

# Women @



# THE ORCHARD

THE ORCHARD EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH | WOMEN'S MINISTRIES | JULY 2011

## *The Problem with Pain*

*My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me; and horror has overwhelmed me. And I said, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten to my place of refuge from the stormy wind and tempest (Psalm 55:4-8).*

Here the Psalmist's words give expression to the experience many have during seasons of adversity. Devastating trials that come upon us suddenly, or suffering and hardship that settle over us like dark clouds, cause us to wonder what on earth is happening. The problem with pain is that as we experience anguish, fear, and feelings of being overwhelmed by darkness, our very faith and understanding of God is tested. Pain causes us to ask questions that evolve out of confusion and suffering, which has the potential for either greater faith or bitterness and anger against God.

Pain can have many different faces, so for our purposes I would like to acknowledge that not all pain is physical. Emotional pain can leave scars inside a person's heart that find healing only through God's grace and truth as we go to Him for our answers. The book of Job addresses the problem of pain in one man's life, bringing to the forefront all of the questions we are prone to ask when it comes into our own lives. What's going on? Why is this happening to me? Where did this come from? Where is God in this?

Another *problem with pain* is that no one else can feel what we feel, or truly know the struggle our soul is going through. Emotional or physical pain can be compounded by loneliness, isolation, and weariness. That is why we must never offer simple pat answers to another person's suffering. Adversity often leads us into a place where only God can meet us with assurance of His love

and faithfulness through His Word. As believers, we comfort others best when we gently lead those in pain to Christ who suffered the agony of the cross so that we would never have to go through our suffering alone.

As I have gone through my own long season of affliction, wondering at God's silence, I have grappled with my own questions. Thankfully, God has faithfully met me in His Word, not with instant relief from the pressures and trials that have tested me beyond anything I have ever endured before, but with Himself. He has answered the deeper needs of my soul, which were not nearly as pressing in my wellness. As I have come desperately to Him He has answered by revealing truths to sustain, strengthen, encourage and convict me. He has reminded me of His love, demonstrated at the cross. In Christ, all the riches of His glory are available to me as His daughter: peace in every circumstance, joy in suffering, patience in affliction, and hope for eternity. He has comforted me, sometimes through a Word of truth, other times through a friend whom He sends to enter into my suffering through prayer and the love of Christ.

It is when we are in the deep valleys that God reveals Himself to those who cry out to Him. As we learn to lie quietly on the Potter's wheel He presses more of His likeness into our soul. At the same time we must intentionally fight the battle against both sin and the adversary who wants to defeat and destroy us.

There are many questions we are prone to ask when pain and suffering show up at our house. And when those questions lead us into God's Word they can become tools that strengthen and grow our faith. But I also believe God has a question for us: What will our response reveal about our hearts through this trial that we are facing?

As we go through adversity Scripture shows it can origi-

nate from different sources. It can be the result of personal sin, an attack by Satan, or it may originate with God. Let's look briefly at each of these areas:

**Sin.** Adam and Eve experienced life changing consequences when they chose to sin against God in the Garden (Genesis 3:16-19). To this day, personal sin continues to lead to personal pain. James 1: 14-15 says: "*Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*"

**T**hus, the first suspect should always be our own hearts. We can easily wander from God's Word and into sin without even realizing the trap we are walking into. That should cause us to cling to God's truth, praying for deliverance from temptation and evil. When God reveals that our suffering is a result of sin, we need to take responsibility and confess and repent. Though our consequences may be life long and bring great pain, what is most important is that we are right with God, finding forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Along with that, we must turn away from grumbling about our hurt and blaming others. When God reveals our sin, we should respond with gratitude that He not only died to pay the penalty for that sin, but that He loved us enough to stop us from continuing in its destructive ways. But what if God does not reveal any obvious sin, although we have invited Him to search our hearts as we put ourselves under the light and authority of His Word? We also need to remember that we have an enemy and are in a spiritual battle.

**Satan.** Many women are oblivious to the fact that we are in a spiritual battle and that our enemy is the father of lies and master deceiver. He is also a thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). If he can't keep us from salvation, he will try to keep us out of God's Word, the truth that sets us free. He works tirelessly in an effort to destroy our faith and testimony. Scripture teaches that there are certain signs, actions, and circumstances that may indicate an attack by Satan. James 3:14-16 talks about disorder and every evil practice; while 1 Corinthians 14:33 says our adversary is always behind confusion. Satan is an accuser, (Revelation 12:10) and no truth is in him (John 8:44). Fear, disunity, and dissension are also all fingerprints of the enemy.

**T**he book of Job shows that Satan cannot touch God's children without his permission, which is granted only to accomplish God's sovereign purposes. Still, 1 Peter 5:8-9 instructs us to be *sóber-minded and watchful, for our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. We are called to resist him and stand firm in our faith.* It is helpful to remember when we are battling to stay awake while reading God's Word and praying, when we struggle in relationships, when a child is rebelling, or when we feel condemned in our sin, that we have an enemy at work. We must take a

stand against him, running to Jesus Christ who is our fortress and refuge.

**G**od. Many people believe that since God is good and there is no sin in Him He would never be the source of adversity. However, that is not what the Bible teaches. Isaiah 45:7 says that He is *the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity.* In Exodus 4:11 God asks Moses, "*Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?*" It was the Lord who allowed a messenger from Satan to torment Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Yet, every power, both evil and good, are under the control of Jesus Christ, so we can know that whatever enters our life, God has allowed it.

**W**hen we cry out to God and He is silent, the Bible guides our response. Scripture reminds us that God is God and His ways and thoughts are higher than ours. We are exhorted to *walk by faith*, not by sight, and to *wait* for the Lord. We are to *fear Him* more than man, *praising and exalting* the One who loves us so much He is willing to allow some suffering and pain in our lives for the sake of immeasurable joy and blessing for all eternity.

**T**he problem with pain is that it can seem like it will never end and feels so contrary to the love of God. Yet, 2 Corinthians 4:17 describes our suffering as *a slight momentary affliction that is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.* If you are in pain right now, run to Jesus who suffered death on the cross so that every pain and all suffering would serve God's good purposes and be used for your eternal joy. Allow it, too, to remind you of the great cost of our sin against God, that our mourning might become praise for His mercy and grace. So, my prayer for you, fellow sojourner, is that *the Lord would bring you into an ever deeper understanding of the love of God and the endurance that comes from Christ until pain is a problem no longer.*

Thanks for letting me share my thoughts with you,

*Linda Green*

"May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."

Colossians 1:11-12



# Making It Personal

1. Look up the following verses to see what Scripture says about adversity's "positive side."  
2 Corinthians 4:17-18; James 1: 2-4, James 1:12, Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 4:13, 14.

2. The real question we must answer in adversity is how should I respond to this? We are to have the mind of Christ and a perspective that reflects our eternal destiny. Knowing God's character is an important key to trusting Him during hardships. What do you learn about God that gives you confidence to wait with patience even when God doesn't change a situation that you have prayed about?

Isaiah 14:24, 27

Psalms 31:15

Psalms 56:8-13

Isaiah 49:14-16

Psalms 57:2

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:28

3. The key to victory over despair is to wait on the Lord and take courage, believing that future grace awaits us. Write out a prayer expressing faith and confidence in God as you wait on Him in a difficult circumstance or relationship. (Reflect on the ways the Gospel speaks into your pain).

## ...Women's Summer Study Update..

Our summer study is well under way and over 260 Arlington Heights, Barrington and Itasca women, of every age and season of life, are being challenged and encouraged to be women who reflect the beauty of Christ and His Gospel. One of our leaders commented: *"Week after week, God continues to amaze me with His grace. The women in my group are eager to learn, sorrowful that they haven't heard these truths before, and their hearts are drawing nearer to the love and grace of God. What a blessing to be part of His work this summer!"* The study continues through August 3rd. It's not too late to join us! Contact Michelle Miramonti, [mmiramonti@theorchardefc.org](mailto:mmiramonti@theorchardefc.org), 224.764.4018, for information.

## ...Upcoming Study @ the Itasca Campus..

Women's LIFE Group @ Itasca

*Seeking Him; Experiencing the Joy of Personal Revival*

By: Nancy Leigh DeMoss & Tim Grissom

Are you tired of *trying* to be a good Christian? Do you sometimes feel as if you're just going through the motions of the Christian life? Do you find yourself running on empty spiritually? Is joy and freedom lacking in your Christian walk? If you answered *yes* to any of these questions, then perhaps God is calling you to something deeper. *Seeking Him* is designed to lead you into a revived relationship with our loving heavenly Father. God wants to reveal Himself to you; He wants to fill your heart with Himself; He wants to set you free from every unholy passion; He wants you to drink deeply of the joys found in His presence; He wants your service for Him to be the overflow of genuine love and authentic life! He wants you—and His entire church—to be revived!

Leader: Sheila Clark

Day: Wednesday evenings, beginning September 7

Time: 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Cost: \$15

## ...Upcoming Event @ the Barrington Campus...

Ladies Night at the Grove Café, Friday, August 26th, 7-9 PM

This informal evening will be an opportunity for us to connect with each other. Be encouraged by hearing others share how they've found joy and contentment in Christ in various circumstances. Register online!

- ◇ Copies of this newsletter can be found at the ministry desks at the Arlington Heights, Barrington and Itasca Campuses.
- ◇ To receive the newsletter by email, contact Mariel at [munverricht@theorchardefc.org](mailto:munverricht@theorchardefc.org).
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