIDENT EXPECTATION”

HOPE AS: DOOR (Hosea 2:15)

Hos 2:15 ESV And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

- Hope is a door for escaping present troubles and entering a brighter path. Hope is a doorway to joy.

HOPE AS ANCHOR (HEBREWS 6:19) –

- Hope gives a reference point for our lives and causes us to live differently in order to receive the hoped-for reward (1 John 3:2-3; Hebrews 6:18; Titus 2:11-12).

Heb.6:17-20 17Wherefore God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Which the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hope as Encouragement

Rom 15:4 ESV For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have *hope*.

Hope from our Source

Rom 15:13 ESV May the God of *hope* fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in *hope*.

HOPE AS HELMET (1 THESSALONIANS 5:5)

1Th es.5:5 ESV For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

- The Christian hope is Christ . . . And in Christ. (1 Tim. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:3) •
- Those who do not have Christ, have no hope. (1 Cor. 15:19; 1 Thess. 4:13)

What is your life like this morning? What is your level of hope? On a scale of 1-10. Is your life characterized with peace? Or are you a wandering, troubled spirit?

1) Jesus Christ must be our Savior and Lord.

2) We must follow and obey Him specifically. God has given us specific instructions. We must respond with specific obedience.



The Tragedy of Life without Love & Joy"

Text: John 13; Luke 7

April 19, 2015

*"The Outcome From Things that God Allows and Blessings From
Heaven's Perspective"*

Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven
--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."
--Luke 7:47 (ESV)

I'd like to build the world a home and furnish it with love,
grow apple trees and honey bees and snow-white turtle doves.

---the New Seekers, 1971

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION: "The Treasures of Mel Fisher" - If you are into treasure hunting, you may be familiar with the name Papa Mel. Papa Mel was a man who spent his life and his life savings, searching for lost sunken treasures in the seas around the world. Yet the greatest sunken treasure of them all eluded him for many years - until one day. With several very old documents and old sea maps and old ships logs - basically a bunch of honest to goodness treasure maps - Papa Mel and his group of helpers, was convinced he knew the general location of the greatest sunken treasure of all. It was one which was searched for by many treasure hunters over the centuries. They had narrowed the search

down, to a small area around a nearby coral reef. Having found several gold coins that experts identified as having come from the sunken ship Papa Mel was looking for, they were confident it was somewhere in the immediate vicinity. After having lost all his life savings, his house and even the life of his son, one day one of the divers was swimming up and down the side of the coral reef and as the diver swam up to cross over the coral reef, his underwater metal detector began sounding - at first thinking it was some false reading the diver adjusted the knobs, but the reading remained. So the diver swam back down closer to the reef and he discovered that that coral reef, was a mound of gold bars stacked like cord wood as far as the eye could see. It laid in about 15 feet of water and just a short distance off shore. For so long, it had been so close and simply by confident perseverance, he found the greatest sunken treasure in history. The whole thing was covered in National Geographic.

What a tragedy it would have been if Mel Fisher had given up his confidence and given up the search before finding the mother lode! What a Tragedy for a treasure hunter, that is. He would have lost it all. And what a tragedy it would be for any of us - to miss out on all the greatest treasures of wonderful blessings and the promised hope and peace that GOD has for us, simply because we failed to access them through faith in Christ. What a tragedy that would be.

“The Tragedies of Life”, can be viewed as the blessings from God, if we can view those tragedies as being experienced within the sovereign plan and merciful compassion of God.

Apr.12, Tragedy of Life without Hope and Peace. The Reality of the Tragedy of Life without Hope and Peace was: God's instructions are specific. Therefore our obedience must likewise be specific. Gods' promises of hope and peace are dependent upon our own willingness to follow the Lord in light of what we know He expects of us. It is along the path of faith and obedience is promised the blessings of hope and peace.

April 19: The Tragedy of Life Without Love and Joy. Today's reality of “The Tragedies of Life Without Love and Joy” is that All hope, and peace; every desire for acceptance and approval; each longing heart for love and search for joy will always end in disappointment and disaster, if not rightfully sought and fully found in the person

of Jesus Christ. Anything short of that or any temporary and faulty substitute for Christ, will only be a leaky patch, on a broken existence.

Sounds rather tragic and miserable doesn't it? And it is. The Tragedy of Life is that Life is miserable and tragic apart from the life that can be found in Christ. HE is our only Hope and our only hope for Peace, or love or even joy.

John 10:10. I have come that you may have live and that abundantly. What did Jesus mean by "abundant life"? The church has defined that every way under the sun, and its mostly all pretty much, self-focused pleasantries.

Without Joy, there is no rejoicing, but sadness, with emotional darkness and emptiness. The focus of this is not merely in receiving joy and love but in discovering the unending source and fountain of treasures of love and joy which are available to us from God, through Christ.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST (Jn.13)

* What effect can our love have on others?

Love Serves (Jn.13:1-5)

-- At Christ's last Passover meal --

Joh 13:1-5 (ESV) (1) Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. (2) During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. (2) During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, (3) Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, (4) rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. (5) Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him

This was an awkward moment in the lives of those who followed Jesus. Jesus washed the disciple's feet. This was the job of the house servant or slave, but Jesus performed this service for them. Have you ever been to an old fashioned "foot washing"? Most people wash their feet before going to the foot washing service, to keep from being embarrassed by dirty and stinky feet.

People of Jesus day, wore sandals and walked dusty roads. Many times they walked where animals had been walking with all the mud and droppings from those animals becoming part of the road. At the end of the day, their feet were nasty and stinky. So Jesus took on the position of a servant, washed the nasty feet of His disciples to demonstrate His love for them.

Verse 2, states that He loved them to the end or "he showed them the full extent of his love." Jesus demonstrated His love by serving those around Him.

Love Exemplified

* Also, Jesus's act of servitude was modeling for them, what He expected them to do for others.

Joh 13:12-17 (ESV) (12) When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? (13) You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. (14) If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. (16) Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. (17) If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Romans 5:8 states that God demonstrated His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. But in John 13, we have a pre-Cross demonstration of the unconditional love of God in Christ.

Today, we might say, "I love you warts and all". That is intended to be a reference to loving someone unconditionally, even with all their peculiarities, imperfections and faults. Jesus demonstrated His love which is, God's love for others - stinky feet and all. And He expects us to demonstrate His unconditional love to others, as well.

Oh the Tragedy of Life without ever understanding or grasping the unconditional love of God for us.

LOVE AND FORGIVENESS (Lk.7:36-47)

* Those who forgive you patiently, demonstrate a love that is much like God's love. What affect can our forgiveness have on others?

Luke 7:36-39 ESV One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. (37) And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, (38) and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. (39) Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."

God Demonstrates His love

The context here is another awkward moment in the lives of those who were with Jesus. Jesus had been invited to a dinner, where there were a variety of kinds of people. At the dinner was one described as "a sinful woman". The idea is that she was probably a prostitute of sorts. During the meal, she begins weeping. With her tears, she begins washing Jesus feet and drying his feet with her hair. But she also begins kissing His feet and putting perfume on them. Interestingly, this is another "foot" episode. John 13, Jesus washes his disciples feet. Now a sinful woman washes Jesus' feet and makes quite a spectacle of herself in the process.

This sinful woman seems to be weeping, due to her repentance from her life of nasty sin – sin that is as nasty as the feet of the disciples that Jesus had washed. Her actions and her emotional state was due to the fact that she was overwhelmed with God's forgiveness and through this forgiveness she experiences something she had never before felt.

God's Forgiveness fosters Love

*As sinful as the woman was, she found forgiveness from Jesus.

Luk 7:40-47 ESV And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." (41) "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. (42) When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (43) Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." (44) Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. (45) You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. (46) You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. (47) Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

This woman became overwhelmed by His forgiveness toward her and then she becomes overwhelmed by her own personal love for Christ. Have you ever felt like this? If you have, then you understand the sense of personal cleansing it can bring.

Her weeping, her embarrassing behavior and the state she is in, is due to her felt love she has discovered as a result of her salvation experience with Christ. Had she not been convicted of her sins, and grasped the forgiveness that He had offered, she would not have experienced that kind of love. Oh the Tragedy that would have been!

The Tragedy of offending someone with the gospel of Christ is nothing to be compared with the tragedy of those who need to hear that message, but do not hear it, due to the fear of those who will not risk sharing it with others. Risking offense by sharing the gospel can be evidence of Godly love and concern for others.

Christian – if you consider yourself to have the heart of Christ beating in your chest, you must love enough to risk sharing the message of sin and salvation with those around you. The greatest tragedy is to withhold that message from others, just because we are afraid. This fear becomes a popular excuse and pleases the enemy.

THE JOY OF CHRIST (Heb. 12:1-8

What effect can our joy have on others?

Christ's joy for YOU. (Heb.12:1-3

Interestingly that again, we are pointed back to the cross of Christ for joy. The cross represents Christ's joy in pursuing our eternal redemption for us. So what does the cross do for you? Does it bring you joy?

Heb 12:1-8 ESV Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted

Typically, we perceive discipline to be harsh and unpleasant.

But God's Love fosters joy

Heb 12:5-8 ESV (5) And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. (6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

God's love is demonstrated through His discipline.

Question: What does God's discipline do for you? How does it make you feel? Loved? This tells us that whom the Lord disciplines, those He loves.

Discipline is NOT necessarily punishment. Discipline equals training, equipping, strengthening and purging. Most of us as Christians desire His love, but not His discipline, because it is unpleasant.

Heb 12:10-11 ESV For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. (11) For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The devil wants to offer us imitations, counterfeits and substitutes. He wants us to experience worldly substitute for love and temporary joy apart from God's true love and real lasting joy. If you accept a cheap substitute for God and that is all you can hope for – *a cheap substitute*.

How Shall We Fight for Joy? (article, Jan.1, 1995; John Piper

1. Realize that authentic joy in God is a gift.

1Th 1:6-7 ESV And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, (7) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

Joy comes from inside – not you, but the Indwelling HS inside you.

2. Realize that joy must be fought for relentlessly.

3. Resolve to attack all known sin in your life.

4. Learn the secret of gutsy guilt - how to fight like a justified sinner.

5. Realize that the battle is primarily a fight to see [and even discover] God for who he is. [i.e. not merely our source of Joy, but He is our joy.

6. Meditate on the Word of God day and night.

7. Pray earnestly and continually for open heart-eyes and an inclination for God.

8. Learn to preach to yourself rather than listen to yourself.

9. Spend time with God-saturated people who help you see God and fight the fight.

10. Be patient in the night of God's seeming absence.

11. Get the rest, exercise, and proper diet that your body was designed by God to have.

12. Make a proper use of God's revelation in nature.

13. Read great books about God and biographies of great saints.

14. Do the hard and loving thing for the sake of others (witness and mercy).

15. Get a global vision for the cause of Christ and pour yourself out for the unreached.

APPLICATION

True love and Joy are part of the abundant life Christ promises, and part of “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”. [Eph.1:3]

<p>Mat 6:33 ESV But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.</p>
--

Christ offers Love: – Heavenly love from God to you. It remains the same and unchanged. You don't earn it, and you don't deserve it.

Earthly love, however is temporary at best and is conditional.

Christ offers Joy. : Earthly joy is temporary; and is situational;

Heavenly hope, peace, love or joy result from our confidence in Christ as our Source of life.

Looking For Love , by Johnny Lee

Chorus

I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places

Lookin' for love in too many faces

Searchin' their eyes, lookin' for traces

Of what I'm dreamin' of

Hopin' to find a friend and a lover

I'll bless the day I discover,

Another heart- lookin' for love.

Looking for love, acceptance and joy, day to day and from person to person; What a tragedy of life that is!

Psa 84:2 ESV My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Its not that a person cannot find some level of love, or joy or hope or peace outside of God. These things can certainly be found in fleeting and shallow forms, though they are deceitful substitutes. The Devil is a deceiver and a counterfeiter.

You think you have found that one true love and then one day that person is gone from your life. You Feel that life has finally been good to you and you enjoy the things your income can provide and the joy your toys can provide. Until the toys break and the funds begin to dissipate. And you realize it was all a cheap and disappointing substitute. We must fight for Love and fight for Joy.

Consider this:

Joh 15:1-5 ESV "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. (2) Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (3) Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. (4) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (5) I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

The Joy and Love that we are looking for, are like grapes. God in Christ is the Vine or our Source of those grapes. We find ourselves looking for the fruit apart from the Vine which they must be found attached to.

The danger in looking for love and joy in all the wrong places is that we often desire that fruit or benefits, without desiring just as passionately, the Vine of God as that fruit Source. We desire nothing more than the fruit itself, and the Tragedy of Life is that many often find that to be enough. Oh the Tragedy of Life of finding Love and Joy apart from Christ as the Love and Joy Giver.

Because we have found God as our Source and Christ as our Vine, the fruit of Love and Joy are the unmerited blessings of God to undeserving believers like you and I.

But oh the Tragedy of Life with Love and with Joy that we find apart from a meaningful and intimate relationship with God through Christ. There are far worse things than failing to find the love and joy which we think we are longing for. The worst thing may actually be in finding them apart from Christ.

The Tragedy of Life is that we somehow stumble upon a glimmer of hope; or a sliver of peace; or a taste of love and joy – yet fail to experience God Himself as the Source or Vine who holds a continual supply of all we need and long for. The result, is that that substitute fruit fades, grows old and dissipates, and leaves us feeling empty of all that we thought we had and searching all over again, for the feelings or the fruit, yet never discovering God and Christ as our Source.

Heart - Treasure

Mat 13:44 ESV "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

What a tragedy it would have been if Mel Fisher had given up his confidence and given up the search – Tragedy for a treasure hunter that is. (story at the beginning of this chapter) He would have lost it all. And what a tragedy it would be for any of us - to miss out on all the greatest treasure of wonderful blessings and the promised hope and peace that GOD has for us, simply because we failed to access them through faith in Christ. What a tragedy that would be.

What a Tragedy of Life to seek all our life long for love and joy, but never truly finding it – always missing it, always evading you, because you never sought the Source of that Treasure.

Where is your treasure today? What is it your heart longs for most and you spend so much of your life searching for? Are you pursuing God as your Source just as passionately as you pursue

those blessings? Have you found Christ as your Vine, in whom are all the blessings of God and a continual source of hope and peace and love and joy?

Oh the tragedy of life filled with counterfeit substitutes!! If we pursue substitutes, that is all we can ever hope to find – substitutes. Therefore we must pursue the real Source and Blessing Giver Himself- Jesus Christ.



The Tragedy of Life without Faith & God"

Text: {Psalm 53

April 26, 2015

*"The Outcome From Things that God Allows and Blessings From
Heaven's Perspective"*

{ The Fool has said in his heart,
'there is no God"'. —Psalm 53:1a }

When the solution is simple, God is answering.

--Albert Einstein

INTRODUCTION

The Tragedies of Life

April 26, 2015

*"The Outcome From Things that God Allows and Blessings From
Heaven's Perspective"*

Sermon: The Tragedy of a Life without Faith And God

Apr.12, *Tragedy of Life without Hope and Peace.*

Apr. 19: *The Tragedy of Life Without Love and Joy.*

Apr.26: The **Tragedy** of Life Without Faith and God

INTRODUCTION

The Tragedy of Life is focused on the question of what life could be like if we were lacking of the most basic of human needs and the things our hearts long for the most.

The Tragedy of Life is about the possibility of having so much, yet missing what it means to have every spiritual blessing in Christ, because we miss Christ Himself.

God has promised and provided so many blessings for His people and His means of dispensing those blessings are through the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Tragedies of Life is missing God's best because we miss God.

First this morning we look at...

FAITH AND ATHEISM

Sometimes Atheists are viewed as people who have no faith, but that is inaccurate. In fact, true atheists are people of great faith.

Heb 11:1 ESV Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

This is referring to face focused on God, but can define faith in any context. That faith can be in Christ, in God, in Buddha, in the spirit of the bear, faith in a thousand gods or even faith that there is no God at all.

Atheistic Faith (*opposing terms?*)

The fact is Atheists have tremendous faith.

Psalms 53:1-2 ESV ...The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

The fool here, is not a mentally handicapped person. Fool is a person who knows truth, but rejects it, or who is resistant to Biblical Truth and Godly wisdom.

The Fool has said, "there is no God". They believe this by faith. They cannot *prove* God does not exist. The best they can do is to *declare* that he does not exist. And the person who believes there is no God, lives like there is no law and hopes that there is no accounting from God for their lifestyle.

Faith in God's Death

In the 1960s, the God is Dead movement was felt around the world. April 8, 1966, Time Magazine published their weekly edition with a cover which was totally black, except for one single question, written in Red, taking up the entire cover. That question was: Is God Dead?

In 1882, Friedrich Nietzsche began dabbling with the concept of the existence of God. In an article entitled, "The Madman", Nietzsche makes these revealing observations:

"God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?

— Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125, tr. Walter Kaufmann

Another commentator addresses Nietzsche's article:

The phrase "God is dead" does not mean that Nietzsche believed in an actual God who first existed and then died in a literal sense. Rather, it conveys his view that the Christian God is no longer a credible source of absolute moral principles. Nietzsche recognizes the crisis that the death of God represents for existing moral assumptions: "When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality

out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident... By breaking one main concept out of Christianity, the faith in God, one breaks the whole: nothing necessary remains in one's hands." This is why in "The Madman", a passage which primarily addresses non-theists (especially atheists), the problem is to retain any system of values in the absence of a divine order.

While Nietzsche himself, wrestled over his own convictions as to the existence of God. Yet he also recognized the Tragedies of Life that would surely result for embracing such a view; being – If God is dead or if He doesn't exist, then there is no means whereby

mankind could expect to govern himself nor offer hope to his inner most being, which is exactly the point of the Psalmist in psalm 53.

Psa 53:1ESV ...The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." [as a result] They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good

Without the concept of God as Supreme Governor over the lives and hearts of men, there is then nothing to restrain the activities of even the vilest of thoughts and wickedness of offenders. This was the concern of Nietzsche.

Interestingly, following the God is Dead movement of the 60s, came the Free Drugs and Free Love of the sexual revolution of the late 60s.

The person who implies that the concept of God does not adversely affect the life of a nation is itself, shows himself to be the fool. The Tragedy of Life without faith and God is not merely that they will live sinfully, but that they will live hopelessly, as well.

Psa 53:1-2 ESV ...The fool says in his heart, "There is no God They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. (2) God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.

So the Atheist cannot prove there is no God, all they can do is proclaim there is no God and see who will follow them. Be even the constant and loud proclamations that there is no God – ultimately changes nothing.

When the Atheist declares that “God is Dead”, what is he/she stating?

Rationally: this statement God is Dead, implies at the very least, that God once was alive, but something or someone has killed Him. But it raises other questions, like “Who or what actually killed God”, and “When did His death occur?”

Realistically: God is not dead, since no person could have accomplished that. God is not dead, but merely rejected and proclaimed as being dead. And for many, that is enough.

Who or what is responsible for the death and demise of God? No one.

"God is Dead" says nothing about God, but speaks directly to those who proclaim it. God is not dead, nor can we disprove his existence. So we choose to turn our backs and reject him. We pretend he is no longer there.

Many who claim to be Atheists are Agnostic

ATHEISM: There is no God, he does not exist. More generally, *atheism* is the absence of belief that any deities exist.

AGNOSTICISM: says "we cannot know if there is a God or not".

Agnosticism is the view that the truth values of certain claims – especially metaphysical and religious claims such as whether or not God, the divine or the supernatural exist – are unknown and perhaps unknowable.

Many Atheists do not want God to exist

* Because they don't want God to exist, they proclaim Him to be dead. Why would anyone NOT want God to exist??

Some wish God dead because:

- 1) they are disillusioned**, that their prayers or needs or wants have not been realized, so they blame God.
- 2) they are hurt** that God has allowed pain and suffering that they feel are unmerited.
- 3) they have been offended** or angered by people who they believe represent God, and therefore by rejecting God, reject those who have treated them badly
- 4) they are living sinfully** and they are actually aware of their wrongful living; they oppose any kind of moral law or hindrance that limits or convicts them of their sinful living, or that which could imply accountability.
- 5) they think the Monotheistic** religion simply does not make sense to them.
- 6) they feel Science seems to clash** with Scripture or the supposed holy books of some religion

The Tragedy of Life without faith. In fact that is an impossibility, because everyone has faith of some kind. Some believe there is no God, other believe there is a God. Some have faith in the evolutionary Sciences, while some have faith in the literal 6 day, Creation. Some people believe they can fly, while others believe they cannot. Some have believed the earth was flat, while other believed it to be round.

The Tragedy of Life without faith is not the tragedy, but faith that is not based in and focused on the God of the universe is tragic. From heaven's perspective, misplaced faith is just as tragic as no faith at all, because the end result is the same.

FAITH AND GOD

The Tragedy of Life without faith and God is misleading. We know that everyone has faith in something. And we know that God exists and we can't escape that. The Tragedy of Life without faith and God refers to the lack of awareness of God, lack of faith in God and failing to experience what God has to offer us.

What Faith in God means

Faith in God means living like God does exist and living according to His word. The Danger of "killing" God, is that regardless of what we claim or proclaim or believe or disbelieve, does not change reality and truth.

Proclaiming that fire isn't hot, does not make it cool. Proclaiming that the law of gravity doesn't exist, does not make any difference when you jump out of an airplane. Proclaiming that God does not exist changes nothing. What matters is reality and truth.

What God Offers Us

With Christ we can escape the 2nd death and hell on earth and eternity.

The danger of rejecting faith and God is stated in 2 Thessalonians.

2Th. 1:9 ESV They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

This is eternal death and the 2nd death. The ToL without faith in God, literally is part of hell on earth, i.e. apart from the presence of

the LORD.... In the presence of the Lord is Hope, Peace, Love, Joy, Purpose, Pleasure.[Ps.16:11]

And whether we neglect God ignorantly or reject Him arrogantly, the result remains the same and eternal destruction, eternal hopelessness and eternal turmoil of the body, soul, mind and spirit, while eternally longing for what we can never have, goes unsatisfied.

FAITH AND PLEASING GOD

Heb 11:6 ESV 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.

Jesus said, "Believe in God, believe also in Me", [Jn.14:1]

We must Live for God - NOW

It is God's desire that everyone trust in His Son Jesus and live for Him today.

Joh 14:15 ESV "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Joh 14:21-24 ESV Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." (22) Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" (23) Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (24) Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

Living for Christ today, will bring...

Honor and Glory to God Then

In the Resurrection in the end times, our obedience and love, lived out for Christ will bring Him honor and glory and blessing in eternity. What we do and how we live will bring praise to God in Christ when Jesus returns. Being prepared for the return of Christ does not mean simply being saved. That is people focused.

Being prepared for the return of Christ means to be living obediently, lovingly for Christ, and which means heaping up optimum amounts of praise and honor and glory to God at that time.

Jud 1:25 ESV to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

APPLICATION

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without Faith and God is that man is left to govern himself, with rules for the most powerful rulers winning out. Rulers will seek fame, power and conquest and will find it.

TRAGEDY OF LIFE with Faith and God is people will kill and destroy themselves – Jn.10: Steal, Kill Destroy. In rejecting God and His rules, you by default receive Satan's rules for destruction.

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without Faith and God is that God is rejected, Truth is rejected, Right and wrong is rejected and self is exalted and everyone does what is right or favorable in their own eyes. (Judges. 17:6; 21:25)

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without Faith in God is that people pursue involvement with groups like ISIS because they think they are doing the world a service.

Muslim family says daughter left Alabama home to join ISIS

Published April 21, 2015 Associated Press

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/04/21/muslim-family-says-daughter-left-alabama-home-to-join-isis/>

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – A spokesman for a Muslim couple in Alabama on Monday said their 20-year-old daughter fled a Birmingham suburb to join Islamic State militants in Syria after being recruited via the Internet.

Hassan Shibly spoke at the mosque on behalf of the parents of the young woman, whom he identified only as Hoda. He said the family has been "extremely traumatized" for months and has been in contact with law enforcement and government officials since she disappeared while also pleading with Hoda to return home.

While he said it's unclear when Hoda made contact with militants, he said she withdrew from the Muslim community in Birmingham more than a year before her disappearance. The woman's whereabouts were not immediately known.

"The reason she withdrew from the community is because the Muslim community is very vocal against groups like ISIS ... she made the decision based on her communication online with them that she wanted to join them," Shibly said. The family and the Birmingham Islamic Society have spoken out against violent extremism.

There have been other reports of young people leaving or attempting to leave the U.S. for ISIS in recent months. In a criminal complaint unsealed on Monday, six Minnesota men were charged with terrorism-related offenses after authorities said they failed in attempts to travel to Syria. Shibly said he's talked with families who have also lost their children to ISIS and have similar stories.

"It's often young, naive, impressionable, ignorant troubled youth who are dissatisfied with their life and are seeking a sense of belonging," he said.

"And it's frankly the same social factors that lead to youth joining various gangs. I think ISIS is just another gang," he said.

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without Faith and God is that people redefine Marriage, thinking they are dealing justly with all people.

Supreme Court rejects group's final attempt to overturn Oregon's gay marriage law

By Jeff Mapes | The Oregonian/OregonLive | The Supreme Court refused Monday to hear an appeal of Oregon's 2014 gay marriage ruling. (*The Associated Press*)

GAY MARRIAGE

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday refused to hear one last legal attempt by the National Organization for Marriage to overturn a federal judge's ruling allowing gays and lesbians to marry in Oregon.

The high court's action came nearly a year after U.S. District Judge Michael McShane of Eugene on May 19, 2014, struck down Oregon's voter-approved constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage.

Tom Johnson, a Portland attorney involved in the other lawsuit, said he was confident that the Supreme Court would deny the National Organization for Marriage's last-ditch legal appeal. But until the court ruled, there was "that tiny, little bit of uncertainty," he said.

The Supreme Court will hold oral arguments on April 28, 2015 on whether states can ban same-sex marriage or whether gay and lesbian couples have a constitutional right to marry no matter which state they are in. The court is hearing cases from four states -- Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia now allow gay marriage, mostly following legal actions relying on the Supreme Court's 2013 ruling that it was unconstitutional for the federal government to refuse to recognize legally performed same-sex marriages. In addition, a federal judge this year struck down Alabama's ban and the U.S. Supreme Court allowed same-sex marriages to proceed there, but the Alabama Supreme Court has ordered local officials to stop issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

The National Organization for Marriage, which has fought gay marriage in cases around the country, unsuccessfully sought to intervene in Oregon and has appealed every adverse ruling as far as it could go.

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without Faith and God is that people fight for abortion thinking they are aiding the world in the fight for human rights.

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without Faith and God is that a nation will lose sight of right and wrong and lose the value of morality over persona and political, popularity and interests. When Governments lead without God, they ultimately lead a nation to its own slow and surprising destruction.

THE TRAGEDY OF LIFE without God and Faith, families lead children to repeat their own mistakes, encourage them to make their own decisions about God and Faith, and inevitably find the way of sin and self to be their best choice for their liking.

Today and Tomorrow.....

- 1) Don't remain silent about your faith and your God
 - 2) Don't be afraid of pointing others to God, His law, Our Sin, and Christ's Saving Sacrifice.
-

Communion focus

1 Cor. 11:23ff

Imagine The Tragedy of Life without the sacrifice of Christ...
for the forgiveness of our sins;
For the salvation of our souls;
For the eternal life to come;
Or for those still outside the family of God.

We celebrate communion today and remember the Lord's death and resurrection and its power in our lives. But we also remember the task before us, that the numbers are not fulfilled as of yet. We must still proclaim Christ to all who will listen, in order for those who hear and believe to be saved.



The Tragedy of Life

without Pain and Suffering

Text: Mk.5:1-20 / Acts 3:20

June 7, 2015

2Thes. 1:9 / Eph.1:3

"The Outcome From Things that God Allows and Blessings From Heaven's Perspective"

** Considering the blessings from God and what life would be like without them.*

{ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ." --Ephesians 1:3 }

It is easier to find men who will volunteer to die, than to find those who are willing to endure pain with patience.

---Julius Caesar

REVIEW APRIL'S MSGS

The Tragedies of Life, can be viewed as the blessings from God, if we can view those tragedies as being experienced within the sovereign plan and merciful compassion of God.

Apart from the Sovereign purposes of God, there is no hope in any circumstance, no matter how strong, that false hope may seem. And yet, faith in God and in His sovereign plan and the things that He allows, are His blessings and purposes from heaven's perspective.

"The Tragedies of Life" is not intended to be a focus on hardships and trials in particular. It is intended to be a focus on what our life could be with God, and what life would be without Him or without His involvement.

2Th 1:7-10 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (8) in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, ***away from the presence of the Lord*** and from the glory of his might, (10) when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

What would eternity be like "away from the presence of the Lord"? What would life without God or without His involvement and blessings in our lives, be like?

Part of this series stems from the concern within the lives of some Christians, that life can be enjoyable and wonderful and blessed, while living disobediently apart from God's word and will.

This series is also intended to help us work through together, how we can experience joy and hope and peace and blessedness, even in times when we don't have what we may want, or feel the way we wish we felt.

Apr.12, Tragedy of Life without Hope and Peace. With God as our Source, we looked at what life might be like with no hope and no peace.

Apr. 19: The Tragedy of Life Without Love and Joy.

Apr.26: The Tragedy of Life Without Faith and God. Some claim there to be no God, but what would life be like without God and the things He provides and can a life without faith even be possible?

Today we focus on "the Tragedy of Life without Pain and Suffering. You may be thinking, "Wait! Don't you mean the tragedy of life *with* pain and suffering?" No. We are considering how tragic it might be if our lives had no pain and we experienced no suffering. Just think about it!

INRODUCTION

Scripture tells us that God uses pain and suffering for our own good and for His good purposes.

Without fear, there would be no such thing as courage.

Without trouble, we could not know peace.

Without weakness, we would never experience the grace and strength that comes only from God.

And, without pain, there could be no appreciation for pleasure.

CS Lewis - "We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

* God uses pain and suffering for our own good and His good purposes.

In Mark 5, there was a woman with an issue of blood. She had experienced pain and suffered much, but could find no relief, until she met Christ. Christ did what Doctors could not do. He did what science or medicine could not accomplish.

In John 5, there was a man at the Pool of Bethesda who was in need of healing, but his situation could not be resolved until he encountered Christ. Jesus did what the angels and perhaps what the superstitions could not do. Oh the Tragedy of Life would have been for these, for it they had not had these afflictions and trials, they would not have encountered the healing and saving power of Jesus.

But in the presence of the Lord there are many blessings to be received^[Acts 3:19-20]

<p>Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,</p>
--

Could pain and suffering – or at least the result of pain and suffering be one of those many blessings we have in Christ?

A MAN IN INDESCRIBABLE PAIN AND SUFFERING

Markk.5:1-5

* His pain and suffering drove him to Jesus.

[READ Mk.5:1-5]

Mar 5:1-5 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. (2) And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. (3) He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, (4) for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. (5) Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

This is a true story of...

A Man in Misery (v1-3

* He was possessed by evil spirits. (v2). Spiritual powers were at war within him. And this seemed to be the source of all his sufferings.

One commentator put it this way. “The great power of the inhabitants of darkness over the evil heart. To drive men from the comforts of an honourable life, and to lead them to seek happiness in vagrancy; to make them think they are all right, though daubed with dirt and pollution; to cause men who are sane in the ordinary affairs of life to frequent such places and cherish such companions as reveal to others their moral madness.”

The man's home was among the tombs or cemetery. (5:3) Death was his neighbor and his constant companion. He also had supernatural powers (5:3-4). Not super human, but supernatural powers. He was energized by the evil powers of those demons who inhabited his body.

The text illustrates the utter impotency of man to deliver the possessed from the power of the inhabitants of darkness.(v4c)
“No one could help or control him.”

He was screeching, screaming, and crying out. (5:5) He was continually cutting and injuring and harming himself. (5:5) It is the devil's way to seek to harm, kill or destroy whoever he can!

His All-Encompassing Pain and Suffering

“Holistic” is a word used in areas of science, the medical field, and even in psychology. This man experienced “holistic” suffering – that is, mental, physical, emotional and spiritual suffering.

This man knew excruciating and unceasing pain. He was accustomed to unimaginable physical suffering, mental madness and misery, emotional anguish and turmoil, as well as spiritual oppression and even possession or demonic habitation within his body.

His life was a miserable and excruciating existence. He was tormented and terrorized by evil Spirits. The pain of his self-inflicted, self-destructive injuries were unending. The misery of his mental madness at the hands of the evil one was unrelenting. He was abandoned and exiled and his lot in life was not a social outcast and loner.

A MAN WITH AN INCOMPARABLE HELPER & DELIVERER

MARK.5:6-13

* His pain and suffering led him to experience Jesus as His own personal Helper and Deliverer.

Mar 5:6-13 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. (7) And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." (8) For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" (9) And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." (10) And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. (11) Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, (12) and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." (13) So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

I believe this is a true, historical event, with true humans and genuine true demonic possession. We have no reason to believe

otherwise. But thankfully it is also the story of a true and genuine Deliverer.

The Work of the Deliverer

* He allowed Him access (v6). The man, though demon possessed, was allowed access to Jesus. No matter how bad a person may be, Jesus invites each of us to “come unto Him”. He alone can help and He alone is Lord over even the demons.

** He spoke to the demon. He allowed dialogue with Him. (v9). Spiritual powers – even demons – were under the control and authority of their Creator, Jesus.[Col.1:16]

Here we see the weakness of the powers of darkness in conflict with Christ. A legion (or 6,000 soldiers) of demons expelled by a word!

1. Beware of tampering with evil. The “little sin” may open the door of the heart for the entrance of a whole legion of demons.
2. The wish of evil will ever be self-destructive.
3. If Jesus has cured you, show it by causing joy and gladness where you have caused so much misery-in your home. (F. Wallace.)

Jesus called out the demons from within the man and out they came. He allowed demons to enter the pigs. Corrie ten Boom has said, “You don’t really know Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have.” And there are times in our lives, God allows us to experience just how tragic life can be without Christ ruling and reigning and blessing and sustaining a life that is under full scale attack from the evil one.

The Response of the Miserable Man

What brought about this man’s condition, we are not told.

But we do know His misery was due to demonic oppression and possession.

The Tragedy of Life without Pain and Suffering is that we would never know how much we really need Jesus.

"Through It All" – Andre Crouch.

Chorus:

Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to depend upon His Word.

Verse 3:

I thank God for the mountains, and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.
For if I'd never had a problem,
I wouldn't know God could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could do

Mar 5:18-20 (18) As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. (19) And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (20) And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

v.18) the man Desired to go with Jesus. But Jesus told him to go home and tell them what God has done and of the mercy which had been shown him. He was sent to the Decapolis which was A district containing ten cities, rebuilt, colonized, and granted special privileges by Rome 65 B.C. The result was that people who heard his testimony were amazed.

The man offered no excuses that he didn't know how, nor did he exhibit any foolish fears that he might offend someone or that someone might ask him a question he didn't know the answer to.

He had taken no speech class and had experienced no formal training on how to share your faith.. He attended no seminar on how to make disciples. He simply demonstrated a simple obedience and a personal faith and God did the rest.

*** Joh 14:26** ESV But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

The Tragedy of Life without Pain and Suffering is that we would have no testimonies to the saving, helping, and delivering power of Jesus Christ.

The World may say: “I made it myself” or “I did it my way.” They would think, “good luck” or “Its just fate”. Someone might even think, “It was in the stars”, or “Who really needs God anyway?”

The power of Jesus Christ in your personal life, is a very important aspect of sharing your faith. Sharing the gospel of Christ, sharing your personal faith and God's personal, supernatural work in your life is confirmation – validation - verification and authentication of the reality of the power of Jesus Christ in the world in which we live.

I wonder how many people are waiting to hear from us, of the wonderful and mighty works of God in saving and changing our lives? I wonder how many people are ready to believe, if only we would open our mouths, give testimony and praise to God and His mercies extended to us.

Are you aware of your own weakness and dependence? Are you aware of your own need for Jesus today?

THE PURPOSE OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

Creation is designed with “dependence”. We are created with a need that no one or no thing can meet, but God.

“In Him all things hold together” – Col.1:17

“[He] sustains all things by the power of His Word...” – Heb.1:3

The Tragedy of Life Without Pain and Suffering

The Tragedy of a Life without pain and suffering is that there would be no clear and personal reminder of sin. A life without pain and suffering would have no reason to depend on or cry out to God in total dependence.

When we receive blessings from God, humans tend to gravitate towards worship of the gift, rather than the Giver. We would most assuredly rather have the blessings. Peace, prosperity, ease, comfort, money, things, no stress, no bills, no troubles, no challenges, no problems..... This is not Biblical Christianity. Suffering is a promised component of True Christianity and True discipleship.

Pain and suffering have a way of diverting our attention and worship toward the One who can help and deliver us from the ills of this world.

Also, pain and suffering can be a demonstration of God's Power, and also of His love.

Q: What? Pain and suffering are demonstrations of Gods' love??

Heb 12:6-12 (ESV) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (7) It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? (8) If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. (9) Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? (10) For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. (11) For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (12) Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees,

"A man's enemies will be that of his own household."

"They will hate you, because they hate me."

"In this world you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33)

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," (2Ti . 3:12 ESV)

"we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance" Rom. 5:3

These references describe relational pain, emotional pain, mental pain, physical suffering, religious and/or political suffering for all true believers.

Therefore we must be confident that God uses pain and suffering for our own good and His own good purposes. Some of which are:

- To forge a persevering faith
- To demonstrate His unconditional love.^[Heb.12:6-12]
- To heap up unimaginable blessings and rewards, in eternity, for us in Christ, who persevere.

APPLICATION

It is crucial that Christians come to grips with the fact that suffering and hardship and heart ache are promised in the Christian life. They are even necessary. It is a non-negotiable, faith forging process of the true Christian life of discipleship.

Tim Keller - "In the secular view, suffering is never seen as a meaningful part of life but only as an interruption." And yet, "Suffering is actually at the heart of the Christian story."

(Re: Heb. 12:12) commentator Albert Barnes gives us these insights: "Lift up the hands which hang down" - As if from weariness and exhaustion. [He is urging the reader to] Renew your courage; make a new effort to bear them. The hands fall by the side when we are exhausted with toil, or worn down by disease; (Isa. 35:3,).

And the feeble knees - The knees also become enfeebled by long effort, and tremble as if their strength were gone. Courage and resolution may do much, however, to make them firm, and it is to this that the apostle exhorts those to whom he wrote. They were to make every effort to bear up under their trials.

The hope of victory will do much to strengthen one almost exhausted in battle; the desire to reach home invigorates the frame of the weary traveler. So it is with the Christian. In persecution, and sickness, and bereavement, he may be ready to sink under his

burdens. The hands fall, and the knees tremble, and the heart sinks [and the spirit fades] within us.

But confidence in God, and the hope of heaven, and the assurance that all this is for our good, will reinvigorate the enfeebled frame, and enable us to bear what we once supposed would crush us to the dust. A courageous mind braces a feeble body, and hope makes it fresh for new conflicts.

Your assignment is to go home and write your own lessons.
Finish this statement.

“The Tragedy of my Life without Pain and Suffering would be...



The Tragedy of Life without Worry or Anxiety

Text: Mk.4:37-41 / 1 Pet.5:6-7 / Mat.6:25-34

June 14, 2015

{ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;
believe also in me." --John 14:1 }

Let our advance worrying become advance
thinking and planning.
--Winston Churchill

INRODUCTION

We all experience anxiety and worry. Whether it is over a family member's health and well-being or an uncertainty pertaining to job security and potential loss of accrued retirement benefits; or even the concerns of what to expect as you consider your first year of college – its hard to imagine a life without anxiety and worry.

The Truth is, without fear, there would be no such thing as courage.

The Tragedy of Life without Anxiety and Worry, is that we could not fully know the blessing of peace, from our Source of peace and life. Through our storms, we must learn to trust God's loving hearts

Let not your heart be troubled

Joh 14:1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

“Troubled” refers to the effect of water when it is heated to a boil. I begins to roll and move at an accelerated rate.

To Trouble means to stir up; to strike the spirit with fear or dread; to render anxious or distressed.

ANXIETY AND ITS CAUSES.

We know that Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. Stress is situational. Worry is mentally, how we think through and consider our stressful situation. Anxiety is the mostly negative, personal, felt effects of our mental worry, due to our stressful situation.

Environmental and external factors

Environmental factors that are known to cause several types of anxiety include:

- Relational or circumstantial stress
- Trauma from events such as abuse, victimization, or the death of a loved one
- Stress in a personal relationship, marriage, friendship, and divorce
- Stress at work over employee / employer issues; promotions or layoffs, etc.
- Stress from school pertaining to expectations or exams; preparing for college or other decisions for the future.
- Stress about finances and money; either the need for enough or the desire for more.
- Stress from a natural disaster including loss and destruction.
- Lack of oxygen in high altitude areas- probably not an issue for most of us here today.

Medical factors

Anxiety is associated with medical factors such as anemia, asthma, infections, and several heart conditions. Some medically-related causes of anxiety include:

- Stress from a serious medical illness
- Side effects of medication
- Symptoms of a medical illness
- Lack of oxygen from emphysema, or pulmonary embolism (a blood clot in the lung)

Substance use and abuse

It is estimated that about half of patients who utilize mental health services for anxiety disorders such as GAD, panic disorder, or social phobia are doing so because of alcohol or benzodiazepine dependence. More generally, anxiety is also known to result from:

- Intoxication from an illicit drug, such as cocaine or amphetamines
- Withdrawal from an illicit drug, such as heroin, or from prescription drugs like Vicodin, benzodiazepines, or barbiturates

Genetics can cause a person to be more anxiety prone.

It has been suggested by some researchers that a family history of anxiety increases the likelihood that a person will develop it. That is, some people may have a genetic predisposition that gives them a greater chance of suffering from anxiety disorders.

Brain chemistry

Research has shown that people with abnormal levels of certain neurotransmitters in the brain are more likely to suffer from generalized anxiety disorder. When neurotransmitters are not working properly, the brain's internal communication network breaks down, and the brain may react in an inappropriate way in some situations. This can lead to anxiety. This relates back to medical factors.

Spiritual Conflict

Spiritual issues can spur other underlying problems such as mental illness; emotional instability and physical health breakdown.

Spiritual issues, are affected by or affect our relationship with God as our Source and Sustainer. Therefore, we have to understand that spiritual attacks can affect these areas of human health. And, even God's disciplining us regarding sin, we have to likewise acknowledge the possibility that mental, emotional and physical problems COULD be the result of God disciplining us as His children and training us in righteousness. (Heb.12) However, anxiety is not necessarily a result of direct spiritual issues.

THE GOOD AND THE BAD OF ANXIETY AND WORRY

Anxiety can be positive

For example, if it helps you deal with a tense situation in the office, study harder for an exam, handle a new situation, or stay focused on an important task. In general, anxiety can help people cope with dangerous or problematic situations.

Anxiety can be negative

But when anxiety becomes excessive, doesn't fit the situation, or lasts a long time, it can get in the way of your everyday activities and may interfere with how you get along with others.

SIGNS of Negative Anxiety

- Worrying about everyday decisions for several days
- Fearing that something bad is going to happen
- Feeling doomed all is hopeless
- Becoming easily distracted ; Having difficulty concentrating; can't keep your mind on the regular tasks of the day.

These can be indicators of negative anxiety.

DEALING WITH THE DANGERS OF WORRY AND ANXIETY

the physical effects of worry and Anxiety

* This is what we know scientifically and medically about the effects of worry and anxiety. Anxiety is not merely a mental issue.

[webMD.com] Chronic worry and emotional stress can trigger a host of health problems. The problem occurs when fight or flight is triggered daily by excessive worrying and anxiety. The fight or flight response causes the body's sympathetic nervous system to release stress hormones such as cortisol. These hormones can boost blood sugar levels and triglycerides (blood fats) that can be used by the body for fuel. The hormones also cause physical reactions such as:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| • Difficulty swallowing | *Dizziness | *Dry mouth |
| • Fast heartbeat | *Fatigue | *Headaches |
| • Inability to concentrate | *Irritability | * Muscle aches |
| • Muscle tension | *Nausea | *Nervous energy |
| • Rapid breathing | *Shortness of breath | *Sweating |
| • Trembling and twitching | | |

AND When the excessive fuel in the blood isn't used for physical activities, the chronic anxiety and outpouring of stress hormones can have serious physical consequences, including:

- Suppression of the immune system
- Digestive disorders
- Muscle tension
- Short-term memory loss
- Premature coronary artery disease
- Heart attack

Some practical ways of ...

Dealing with stress and anxiety

- Walk, jog, or work out—Physical activity can improve your mood and help you sleep better. Physical activity can help purge the body of unused fuels caused by stress.
- Eat healthy meals regularly—Good nutrition helps your body and your mind
- Sleep well—Enough quality sleep can help you feel better

Psa 127:2 ESV It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Being Pre-Occupied by anxiety, consumed by worry and fear, living a life, being ruled and manipulated by stress can bring about mental illness, emotional anxiety and even physical health problems such as blood pressure and heart problems . Lack of rest can contribute to these problems or can be a result of these problems.

- Practice relaxation techniques—A shower, deep breathing, or time in a quiet place to collect your thoughts can help relieve stress and make you feel more at ease. Peaceful music, or Scripture medication can contribute to easing the feeling of stress induced anxiety.
- Get involved—Volunteer, join a club, or take up a hobby to share your strengths and wisdom with others
- Perhaps consult your doctor
- Regularly gathering with other believers. (Heb.10:24-25. The power of obedience to God and the effect of Christians gathering together is often underestimated. I believe we have yet to understand all the benefits for being obedient to God's word to gather regularly with other strong and solid believers in Christ.

Pro 12:25 ESV Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.

You're not going to get much good word or Godly input from those outside the body of Christ. Psychology apart from Scripture is a dangerous thing.

DEALING WITH WORRY AND ANXIETY – SPIRITUALLY

- Spend time alone with God in prayer.

1Pet. 5:6-7 ESV Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, (7) casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

- Spend time in quiet reading of Scripture – the Psalms, Promises of God in Christ in the NT.

Col 3:1-2 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

- Focusing your thoughts and disciplining your thought life to focus on Good and Godly things, rather than the “What If’s” or “If Onlys” - of your worries.

Talking with God Audibly

* This is prayer out loud. Is. 9:6 speaks of God being our “Wonderful Counselor”. We are creatures of “expression”. That is how God has made us. WE can talk to God and tell Him anything. Pray out loud and talk audibly to God. He doesn’t need to hear it, but we need to be able to express it. This can be a helpful outlet in dealing with stress.

THE BLESSINGS OF CHRIST IN OUR STORMS

Mar 4:37-41 ESV And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. (38) But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (39) And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a

great calm. (40) He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (41) And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

- 1) Storms arise as a fact of life – “a great windstorm arose” (v37)
- 2) Circumstances become threatening – v.37, their boat fills with water
- 3) Panic sets in and Anxiety escalates – v.38 “*Don’t you care...?*”
- 4) Jesus controlled the storm. – v.39, “peace be still”. HE still controls storms, but sometimes He controls us as we endure the storms, as he lets the wind and waves go wild. ("Sometimes He Calms The Storm", by Stokes, Benton Kevin / Wood, Tony W)

The Tragedy of Life without worry and anxiety is that without storms we would not know the peace that only God can give. Without the wind and waves of trouble beating against the boat of life, we might continue through life – in control – on top – no concerns and possibly losing the sense our dependence upon Jesus.

You can say, “christians should not worry.” Or you can label anxiety as sin. All I know is a good storm every now and then can offer a healthy dose of panic, that causes us to call out to Jesus for help.

MASTER OF THE WIND

The Hemphills on Togethern Copyright @ 1984 Heartwarming Records

1. My boat of life sails on a troubled sea
Whenever there's a wind in my sail.
But I have a friend who watches over me
When the breeze turns into a gale.

CHORUS:

I know the Master of the wind.
I know the Maker of the rain.
He can calm a storm, make the sun shine again.
I know the Master of the wind.

2. Sometimes I soar like an eagle through the sky
Above the peaks my soul can be found.
An unexpected storm may drive me from the heights
Brings me low, but never brings me down.

CHORUS:

He can calm a storm, make the sun shine again
I know the Master of the wind.
(link is posted on church website www.christefca.org)

DEALING WITH STRESS AND ANXIETY BIBLICALLY

Application

One realization about worry may actually help us deal with worry more productively. Worry and anxiety occur because someone cares. People don't worry that someone is going to sneak into their home late at night and replace all their fake jewelry with real gold and diamonds.

Parents don't lie awake on a sleepless night, racked with anxiety because their child is going to receive a \$3000 tax return in the mail.

You don't sit at home, staring out the window because you just received a clean bill of health from your doctor.

People worry and are anxious about potentially negative or unpleasant experiences they perceive to be in the near future for those they know and care about, or perhaps for themselves.

My Father calls us sometimes, worrying about things that have come to his mind that he wants to remind me to be careful about. It can sometimes be frustrating, but if he didn't care, he wouldn't worry. He worries because he cares.

We worry about things that are important to us and people that we care about.

Taking Steps towards entrusting things out of your control, into the hands and plans of God. Taking the initiative to be "accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative".

Anxiety And Prayer

* Thanks Giving

Php 4:6-7 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Speak to God audibly. He is our *Wonderful Counselor*.

Give it all up! Lay it all down! Let it all Go!

1Pet. 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, (7) casting all your *anxieties* on him, because he cares for you.

When stress brings about long term Worry and fear, it also brings about a pre-occupation with anxiety; and consummation of worry; and manipulation by mental stress.

When this happens it can become incapacitating, debilitating, negative and paralyzing, and life crippling.

Cast – surrender, get rid of, cast off, cast down, hand over, give it all up, lay it all down, let it all go.

Cares – concerns, worries, anxieties,

Upon **Him** – Creator, sustainer, Lord God Almighty.

He **Cares** – concerned, interested

For **you** – you personally; your situation, problem or trial

God is interested and concerned in the things that interest and concern you. Not in a worrisome sense but concerned in that you and your situation matters to God.

Not that you forget, but no longer allow anxiety to rule over you or worries to consume. NO longer will you allow stress to manipulate or destroy your life.

This is not throwing up your hands in giving up; but in dropping to your knees in laying it all at the Lord's feet and entrusting Him

with the outcome. Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you!

Give it all up! Lay it all down! Let it all Go!

This is not ceasing to care about the things close to you. But beginning to restrict its negative effects on your life and your negative effects on the lives of others.

If you are not spiritually healthy, you will not have a spiritually healthy effect on others.

Anxiety And Promises

Mat 6:25-34 ESV "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (26) Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (27) And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? (28) And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, (29) yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (30) But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? (31) Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (32) For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. (33) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (34) "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Faith is the victory. Worry and fear are the enemies of every human spirit. Worry is the thief of joy and the destroyer of faith and hope.

Fear **CAN** become the key that unlocks courage and releases faith to a new and higher level.

A Bunch of "A's" - just some practical applications

1) **ALLOW:** Allow God to Cultivate humility. Revealed personal weaknesses in times of out of control life challenges can have a positive effect if we will learn from it.

2) **ACCEPT:** Accept God's Love for you and His interest in your situation. Accept by faith that your trouble is something God will use to strengthen you for future, greater challenges.

3) **AFFIRM:** Mentally and verbally Affirm God's control over creation and your circumstances. Whatever is out of your control, you can rejoice it is under God's control. Do I believe God is in control? Do I trust God's perfect power and wisdom.

4) **ASK:** Pray for Wisdom and perseverance, (Mat.7:7)

ASK: Make your requests to God

SEEK: genuinely desire and pursue God's will to be done

KNOCK: prayerfully consider the options that are before you. What are possible open opportunities? What appear to be closed doors at the moment?

5) **ADDRESS:** Address God, talk to God; out loud; express your concerns, worries, anxieties; confess your weakness and doubt; confess His lordship over all things

6) **ALWAYS REPEAT:** Repeat as often as worries arise.

7) **ACKNOWLEDGE:** Acknowledge God's will and His Ways over your own will and ways.

Pro 3:5-7 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (7) Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

V5) Trust in the Lord. Do not trust in your own understanding, nor fear over your lack of understanding.

v.6) IN all your ways acknowledge Him – display and proclaim your faith in Him in your life as Lord of all things, that HE will make your paths straight.

8) ADMIT: Humbly admit your needs and concerns to another Christian you can trust. God often uses people to be His hands and express his heart.

Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

The Tragedy of Life without Anxiety and Worry, is that we could not fully know the blessing of peace. Without agonizing worry and paralyzing Fear, we'd never experience how great our God really can be in our lives, nor the victory he has available for each of us as we struggle in his strength.

Hope for the Heart Resources

FEAR:

<https://www.hopefortheheart.org/pdfs/OLQR-pr-Fear.pdf>

ANXIETY:

<https://www.hopefortheheart.org/pdfs/OLQR-pr-Worry.pdf>



The Tragedy of Life *without Meaning & Purpose*

Text: Eph.2:10; Titus 2:14
Father's Day

June 21, 2015

{ "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." }

--Psalm 139:14-18 ESV

Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.

--Dalai Lama

Mat 16:24-26 MKJV Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (25) For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it, and whoever desires to lose his life for My sake shall find it. (26) For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

2Co 5:14-17 ESV For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

INRODUCTION

“You move us to delight in praising You; for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in You?”

-- St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo

Even noted atheist Richard Dawkins, in his documentary, “Why are we Here?”, states that “the human race is one of the wonders of the universe. We may be unique, and of all our remarkable properties, one stands out; It is that we are restlessly drawn to ask questions like, ‘why are we here?’ and ‘what is the purpose of life?’”

-Richard Dawkins

Scripture itself informs us that God has a purpose for every human being and has placed meaning into every human life.

Eph 2:10 ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

We are here because God put us here. Our purpose in living, is to be about the work which God has planned for us.

The Tragedy of Life without Purpose or Meaning, is that, an inner sense of purpose and meaning has been stamped upon every human soul by its Creator. We need to know, “I’m important” or “I have value”. Life is intended to have purpose and meaning for us. IT is ordained for us by our Creator. The Tragedy of Life is

that it is possible to live a wasted self-focused life without the meaning and purpose God intended.

The thought that fills every person's mind is the topic that has been the central focus of every philosopher's debate and the question that has been asked by men of every generation of human history since the beginning of creation itself. That is, "Why am I here?" "What is my purpose for existing?" "What is the meaning of life?"

And apart from Scripture, everyone comes up with their own answer. The meaning of Life becomes all about *getting*... The purpose of Life is about *owning*..... The value of Life is about *acquiring*.... Ultimately, Life is about achieving, about *accomplishing* and about *excelling*.

In a documentary by Ben Stein, entitled "*Expelled*", Richard Dawkins interviewed and asked about the universe, humans and Intelligent Design. When asked, "Do you think the universe evidences Intelligent Design?", Richard Dawkins, replied, "yes!". Then Stein goes on to ask, "Do you believe aliens could be responsible for the Intelligent Design of the universe?", Dawkins again answered, "Yes!". "Then you would say, 'anything but God?'. To which Dawkins, again replied, "yes!"

That is the core of most of our problems on planet earth today, "*Anything goes but God*". And when the Creator concept of God is rejected, we also reject the personal purpose of life. The result is that without God, the question regarding the meaning or purpose of life, no longer makes any sense. Our culture stares creation in the face, yet declares 'there is no God!' Yet without a purpose Giver, the questions about life, value, meaning and purpose fade into irrelevance.

Even if you are not a Christian or a "religious" person, you are accountable before God to be the kind of Father HE wants YOU to be.

3Points to encourage Dads in their calling and responsibilities.

THE NEEDS FOR TODAY'S FATHER

You must realize that as a Father, you have meaning, you have value and you have a purpose; A holy Calling from Almighty God Himself.

Here is a good prayer for Dads today.

2Thes. 1:11 MKJV Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of the calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,

Too many Fathers today are drawn to pursue their own pleasures, rather than God's special purpose for them.

Perhaps Dads never realized...

I am a Creation of God

* Dad's need to know they are a purposeful creation of God.

Psa 139:14-18 ESV I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. (15) My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. (16) Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (17) How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (18) If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

These words were not written by a child, but by a bear slayer; a lion slayer; a man/s man, who as a young man, defeated a monster of a man 3 times his own size and went down in history as one of the greatest earthly rulers of all time. He was also a Father.

Dads need to know who they are and what their origin is. (Ps.139)

When children believe they are worthless accidents, guess what they grow up to believe? They become adults – Dads - who believe they are worthless accidents.

Dad need to know “Who he is” and “What he is”. He needs to know of; his job or his title and his responsibilities as a Dad.

Dad's You are not Worthless and You are not an Accidents. You are not a Father by accident. You are a valuable creation of God himself.

Perhaps Dads never realized...

I have a Purpose and Calling From God

* Dads need to know, "Why they are", and they have a purpose and calling from God.

Someone once said, "If you shoot at nothing, you'll hit it every time." Too many men and too many Fathers do nothing or become nothing, because they don't know what to shoot for.

2Tim. 1:9 MKJV who has saved us and called us with a holy *calling*, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the eternal times.

The need for Father's today is to view Fatherhood as one of the greatest purposes on earth, and a holy calling from Almighty God Himself.

THE PURPOSE FOR TODAY'S FATHER

* The Purpose for Today's Father is to understand that He is a Father; to understand that, as a Father, He has a purpose; And that with a purpose comes responsibilities.

Q: What's a Dad's responsibility? "Provider". What's a husband's responsibility. "Provider" – same answer.

Dads need to...

Provider Materially

It is a Dad's responsibility to support his children. Dads who are divorced or separated or not with their child, for whatever reason, still have to provide. Your child is still your child!

You must do all you can legally, to stay connected to your child and to be a provider for your child. Just because you no longer live with your child's mother, does not relieve you of your responsibilities as a Father. Your task may be far more of a challenge, but certainly a challenge worth taking on.

With Love INC, nearly each month I deal with a family situation where the mom is on her own, with children and no support from the Dad whatsoever. There is no excuse for that.

You may not like sending your hard earned money to your child's Mom, but you must support that child, materially.

You are to do what you can to influence that child as a Dad who wants to be connected, though you may be presently limited. So a Dad should always attempt to supply and support his child(ren) financially.

Dads need to...

Provide Relationally

One man recently told me: "My Dad was a great provider. But he was always working. We'd sit down at the table and my Dad was typically gone. We gathered in the living room for a family time, and I remember wondering, 'where's Daddy?'. Then I heard the front door shut and I knew that Daddy was off to work again. –

And He was a minister.

Dad was a provider materially. He was the leader of the house, set forth rules, and was the one reported to when we were bad, but relationally, he was a Dad who was too often absent relationally.

Some Dad's work too much and excuse it by saying they need to provide for their family. Some are too distracted by doing their own things, when they aren't working. Hobbies, pursuits or things that don't involve their family or their children.

Dads need to be connected relationally and available to talk with and discuss issues of life and help their children work through their challenges. They need to help their children; to walk with them; to encourage them throughout the various stages of life and to encourage and affirm their value, worth, appreciation and love for them.

Dads need to...

Provide Spiritually

Bring them up to know, love and obey God and His word.

Some Dad's view their children like animals. They think their children will learn by instinct. Children are not like animals. We are to live by a moral law from God. That must be modeled and taught.

Eph 6:4 ESV Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

That command is addressed to us Dads!

Col 3:21-23 ESV Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (22) Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. (23) Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

When it comes to "fathering" we are to do it "heartily" as unto the Lord. That means we are to allow the calling of being a father, to consume our hearts. We are to *heartily* father our children.

The Purpose for today's Father is to understand that He is a Father. He must understand that, as a Father, He has a specific purpose from God and that he knows what God expects of Him. With the purpose and calling of God to be a father, come personal responsibilities.

THE POWER OF A FATHER

The Bible does not speak of Dads as men of muscles, but it does speak of Dads as men of strength.

A Father must be ...

A Strong Man of Influence

Every young child needs a strong man of influence. If Dads don't step up to this responsibility, someone else will.

Psa 127:4 ESV Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.

Too many times, men want to be known as the man who achieved, or acquired, or accomplished or excelled. We want to be known as men of impact.

What we need to realize is that more times than not, we are not called to be people of impact. Often we are called to be men of influence behind the person of impact.

The person of influence is the teacher, trainer, supplier, coach, supporter, the sacrifice, the motivator, the influencer or the encourager for the one who may become a person of impact.

Arrows are an extension of the archer's skill and influence. God calls some to be men of impact. But He calls all of us to be men of influence to our children.

Moms and Dads have irreplaceable roles. This is not to say that a single Mom can't do a good job raising a son. But female moms and male dads have crucially important roles.

Patrick Morely from MIM ministries makes these comments. "A Mom says to her teenage son; 'I'm taking you clothes shopping today to get you some clothes. So let's go. I want to get you something really cute for school'".

If a single mom is raising a son, there needs to be a Godly man somehow connected into the life of that young man. Every boy needs a man's example to follow and a man's influence to direct him.

If a dad has girls, both mom and dad have to work together. A Dad teaches his daughter how she deserves to be treated. And whether he realizes it or not, a Dad gives his daughter an example of the man she will one day choose for a husband.

A Father must be ...

A Strong Man of Dependence

A wise man knows he is dependent upon God. After all, "a man's gotta know his limitations" - Harry Callahan (aka: Clint Eastwood)

A Father must have a strong dependence upon God.

Pro 3:5-6 ESV Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

God's input into your personal life, is necessary for you to be all God wants you to be in the life of your child(ren).

A Father must have a certain connection with other Godly men

Pro 27:17 ESV Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

Pro 11:14 ESV Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

No matter how Godly or how mature or experienced you are as a Dad, it will be helpful to have other wise and Godly men in your own life who can help you become a better Dad. Other Dads have ideas, experiences, advice and even support and understanding for one another.

-----Dads remember this?-----

"Lean On Me"

Writer(s): Bill Withers | Copyright: Interior Music Corp.

Sometimes in our lives, We all have pain, we all have sorrow
But if we are wise, We know that there's always tomorrow

Lean on me when you're not strong, And I'll be your friend,
I'll help you carry on, For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on

Please, swallow your pride, If I have things
you need to borrow, For no one can fill those of your needs
That you won't let show

You just call on me, brother, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on

I just might have a problem that you'll understand
We all need somebody to lean on

Lean on me when you're not strong, And I'll be your friend,
I'll help you carry on, For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need somebody to lean on

APPLICATION

Things to help make your child functional

1) Raise them in the church. If church is not important to you, it will not magically become important to your child. Teaching by example that God is optional, only gums the child for spiritual failure.

2) Model and Demonstrate your own faith. Things of the faith are most often caught rather than taught. Biblical values must be passed on, both verbally as well as visually. Live the Christian life. Model true faith in your own life.

3) Establish and Explain guidelines and restrictions to your children based on Scripture, Common Sense and Personal Experience.

- * Life of holy living and choices.
- * Family curfew and other practices
- * Work and responsibilities.

(These are all things a child must learn at home)

- **a) Establish and Explain:** “Because I said so!” might work in elementary school, but once that child is in High School that reasoning will breed rebellion. Guidelines must be explained with reasons.
- **b) Deadly Double Standards:** “Don’t Do as I do, Do as I say”. Parents who establish double standards – that is standards that are one way for their children but another way for the parent – these standards will breed rebellion. Josh McDowell states: “Lay down Rules without Reasons, and you will raise a rebel.”

Things to help make your child functional | *Dr Dobson.*

- 1) Children who experienced verbal and physical affection had higher esteem and confidence.
- 2) Families with clear guidelines and consistent standards, have characteristically more self-control.

Keep your children close. Keep relationships open for guidance, direction and love.

7 Principles for Raising Sons: by Dr Dobson

1. Channel Their Energy. Understand that your boys will have more aggressive and excitable behavior than your girls. Instead of trying to squelch their energy, channel it into something productive.

2. Protect Their Spirit. Understand that there are many harmful things in this world which can wound your boys' spirit. Dobson advises, "deal decisively with bullies, reduce exposure to media violence, and watch for signs of depression, withdrawal or lethargy."

3. Keep Them Close. Maintain close relationships with your sons. Keep communication open, provide guidance, and discipline out of love.

4. Provide Them with Role Models. Provide your sons with healthy male role models. If their father is not in the home, consider a trustworthy family member or friend to spend time with them.

5. Give Them Your Time. Give your sons plenty of your one-on-one time. You may need to make changes in your own schedule, but give your sons both quality and quantity time.

6. Affirm Their Value. Dobson advises, "Counteract the effects of male-bashing in our culture by affirming a boy's masculinity and his value as a person."

7. Nurture Their Spirituality. Make your sons' spiritual development your first priority in parenting by helping them develop their relationship with God.

[This article is based on the book, *Bringing Up Boys*, by Dr. James Dobson.]

7 Principles for Raising Girls By Susan Merrill

Here are some key areas where parenting your daughter may be unique.

1. Teaching her that her worth is based on more than her appearance. Our culture and its media send one consistent message,

day-in and day-out: how she looks is everything. If you want to protect your child from the disappointment that values like these will certainly cause her, you must give her something to put in its place. Your job is to show her—in the way you value yourself and other women—that we are more than what the eye can see. Teach her that her worth comes from God, who made her perfectly and endowed her with gifts and talents that are the essence of who she is.

2. Protecting her purity. You are the last line of defense between your daughter and a world that would encourage her to give up the innocence of childhood far too soon. If you don't put boundaries in place that prevent her from experimenting sexually, who will? Don't underestimate the pull of curiosity, boyfriends, and the influence of her more worldly friends. And don't let her be in situations where she's forced to be strong before she's ready for that responsibility.

3. Teaching her to handle “mean girls.” There's something about the way girls—even little grammar school girls—socialize that can bring out the worst in children. Odds are, your little girl will be the “odd man out” on the playground at some point, and she'll have to know when to let it go and seek out more authentic friendships, and when to stand up for herself. Help her to have the confidence to understand that when this happens, it's because the other child(ren) has failed at being kind—not because she has failed at being worthy of kindness.

4. Teaching her not to BE a “mean girl.” I know what you're thinking. “This one doesn't apply to me. My child isn't the bully.” But let's be honest—every bully has a mom, and she's probably almost always in denial about her child's capacity for meanness. Have you ever laid down the law with your child about the level of kindness you expect from her toward others, and what the consequences will be if you ever find that she's treating another child unfairly? Maybe we should all do one another a favor and have those conversations whether we think they're needed or not...

5. Helping her to balance femininity and strength. The women's movement did a lot for girls, opening doors of opportunity for all. But help your daughter to understand that equality isn't *sameness*. Our femininity is what makes us distinct—God made us to be different from men for a reason. To deny that in some misguided effort to project an image of equality just strips us of what makes us, well—us! Help her to learn to be smart and strong like Ginger Rogers, who did “everything Fred Astaire did, except *backward* and *in heels*.”

6. Protecting her safety. It's a sad reality that we live in a world where danger is a constant companion. Keeping your daughter safe will look different at various stages of her development, but you must be vigilant always. Take a long, hard look at her potential exposure to predators online, and in her real-world routines. Teach her, in age-appropriate ways, how to protect herself in various situations. As she becomes a teen and has more freedom, make sure she knows how to be safe on the road and on a date.

7. Modeling for her what a good wife and mom looks like. There is no other single factor that will influence how she carries out the roles of wife and mom in her own life more than what she observes in you. Live your own life with the kind of integrity and wisdom that you want her to embrace; and odds are, she will. [www.imom.com]

What Every Child Needs

A loving family	A life worth living	A mother's love
A father's pride	A Cheerleader	A proper image
A close friend	A life coach	A cause to pursue
A responsible role model		A genuine hero
A Divine calling	A discerning spirit	A greater purpose
A life passion	A set of priorities	A skill to use
A faith to share	A road to travel	A path to follow
A burden to carry	A promise to cling to	A hope to believe in
A battle to fight for	A risk to take	An outlet to change them
A ministry to consume them		A disciple to influence
A vision for the kingdom	A Course to consider	
A purpose worth dying for		A Love for God
A Hatred for sin	A wonder about creation	
A concern about the future		A personal relationship with Jesus
An awareness of eternity		An understanding of humanity
An Anger toward oppression		An Outrage over injustice

An Intolerance toward persecution	An ability for decision making
Deep Moral Values	True Spiritual Fruit
	Humility of self
Compassion for others	Genuine admiration
Unconditional Acceptance	Appropriate Affection
Focused priorities	Confidence in who they are
Someone to listen to them	Someone they can listen to
Adequate Encouragement	Selective discouragement
Biblical guidance	Something to believe in
Someone to believe in them	Something to give themselves for
True identity	Consistent discipline
Rules with reason (J.McDowell)	Patient Understanding
Goals to achieve	Parents to train them in truth and faith formation

If our children do not get these from us, they will get them elsewhere!

Parents, we need the Lord's help!



The Tragedy of Life

without Kindness & Encouragement

Text: Independence Day Observation

June 28, 2015

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets "
--Matthew 7:12 ESV

Correction does much, but encouragement does more.

--Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

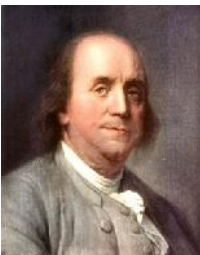
[Documents used] * God In Country *Presidents and Prayers

* Crabb – "Encouragement: the key to caring "

INRODUCTION

As the coming week progresses toward Independence Day, next Saturday, I wanted to take this opportunity to read some of the historical documentation of our Founding Fathers, on the topic of God in our Country's earlier years. [Read during Offertory]

Taken from "*God In Country*", document.



Benjamin Franklin

"God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the *Sacred Writings* that except the *Lord* build the

house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also

believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel” –
Constitutional Convention of 1787 | original manuscript of this speech

In Benjamin Franklin's **1749 plan of education for public schools in Pennsylvania**, he insisted that schools teach "***the excellency of the Christian religion*** above all others, ancient or modern."

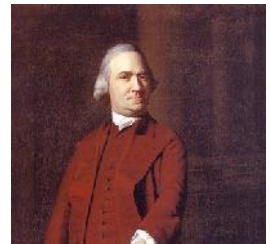
In 1787 when Franklin helped found Benjamin Franklin University, it was dedicated as "a nursery of religion and learning, ***built on Christ, the Cornerstone.***" --

Benjamin Franklin

Samuel Adams

"He who made all men hath made the truths necessary to human happiness obvious to all...

Our forefathers opened the Bible to all." ["American Independence," August 1, 1776. Speech delivered at the State House in Philadelphia]



"Let divines and philosophers, statesmen and patriots, unite their endeavors to renovate the age by impressing the minds of men with the importance of educating their little boys and girls, inculcating in the minds of youth the fear and love of the Deity... and leading them in the study and practice of the exalted virtues of the Christian system." [October 4, 1790]



President John Adams

"We recognize no Sovereign but God, and no King but Jesus!"

[April 18, 1775, on the eve of the Revolutionary War after a British major ordered John Adams, John Hancock, and those with them to disperse in "the name of George the Sovereign King of England."]

• ***"[July 4th] ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."***

[letter written to Abigail on the day the Declaration was approved by Congress]

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. ***Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.***" [October 11, 1798]

United States Congressional Endorsement of the Bible and God



Congress printed a Bible for America and said: "The United States in Congress assembled ... recommend this edition of the ***Bible*** to the inhabitants of the United States ... a neat edition of ***the Holy Scriptures*** for the use of schools."

- United States Congress 1782

US House of Representatives

This brief tour of our nation's capital reveals that Christianity is



the source of America's liberty and prosperity. In the words of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1854:

"The great vital element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ."



Joseph Story

"I verily believe Christianity necessary to the support of civil society. One of the beautiful boasts of our municipal jurisprudence is that ***Christianity*** is a part of the Common Law ... There never has been a period in which the Common Law did not recognize ***Christianity*** as laying its foundations." - Supreme Court Justice, Harvard Speech, 1829

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation, Under God; indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."



I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands. One Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again, with life and liberty to all who believe.



I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path; I will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.



SERMON

The Tragedy of Life **WITHOUT** Encouragement and Kindness is that God's tools for the church to be built up and strengthened, would never be utilized and Christians would miss important opportunities to affect the spiritual lives of others.

Heb 3:13 ESV But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

The Bible teaches us over and over that the Christian faith is all about relationships. It is the purpose of God to use His children, to help other Christians along in their faith.

Gal 6:2 ESV Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Our Positive, Christian effect on others.

Encouragement is a Powerful Force for Good.

In His book, “Encouragement; The Key to Caring”, Larry Crabb defines encouragement as “the careful selection of words that are intended to influence another person meaningfully toward increased Godliness.”

Jesus Himself, gives us an all-important principal for relating to each other.

Mat 7:12 ESV "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

This is known as the Golden Rule. Treating others appropriately and lovingly can quite often be accomplished by treating others the way we would appreciate being treated.

Can we possibly image the change in our speech and the positive impact our lives might have on others, if we lived by the Golden Rule, and governed our speech to be more encouragement focused?

Can you imagine the difference in your relationships at work: or your relationships with your neighbors, or with your children or parents or even your relationship with your spouse?

Encouragement is Words Of Life and Influence

Our words can be words of life and positive influence.

Pro 18:21 MKJV Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it shall eat the fruit of it.

We should choose our words wisely. They have significant impact. We should speak our words lovingly. We can never take our words back, no matter how many times we might apologize.

IB Discouragement is Words of Death and Destruction

Discouragement can come in the form of criticism, complaining, tearing down, insulting, or verbal manipulation. It can result from our voice tone or volume; facial expression and even body language. Discouragement and destructive words are intended to manipulate or force people to do what you want them to do or to become what they may want you to be.

Regarding discouragement William Ward writes: “Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust

of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our fellowman, and unbelief in the promises of old. It is impatience with time, immaturity of thought, and impoliteness to God.” [bible.org]

((Encouragement is a Powerful force for God))

ENCOURAGEMENT IS A SPIRITUAL TOOL FOR SPIRITUAL CONSTRUCTION

Encouragement is not merely flattery or a “pat on the back” that inflates and leaves emptiness inside.

The Goal of Encouragement and Constructive speech is to build others up with content and strength and purpose.

Eph 4:29-30 ESV Let no *corrupting* talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

“Corrupt talk” would be discouraging or destructive talk.

“Building up” (oikodome) refers to (1) the building of a house; or to form the foundation. (2) metaphorically it refers to grounding or establishing another in the faith; 2b) to promote growth in Christian wisdom; affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness 2c) to grow in wisdom and piety [Thayer Definition]

It is typically easier to criticize and tear down, rather than to encourage and build up.

Col 4:8 ESV I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts,

Spiritual Construction is God's Goal for our words of encouragement

Heb 10:24-25 ESV (24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

When referring to the return of Christ and the rapture of His church, Paul urges:

1Th 4:18 ESV Therefore **encourage** one another with these words.

Encourage is to speak words of content and strength to others that have lasting, positive spiritual impact.

1Thes. 5:14 ESV And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

“admonish” = warn; caution;

“comfort or encourage” = console or instill with courage

Idle = disorganized; irregular and inconsistent in the disciplines of their faith; hot again, cold again; those who deviate from the prescribed order or rule, that is specifically concerning the things of the faith.

Faint hearted = weak spirited. - The idea here is that there are expected to be some among us who are a bit more mature than some others. Those who are less faint hearted, are to be encouraging the faint hearted.

Weak = lacking in mature spiritual strength and endurance ; those needing support, instruction, reminder, or encouragement.

1Th 5:9-10 ESV For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. v.11) “..therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing.”

Question: How are you doing so far? Would you say you are an encourager? What needs to change for you to become one?

((Encouragement is a Powerful force for God AND
It is the is a powerful tool for Spiritual Construction))

CHURCH FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ARE ALL ABOUT HELPING ONE ANOTHER BY EXHIBITING KINDNESS AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS.

* Encouragement is “others” focused. It has the good of others and the benefit of others as its goal and purpose.

God's Love is others focused

* 1 Cor.14 is a bit controversial in its subject matter, but is clear in its intended outcome.

1Cor. 14:3-5 ESV On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks **to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.** (4) The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies **builds up the church.** (5) Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, **so that the church may be built up.**

When the church gathers, we are to be about the business of encouraging and building up one another in the faith.

“One Another” Commands

There are approximately 100 “One Another” commands in the NT. 47 are those who are followers of Jesus. Paul Wrote 60% of the “One Another” commands. Approx. 1/3 of the “One Another” commands deals with the church family getting along.

Approx. 1/3 of the “One Another” commands deals with Christians demonstrating genuine Christ like love to one another. About 15% stress an attitude of humility and deference among believers.

God's Love must by our desire and goal

If its anything, encouraging others must be an attitude of the heart. It has to be a desire of our heart and the goal of our gathering and interacting with one another. I personally, have found several great examples in this church to help me see what it means to be an encourager. I am thankful for examples like that in my life!

APPLICATION

1) Encouragement speaks words of life. Encouragement is a positive communication to another person . Encouragement motivates and moves a person to continue a good work, or to work hard to improve. Encouragement has the other person's best interest at heart.

2) Discouragement or Criticism speak words of Death. They tear down, rather than building up. Discouragement is destructive in nature.

Pro 14:1 ESV The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.

There is the contrast between the effects of encouragement and discouragement. Where Encouragement motivates, Discouragement manipulates. Discouraging and insulting words or inconsiderate criticizing are often means of manipulating others for our personal benefit. It attempts to get people to do what we want them to do or to become what we think they ought to be.

3) Implement the Golden Rule. Consider how your communication will or does affect others. Consider how you would want others to speak to or treat you. Begin putting that principal into practice more and more in every relationship possible. (Mat. 7:12)

4) Speaking the Truth in Love

Eph 4:15 ESV Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Too often, I have heard people criticize another person and the one doing the criticizing says something like, "I'm just speaking the truth in love." And I have often thought, "probably NOT." Speaking the Truth in Love may mean withholding criticism, even if you feel it is needed. Constructive criticism is only constructive if it is presented in a manner in which the receiving party will receive it in a positive and appreciative frame of mind.

Encouraging words should motivate towards godliness and offer guidance and direction, as well as expressing appreciation.

Eph 4:29-30 ESV Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, ²***as fits the occasion,*** ³***THAT IT MAY GIVE GRACE TO THOSE WHO HEAR.*** (30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Remember: it is typically easier to offer discouraging criticism than positive building up encouragement. Encouragement takes effort.

5) We must Consider praying about changing the way we communicate or evaluate others. As Christians, we must seek to help others to be all they can be in Christ, instead of manipulating them into what we may want for our own satisfaction.

Encouragement...

“the careful selection of words
that are intended to influence another person
meaningfully toward increased Godliness.” -- Larry Crabb



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

**Is Jesus Christ the Savior of *your* soul
and the Lord of *your* life?**

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; --
Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from
God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life. --*John 3:16*

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die
in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- *Romans 6:23*

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus
Christ in our place for our sins.

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

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- *Rom 10:13*

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he
gave the right to become children of God, - *John 1:12*

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are
truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

***Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your
sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.***

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. *He already knows.* Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:

Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

It is our prayer that you find Jesus Christ to be, your greatest purpose, your highest calling, your soul's source and joy, and your all-consuming passion.

Other Free Booklets

1 PETER, pt.1-2 (2Vol): *Suffering in Sojourning*

1 PETER, pt.3-5 (3Vol): *The Church God Always Wanted*

100 YEARS OF MISSIONS: *So Where Are We Now?*

A NEW CREATION: *Beginning Your New Life In Christ*

ADVENT: *The Submission of Christ*

AMERICA ADRIFT: *A Culture in Crisis and the Challenges Before the Church*

CHALLENGES OF FAITH *From Characters in the Bible*

CHRIST'S COMING KINGDOM: *What Will Be Will Be*

CPR Evangelism: *Helping others Step from Death to Life*

DIRTY DISCIPLESHIP: *Preparing the Soil of the Heart for the Seed of the Word.*

ETERNITY: *What Will It Really Be Like?*

GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: *A Match Made in Heaven*

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR THE FAMILY: *The Intelligent Divine Design*

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF: *When Pain Won't End and Hope Seems Lost*

HOLY WEEK QUESTIONS: *Life After Death & How Dead Will We Really Be?*

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ALMIGHTY: *Life Transforming Prayer & Communion*

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SHEPHERD: *Sheep Becoming Like the Servant Shepherd*

INTERESTS AND INQUIRIES: *Curious Cultural Concerns for The Future*

JAMES (4Vol): *Faith That Makes A Difference*

JUDE: (2Vol) *STANDING FIRM, When the Rest of the World is Falling Away.*

KINGDOM VISION: *Seeing the World and God's Kingdom as God does*

LIFE MATTERS: *What It Means for Others To See Jesus In You*

MAKING LIFE WORK (2Vol): *Discovering Your God Focused Purpose in Living*

PRAYERS OF DESPERATION: *Prayer God Answers But No One Wants To Pray*

Ruth: *Our Unmerited Blessedness in the LORD.*

SURVIVING THE STORMS OF THE SOUL: *The Presence of God for the Troubled Soul*

THE HOLY SPIRIT: *The Friend You Need To Get To Know*

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: *Seeing and Living the Kingdom of Heaven*

THE WONDER OF IT ALL: *The End Times of Trials, from Mark 13*

TRAGEDIES OF LIFE: *Things God Allows & Blessings from Heaven's Perspective*

WATER BAPTISM: *The First Step of Believer's Obedience or Disobedience.*

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER: *A Handbook for Pre-Marriage Considerations*

YOUR LIFE IS LIKE...: *The Challenge to Disciple A Community*

--- All downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org ---



May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

--- Downloadable free resources at: www.christefca.org --