

Summer Nights @



“Strong Through The Storm”

Introduction

THE PLAN/CALENDAR

- June 3rd - The Storm
 - Is God Big and Good Enough?
- June 10th - The Desert
 - What is Suffering?
- June 17th - The Valley
 - Where is God? Can God Bring Me Through?
- June 24th - The Darkness
 - How Should We Go Through Suffering?
- July 1st - The Garden
 - Does God understand? Does God Care?

Recap

SETTING

- God is Great
- God is Good
- Evil Exists
 - It's Bad
 - God doesn't like it

THEODICIES

- Irenaeus - Evil is necessary so that we can grow and develop spiritually
- Augustine - It's all a misuse of human freedom: we have a choice to choose good or evil and we choose evil
- God doesn't give a definitive answer
- Bible unclear:
 - Justice Sometimes
 - Mystery Other times
 - Quick to Repent, and Slow to judge

PURPOSE IN SUFFERING

- "According to Christian theology, suffering is not meaningless - neither in general nor in particular instances. For God has purposed to defeat evil so exhaustively on the cross that all the ravages of evil will someday be undone and we, despite participating in it so deeply, will be saved. God is accomplishing this not in spite of suffering, agony, and loss but through it - it is through the suffering of God that the suffering of humankind will eventually be overcome and undone." (Keller 163)
- Brings Glory to God
- Suffering Grows Us
 - "In the valley of suffering, despair and bitterness are brewed. But there also character is made. The valley of suffering is the vale of soul-making." (Wolterstorff 500)
- Suffering Brings Us Closer to Christ
 - "...suffering is at the very heart of the Christian faith. It is not only the way Christ became like and redeemed us, but it is one of the main ways we become like him and experience his redemption. And that means that our suffering, despite its painfulness, is also filled with purpose and usefulness." (Keller 163-164)

The Valley

COMMONALITIES OF SUFFERING

- All are change/loss
 - Our Identity is changed
 - Our 'future' is 'lost'
- All hurt
- All are real
- All are signs/signals that something isn't right
 - It's not that the pain is bad, it's that they point at the something that isn't right
 - This is why pain shouldn't simply be ignored, numbed, or avoided
 - "Suffering is the shout of "No" by one's whole existence to that over which one suffers-the shout of "No" by nerves

and gut and gland and heart to pain, to death, to injustice, to depression, to hunger, to humiliation, to bondage, to abandonment. And sometimes, when the cry is intense, there emerges a radiance which elsewhere seldom appears: a glow of courage, of love, of insight, of selflessness, of faith. In that radiance we see best what humanity was meant to be.” (Wolterstorff 493)

WALKING THROUGH SUFFERING

- “Recovery is misleading and empty expectation. We recover from broken limbs, not amputations. Catastrophic loss by definition precludes recovery. It will transform us or destroy us, but it will never leave us the same.” (Sittser 73)
- Stages of Grief
 - Denial
 - Anger
 - Bargaining
 - Depression
 - Acceptance and Hope

BEING TOGETHER WITH EACH OTHER

- Sometimes you need someone to just be present with you – to walk with you
- “But loss does not have to isolate us or make us feel lonely. Though it is a solitary experience we must face alone, loss is also a common experience that can lead us to community. It can create a community of brokenness. We must enter the darkness of loss alone, but once there, we will find others with whom we can share life together.” (Sittser 171)
- “Choosing to withdraw from people and to protect the self diminishes the soul; choosing to love even more deeply than before ensures that we will suffer again, for the choice to love requires the courage to grieve. We know that loss is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. So naturally we dread the losses that loom ahead. But the greater loss is not suffering another loss itself but refusing to love again, for that may lead to the death of the soul.” (Sittser 184-185)

BEING TOGETHER WITH GOD

- ISAIAH 43:2-3,5 WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY WILL NOT SWEEP OVER YOU. WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU WILL NOT BE BURNED; THE FLAMES WILL NOT SET YOU ABLAZE. ³ FOR I AM THE LORD, YOUR GOD, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, YOUR SAVIOR;... ⁵ DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I AM WITH YOU;...
- Union with Christ
 - “We are so near to Christ that we cannot be nearer, for we are one with Him. We are so dear to Christ that we cannot be dearer. Consider how close and tender is the tie when it is true that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. It is a union more intimate than any other which exists among men, for ‘Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ – Charles Spurgeon” (Sproul 36)

WHAT I’M LEARNING

- Pain isn’t all bad
- Pain needs to be faced and gone through
- And we may even come out more healthy with a greater capacity on the other end. (Not that that justifies the loss, but it may help with getting through the day)
- So the question becomes how do we go through Pain well?

The Darkness

THE BOOK OF JOB

- Speaking on the book of Job: “Rabbi Abraham Heschel, ‘God is not nice. God is not an uncle. God is an earthquake.’” (Keller 270)
- “Philosopher Peter Kreeft says, ‘Job is a mystery. A mystery satisfies something in us, but not our reason. The rationalist is repelled by Job, as Job’s three rationalist friends were repelled by Job. But something deeper in us is satisfied by Job, and is nourished.... It puts iron in your blood.’” (Keller 270)

WHO IS JOB?

- Blameless
- Upright
- Fearing God
- Turning Away from Evil
- Blessed
 - Children
 - Wealth
- Greatest of all men of the east

GOD'S COURT

- JOB 1:6 ONE DAY THE ANGELS CAME TO PRESENT THEMSELVES BEFORE THE LORD, AND SATAN ALSO CAME WITH THEM.
- JOB 1:8-12 THEN THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "HAVE YOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB? THERE IS NO ONE ON EARTH LIKE HIM; HE IS BLAMELESS AND UPRIGHT, A MAN WHO FEARS GOD AND SHUNS EVIL." ⁹ "DOES JOB FEAR GOD FOR NOTHING?" SATAN REPLIED. ¹⁰ "HAVE YOU NOT PUT A HEDGE AROUND HIM AND HIS HOUSEHOLD AND EVERYTHING HE HAS? YOU HAVE BLESSED THE WORK OF HIS HANDS, SO THAT HIS FLOCKS AND HERDS ARE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE LAND. ¹¹ BUT STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND AND STRIKE EVERYTHING HE HAS, AND HE WILL SURELY CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE." ¹² THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "VERY WELL, THEN, EVERYTHING HE HAS IS IN YOUR HANDS, BUT ON THE MAN HIMSELF DO NOT LAY A FINGER." THEN SATAN WENT OUT FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.
 - In other words:
 - God is proud of Job
 - Satan is saying that Job only loves God for the blessings he's getting from God
 - And then the Lord gives Satan power over him
 - Note:
 - Nothing happens outside of God's power
 - Not Dualism or Manicheanism
 - "God is completely in charge. He has total control over Satan. Satan can go so far, and no further. God is clearly sovereign." (Keller 275)
 - God loves Job

DISASTER AND SUFFERING

- Sabeans took the Oxen and donkeys
- Fire killed all the sheep
- Chaldeans took the camels
- A great wind struck the house your children were in and they all died
- JOB 1:20-22 AT THIS, JOB GOT UP AND TORE HIS ROBE AND SHAVED HIS HEAD. THEN HE FELL TO THE GROUND IN WORSHIP ²¹ AND SAID: "NAKED I CAME FROM MY MOTHER'S WOMB, AND NAKED I WILL DEPART. THE LORD GAVE AND THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY; MAY THE NAME OF THE LORD BE PRAISED." ²² IN ALL THIS, JOB DID NOT SIN BY CHARGING GOD WITH WRONGDOING.
 - 'All my blessings are from God'
 - 'God can do as God will (regardless of whether or not I understand it)'

ROUND 2

- Satan again is allowed to come before the Lord
- JOB 2:3 THEN THE LORD SAID TO SATAN, "HAVE YOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB? THERE IS NO ONE ON EARTH LIKE HIM; HE IS BLAMELESS AND UPRIGHT, A MAN WHO FEARS GOD AND SHUNS EVIL. AND HE STILL MAINTAINS HIS INTEGRITY, THOUGH YOU INCITED ME AGAINST HIM TO RUIN HIM WITHOUT ANY REASON."
 - Note: God even says the suffering was 'without cause'
 - "Job's difficulties come upon him not despite his goodness but because of it." (Keller 271)
- Now Satan is allowed to mess with Job directly - and he does
- God Allows Satan to test Job
 - "God allows Satan to test Job. Why? I believe it meant that God knew Job already loved him. And yet there was still a need for Job's love to be refined - in a way that would do enormous good down through the ages. The suffering was allowed to bring Job to a level of greatness." (Keller 273)
 - I wonder if Job knew that he loved God that much. I wonder if this was more for Job than Job would ever expect
 - "God knew that Satan was ultimately wrong about Job. But he also knew that Satan was penultimately right. Job was not fully the servant

he should be, and could be, and God was going to enable him to attain that kind of greatness the only way it can be attained – through adversity and pain. Job would become more fully someone who serves God for nothing and loves God for himself alone. And so God willed to show the hosts of heaven as well as all the hundreds of millions of readers of the book of Job that he *can* make human beings into loving servants.” (Keller 275)

- Job’s Wife
 - JOB 2:9-10 HIS WIFE SAID TO HIM, “ARE YOU STILL HOLDING ON TO YOUR INTEGRITY? CURSE GOD AND DIE!” ¹⁰ HE REPLIED, “YOU ARE TALKING LIKE A FOOLISH WOMAN. SHALL WE ACCEPT GOOD FROM GOD, AND NOT TROUBLE?” IN ALL THIS, JOB DID NOT SIN IN WHAT HE SAID.
- Job Laments

LAMENT

- “Rittgers says that the Lutherans, in their concern that Christians not doubt the love of Christ, minimized the legitimacy of lament. He argues that the early Reformers created a culture in which the expression of doubts or complaints was frowned upon.” (Keller 241)
- The Lost Art of Lament
- Psalm 88 – a psalm of lament
- “Every lament is a love-song.” (Wolterstorff, 18)
- ECCLESIASTES 7:2-4 IT IS BETTER TO GO TO A HOUSE OF MOURNING THAN TO GO TO A HOUSE OF FEASTING, FOR DEATH IS THE DESTINY OF EVERY MAN; THE LIVING SHOULD TAKE THIS TO HEART. ³ SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER, BECAUSE A SAD FACE IS GOOD FOR THE HEART. ⁴ THE HEART OF THE WISE IS IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING, BUT THE HEART OF FOOLS IS IN THE HOUSE OF PLEASURE.

JOB’S FRIENDS?

- Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar
- Their Basic Argument:
 - God is just: punishing wrong and rewarding right
 - Bad things are happening to you, so you are being punished for the bad things you’ve done

- Therefore: Repent! Confess! And God will forgive and restore.
 - “Eliphaz’s speech is uncomfortably close to conventional evangelical piety.” (Keller 277)
 - “Job’s friends therefore have a view of God that is very domesticated. There is never a mystery – if life goes well, it is because you are living rightly. If life does not go well, it must be your fault. But Anderson shows that this puts God on a leash, as it were. ‘To bring God under obligation to a [human] morality. . . is a threat to His sovereignty.’ In other words, a moralistic person like Eliphaz believes God can be managed with morality. His advice to Job is: Push the right buttons, confess all known sin, straighten up and fly right, and everything will be good again. Guaranteed.” (Keller 277)
 - I want evil and suffering to make some kind of sense, because then it means I can control it to some degree or other. If suffering always happens for a reason, or to balance fairness, than I can hold suffering at bay from my own life. But if suffering doesn’t make sense, than I’m at its (or God’s) mercy.
 - God may not want evil to happen either. God may be sad and angry when people are hurt
- Job knows they’re wrong
 - Job thinks they’re bad comforters
 - How to comfort and how not to...
 - “Trite answers were a poor replacement for compassion.” (Sittser 174)
 - From *The View from a Hearse*: “I was sitting, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God’s dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly, he said things I knew were true. – I was unmoved, except to wish he’d go away. He finally did. – Another came and sat beside me.

He didn't talk. He didn't ask leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour or more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left. - I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go." (Keller 245)

- Job is insulted
- Job continues to maintain his righteousness
 - "Job's grief was expressed with powerful emotion and soaring rhetoric. He did not 'make nice' with God, praying politely. He was brutally honest about his feelings. And while God did... forcefully call Job to acknowledge his unfathomable wisdom and majesty, nevertheless God ultimately vindicated him." (Keller 242)
- Elihu, a 4th Friend?
 - The other 3 cease because Job is righteous in his own eyes, and it's hard to convince someone that stubborn about anything
 - But then another, starts up in the same vein

THE LORD ANSWERS

- God now speaks to Job from a whirlwind
 - Yahweh *answered* Job out of the storm... "...in Hebrew idiom, to 'speak to' someone indicates a one-way communication of an authority to an inferior, while to 'answer' or 'reply to' expresses a dialogue between two parties. It is striking, then, that when God shows up, he enters into a dialogue - he does not come to simply denounce. In other words, God is inviting Job into a relationship. He even gives Job the final word!" (Keller 281)
 - "... despite the intimacy of the name Yahweh and the mode of address, God appears to Job in a *storm* - literally, a 'storm-wind.' Ancient people knew nothing more terrifying or destructive than a hurricane-force windstorm. Job's children had been destroyed by one (Job 1:19). Job was afraid that, if God actually did appear to him, 'he would crush me with a storm' (Job 9:17) and

indeed, when God shows up, he comes in the most fierce, overwhelming, majestic form possible – as the Storm King.” (Keller 282)

- From Job 38:2 through Job 39:30 God reminds them of who HE is
- JOB 40:1-4 THE LORD SAID TO JOB: ² “WILL THE ONE WHO CONTENDS WITH THE ALMIGHTY CORRECT HIM? LET HIM WHO ACCUSES GOD ANSWER HIM!” ³ THEN JOB ANSWERED THE LORD: ⁴ “I AM UNWORTHY-- HOW CAN I REPLY TO YOU? I PUT MY HAND OVER MY MOUTH.
- And then God continues through Job 41:34
- Job replies, “JOB 42:3-6 *YOU ASKED, 'WHO IS THIS THAT OBSCURES MY COUNSEL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE?' SURELY I SPOKE OF THINGS I DID NOT UNDERSTAND, THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME TO KNOW.* ⁴ *“YOU SAID, 'LISTEN NOW, AND I WILL SPEAK; I WILL QUESTION YOU, AND YOU SHALL ANSWER ME.’* ⁵ *MY EARS HAD HEARD OF YOU BUT NOW MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOU.* ⁶ *THEREFORE I DESPISE MYSELF AND REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES.* ””
 - “Job is not here expressing a general repentance for all his depravity. That would defeat the whole purpose of the book, because that is what Job’s friends have been trying to get him to do. Instead, he is doing what he was unwilling to do in Job 40:3-5. He abandons his self-justification project. He retracts his demand that God, because of Job’s righteousness, must give him explanation and public vindication. He gives up trying to control God (that is to say, he stops mistrusting God) in any way. He bows before God and lets him be who he is. He serves God for himself alone.” (Keller 292)

THE LORD RESTORES

- God is displeased with Job’s Friends
- Job is blessed again twofold
 - Blessed the latter days of Job more than the beginning
 - Children again
 - JOB 42:16 - PSALM 1:1 AFTER THIS, JOB LIVED A HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS; HE SAW HIS CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN TO THE FOURTH GENERATION. ¹⁷ AND SO HE DIED, OLD AND FULL OF YEARS.

CONCLUSIONS

- “But to grow into a true ‘free lover’ of God, who has the depth of joy unknown to the mercenary, conditional religious observer – we must ordinarily go through a stripping. We must feel that to obey God will bring us no benefits at all. It is at *that* point that seeking, praying to, and obeying God begin to change us. And so the expanded life with God that Job eventually receives can come to him only by God’s *not* telling him why he suffered.” (Keller 283-284)
- Dark Times/Dark Night of the Soul (Ortberg)
 - “[*The Dark Night of the Soul*] is an account of how God works to change us not just through joy and light, but through confusion, through disappointment, through loss. Because of his commitment in the midst of suffering, he became known as ‘St. John of the Cross.’ The dark night of the soul, as he described it, is not simply the experience of suffering. It is suffering in what feels like the silence of God.” (Ortberg 181)
 - “Of course, it’s possible for me to grow cold toward God because I cling to sin, or prefer an idol, or simply become lazy. These are all real occurrences that require wise response. But they are not the dark night. The dark night is God-initiated.” (Ortberg 182)
 - “John of the Cross, writing from his prison cell, says in the dark night the soul is pained but not hopeless. ‘God’s love is not content to leave us in our weakness, and for this reason he takes us into a dark night. He weans us from all of the pleasures by giving us dry times and inward darkness. . . . No would will ever grow deep in the spiritual life unless God works passively in that soul by means of the dark night.” (Ortberg 183)
 - “What do we do in the dark night? We do nothing. We wait. We remember that we are not God. We hold on. We ask for help. We do less. We resign from things, we rest more, we stop going to church, we ask somebody else to pray because we can’t. We let go of our need to hurry through it. You can’t run in the dark.” (Ortberg 183)

- “Modern churches with linear models of spiritual growth and large-scale models for devotional life rarely speak of or help people with the dark night. We are uncomfortable with it because we want to do something – because we sell formulas and steps and programs, and the dark night of the soul is not our program. The dark night is for souls that learn to wait.” (Ortberg 185)
 - “All of this means that even if we cannot feel God in our darkest and most dry times, he is still there. And so there is no more basic way to face suffering than this: Like Job, you must seek him, go to him. Pray even if you are dry. Read the Scriptures even if it is an agony. Eventually, you will sense him again – the darkness won’t last forever. The strength you need for suffering comes in the doing of the responsibilities and duties God requires. Shirk no commands of God. Read, pray, study, fellowship, serve, witness, obey. Do all your duties that you physically can and the God of peace will be with you.” (Keller 288)
- “I trembled before the power of Job’s freedom to decide how he was going to respond to his suffering. How he exercised that freedom had repercussions even in God’s heavenly court, where the hosts of heaven, including Almighty God, watched to see how Job’s life would turn out. Job’s choices really mattered to them...” (Sittser 116)

Why?

WHAT’S GOD DOING?

- We don’t know
 - Job’s outcome – because God made a wager?
 - Job’s outcome – “The reason why, is that God was glorified in how Job remained faithful, how he exhibited character, and how he trusted God through this trial” (Sproul 4: 12:10)
- We won’t ever fully understand.
- We don’t get to ask that in an accusatorial manner.

- Holy > Happy
 - “One of the key reasons why God creates calamity: why he sends suffering into our lives is to help us grow in grace and to help us become more like Jesus. He sends suffering because he’s more interested in us becoming holy, than he is in our being happy.” (Sproul #6 13:15)
 - JAMES 1:2-4 CONSIDER IT PURE JOY, MY BROTHERS, WHENEVER YOU FACE TRIALS OF MANY KINDS, ³ BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH DEVELOPS PERSEVERANCE. ⁴ PERSEVERANCE MUST FINISH ITS WORK SO THAT YOU MAY BE MATURE AND COMPLETE, NOT LACKING ANYTHING.
 - “We are told that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect, must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and shall the other members of the body be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Christ pass through seas of his own blood to win the crown, and are we to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, our Master’s experience teaches us that suffering is necessary, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might. – Charles Spurgeon” (Sproul 29)
- “God does not give us exactly what we ask for. Instead he gives us what we would have asked for if we had known everything he knows.” (Keller 264)

SOUL EXPANDS

- “...though I experienced death, I also experienced life in ways that I never thought possible before—not after the darkness, as we might supposed, but *in* the darkness. I did not go through pain and come out the other side; instead, I lived in it and found within that pain the grace to survive and eventually grow. I did not get over the loss of my loved ones; rather, I absorbed the loss into my life, like soil receives decaying matter, until it became a part of who I am. Sorrow took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it.” (Sittser 45-46)
 - “The soul is elastic, like a balloon. It can grow larger through suffering. Loss can enlarge its capacity for anger, depression, despair, and anguish, all natural and

legitimate emotions whenever we experience loss. Once enlarged, the soul is also capable of experiencing greater joy, strength, peace, and love. What we consider opposites—east and west, night and light, sorrow and joy, weakness and strength, anger and love, despair and hope, death and life—are no more mutually exclusive than winter and sunlight. The soul has the capacity to experience these opposites, even at the same time.” (Sittser 48)

- “Sorrow is noble and gracious. It enlarges the soul until the soul is capable of mourning and rejoicing simultaneously, of feeling the world’s pain and hoping for the world’s healing at the same time.” (Sittser 74)
- “It is therefore not true that we become less through loss—unless we allow the loss to make us less,…” (Sittser 49)

ENDURING

- (Someone once told Keller) “I always knew, in principle, that ‘Jesus is all you need’ to get through. But you don’t really know Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have.” (Keller 5)
- “Most books and resources for sufferers today no longer talk about enduring affliction but instead use a vocabulary drawn from business and psychology to enable people to manage, reduce, and cope with stress, strain, or trauma. Sufferers are counseled to avoid negative thoughts; to buffer themselves with time off, exercise, and supportive relationships; to problem solve; and to ‘learn to accept things we can’t change.’ But all the focus is on controlling your immediate emotional responses and environment. For centuries, however, Christianity has gone both higher and deeper in order to furnish believers with the resources to face tribulation.” (Keller 225)
- Walking
 - “The unusual balance of the Christian faith is seen in the metaphor of walking – through darkness, swirling waters, or fire. We are not to lose our footing and just let the suffering have its way with us. But we are also not to think we can somehow avoid it or be completely impervious to it either. We are to meet and move through suffering without shock and surprise, without denial of our sorrow and weakness, without resentment or paralyzing fear, yet

- also without acquiescence or capitulation, without surrender or despair.” (Keller 226)
- “Walking with God through suffering means treating God as God and as there, as present. Walking is something nondramatic, rhythmic – it consists of steady, repeated actions you can keep up in a sustained way for a long time.” (Keller 236)
 - “A walk is day in and day out praying; day in and day out Bible and Psalms reading; day in and day out obeying, talking to Christian friends, and going to corporate worship, committing yourself to and fully participating in the life of a church. It is rhythmic, on and on and on. To walk with God is a metaphor that symbolizes slow and steady progress.” (Keller 236)
 - God with Us (especially in suffering)
 - PSALM 34:18 THE LORD IS CLOSE TO THE BROKENHEARTED AND SAVES THOSE WHO ARE CRUSHED IN SPIRIT.
 - PSALM 145:14 THE LORD UPHOLDS ALL THOSE WHO FALL AND LIFTS UP ALL WHO ARE BOWED DOWN.
 - ROMANS 8:26 IN THE SAME WAY, THE SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE OUGHT TO PRAY FOR, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US WITH GROANS THAT WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS.
 - JOHN 10:28 I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE, AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH; NO ONE CAN SNATCH THEM OUT OF MY HAND.

THE STUMP

- “The sorrow I feel has not disappeared, but it has been integrated into my life as a painful part of a healthy whole.” (Sittser 51) “I felt like I was staring at the stump of a huge tree that had just been cut down in my backyard. That stump, which sat all alone, kept reminding me of the beloved tree that I had lost. I could think of nothing but that tree. Every time I looked out the window, all I could see was that stump. Eventually, however, I decided to do something about it. I landscaped my backyard, reclaiming it once again as my own. I decided to keep the stump there, since it was both too big and too precious to remove. Instead of getting rid of it, I worked around it. I planted shrubs, trees, flowers, and grass. I laid out a brick pathway and built two benches. Then I watched everything grow. Now, three years later, the stump remains, still

reminding me of the beloved tree I lost. But the stump is surrounded by a beautiful garden of blooming flowers and growing trees and lush grass. Likewise, the sorrow I feel remains, but I have tried to create a landscape around the loss so that what was once ugly is now an integral part of a larger, lovely whole.” (Sittser 51)

For Further Study

BOOKS:

- Keller, Timothy, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering
- Lewis, C.S., A Grief Observed
- Lewis, C.S., God in the Dock
- Sittser, Jerry, A Grace Disguised
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, Lament for a Son

VIDEO/CLASS

- ‘Suffering and the Sovereignty of God’ – Sproul



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