

Seminar 4 -Turning Tragedy into Triumph

❖ **Psalm 103 – Celebrating God's grace in all circumstances**

- **103:1-5** – Personal thanksgiving
- **103:6-18** – National gratitude
- **103:19-22** – Universal acclamation

God wants us to grow though suffering.

How do we respond?

1. Listen to the right voices

❖ **A cacophony of voices**

- Pain, people, the church, and our emotions all clamour to be heard.
- The Prosperity Gospel - "*The blessed band of helpful healers.*"
- Pain makes us vulnerable.

❖ **Who will you trust?**

- **Ephesians 6:14-17** – Put on the armour of God.
- "*Faith is taking God at His word.*"
- Do not believe the lies that suffering tells you.
- Faith is a choice - choose to believe God's Word.

❖ **God speaks most clearly through the presence of pain**

- **Psalm 19:7-9** – In his Word God gives us himself.
- **Psalm 18:30** – God's way is perfect.
- **Deuteronomy 8:3** - We live by promises not explanations.
- **Martin Niemöller** – "*What did the Bible mean to me?*"

❖ **What Bible passages have helped you when you have suffered?**

2. Deal with your emotions in a healthy way

❖ Do not give in to negative emotions

- It is easy to become imprisoned in negative emotions - anger, bitterness, frustration, self-pity, helplessness, fear, and guilt.
- **Ephesians 4:25-32** – Do not grieve the Spirit and give a foothold to the devil.

❖ The Bible encourages us to express our grief

- Stoicism – submit to fate, detach from the world and stifle your tears.
- **Job 1:20-22** - We are allowed to grieve.
- **1 Thessalonians 4:13** – The Bible encourages genuine expressions of grief.
“*This is not the way things should be.*”
- Hate death and the pain it causes.
- Express your emotions in a healthy way.
- Mourn and bring it to God.

❖ Find help in the Psalms

- The Psalms cover every expression of human emotion.
- **Psalms 88:1-6, 10-18** – The saddest Psalm in Psalter.
- Find a psalm of lament and use it (e.g Psalm 31).

3. Learn to deal with disappointment

❖ What is Disappointment?

- “*Disappointment is the sadness, displeasure and regret we feel when people or circumstances do not fulfill our hopes and expectations.*”
- Disappointment occurs when there is a disparity between expectation and experience – hope and outcome.
- It is a universal human experience - Christians are not immune.
- “*Life was not meant to be like this!*”

❖ Disappointment has painful consequences

- **Proverbs 13:12** – “*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*”
- **Ecclesiastes** – Our lives are full of frustration in a fallen world.
- It can be a passing emotion for a temporary loss, or it can strike at the heart of our lives and permanently hang over us like a shadow.
- Symptoms may include dismay, despondency, depression, despair, or disillusionment.
- It is often accompanied by severe and debilitating regret.
- “*Always Winter and never Christmas.*”

4. Be honest with God

❖ You can be honest with God

- **Numbers 11:10-15** – The depression of Moses.
- **1 Kings 19:4,10,14** – The despair of Elijah.
- **Job 3:23-26** – The honesty of Job.
- **Habakkuk 1:12-17** – The confusion of the prophet.
- **Luke 24:13-27** – The despondency of the disciples.

❖ God promises to walk with us through the darkness

- **Psalms 23:4** – In the valley he is close.
- **Isaiah 43:1-5** – “When you pass through the waters...”
- God’s presence and promises do not depend upon our feelings or our performance or the strength of our faith.
- **Hebrews 12:1-3** - Jesus went into the darkness and came through – keep your eyes on Jesus.

❖ Learn to draw on God’s grace

- “We never know that God is all we need until we discover that God is all we have got.”
- **1 Peter 5:6-11** - Cast your cares on Him – he cares for you.
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** - Trust and obey.

❖ **Why do we find it difficult to be honest with God?**

❖ **Why do we find it difficult to be honest with our fellow believers?**

5. Build godly relationships

❖ *The priority of relationships*

- The one God exists eternally in a loving community of persons.
- **Genesis 1:26-28** – We are made in his image.
- **Genesis 2:18** - It is not good to be alone – we need people.

❖ *Many biblical examples*

- **Ruth 1:16-18** - Naomi and Ruth.
- **1 Samuel 18:1-5; 23:16** - Jonathan and David.
- **2 Timothy 4:9-13** - Paul's "band of brothers".
- **Matthew 27:36-46** – Jesus wanted the support of his friends.

❖ *2 Corinthians 1:3-6 – become a blessing to others*

- God pours in suffering and comfort to make us channels of blessing.
- Do not put up a wall.
- Enjoy the friends that God gives you - God ministers to us through people.
- "People who need people are..." – the only people in the world.

6. Cultivate a contented and thankful heart

❖ *1 Timothy 6:6 - Godliness with contentment is great gain*

- **James 1:17** – All good things come from God.
- **Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:12-13** - Enjoy what God sends.
- Do not feel guilty or fear their loss.

❖ *Learn to hold things lightly*

- We are pilgrims - every joy and every sorrow are temporary.
- Life is about giving things back.
- Rejoice in what you have rather than grieving over what you have lost.
- Matthew Henry's example – cultivate a positive mental attitude.
- **Philippians 3:12-14** - Forget what is behind and press on to the future.

❖ *Think about heaven*

- **Luke 10:17-20** – We are to rejoice that our names are written in heaven.
- Life is like a bridge – we are not supposed to settle here.

7. Do not give up

❖ *The temptation to give up is sometimes strong*

- **Numbers 11:11-15** – Moses.
- **1 Kings 19:3-5** – Elijah.
- **2 Corinthians 1:8-9** – Paul.

❖ *Philippians 3:10-14 – Paul’s ambition*

- An honest confession.
- A humble commitment.
- A heavenly calling.
- **Elizabeth Eliot** - “Sometimes the Christian life is just setting one foot in front of the other”

❖ *John Stephen Akhwari*

- “Never, never, never, never, never give up.”

❖ *How should we help people when they feel like giving up?*

❖ *Conclusion*

- **Terry Waite** – “I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining; I believe in love, even when the feeling is not; I believe in God, even when he is silent.”
- **Donald Barnhouse** – “I have often trembled on the rock – but the rock has never trembled beneath me.”