

“Don’t you love us?” - Peter & the disciples

Expect brokenness AND know it CANNOT mean that he does not love you.

Tragedy hits hard: At age 16, Jackson was our oldest of four, running cross country, playing drums, and enjoying friends and math. On June 3, 2013 he crashed his car and died with two of his friends. What loss. So what do we do now? Is it over?

“Don’t you love us?” In Mark 4 Jesus was exhausted and asleep in the bow of the boat when a life threatening storm arose. The disciples believed they were going to die. It is interesting how they wake Jesus. They yell, “don’t you love us?” They had only one category of thinking: people loved by Jesus don’t die in storms or have bad things happen to them in this broken world. Their flat view of God only allowed for brokenness to equal “God must hate me.” The modern verbiage of this might be, “God, if this is how you treat your followers, I want nothing to do with you.”

What about you? Have you felt that? How do you deal with the unspeakable pain and brokenness that you have or will soon have? Is there any word that

Jesus says over you that gives hope or provides real help? There are five truths that have become even more important to us as we remind ourselves that God does indeed love his own even in the midst of deep sorrow and pain.

1. There are WHY answers. Why did our son die? Why us? Why do you suffer? This is a normal experience and set of questions to ask when confronted maybe for the first time with something really devastating. The bedrock answer is



that we live in a world that is broken. In Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sin, not only is their intimate relationship with the holy God destroyed, but the material world breaks at that same time. Sin invades. Babies die of AIDS. Tornadoes wipe out towns and kill families. Murders are commonplace.

The Bible could have stopped at Genesis 3.

Instead, God does something about the brokenness. Even in Genesis 3 God says he will send a “Seed”, who is his Son, to forgive the sin and restore the material

world one day. When you taste this world’s brokenness you realize that we do not need a list of good things to do in life to try to appease God, but we need a savior to rescue us and make all things new once again.

Also, God has reasons why he orchestrates all things for our good and his glory even if we can’t figure them out. That is also an argument for God’s existence. If you had to know everything God knows then he would not be “other” or God. Whatever his hidden reasons are in any situation, we know they are from our Good Father who is for us.

The world is more deeply broken than we in the West with our medical science and economy often give it credit.

If we don’t understand that, then we will be grieving that we are grieving. We will be sad that we are sad something bad happened to us. Ironically, that will double your already unbearable pain. Expect brokenness, AND hope in the Redeemer that is saving you in unfailing love.

2. Christ has deep empathy because he’s been there. God does not just theoretically experience our pain, but

Jesus left heaven, became flesh, and experienced pain himself. That is what makes him sympathetic with deep empathy for us, because he knows first hand what pain we are experiencing.

Remember, don’t avoid tears. Tears are not the enemy. The “man of sorrows” - what many people called Jesus - weeps with you.

So if tears are not the enemy, what is the real enemy? Bitterness or despondency - giving up - these are the real enemies.

3. Lament will give you language to move forward. What do you say to others when it hurts so bad? Do you try to say something profound or positive that does not reflect how you really feel and all

that you are wrestling? About one-third of all the Psalms are Lament prayers that are in the Bible to give voice to our pain AND prove that God wants raw, unpremeditated conversation with him. “Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust” (Mark Vroegop). Psalm 13, for instance, starts with, “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?” We know God is smart and does not blank out over what he sees or remembers.

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”
- *Romans 8:32*

But lament helps us process when what we KNOW to be true about God does not FEEL true in the moment.

Let these Psalms teach you to run to God (not give him the silent treatment), voice your complaint, ask him for the help you don't have, and trust him that he is indeed good and for you as a follower of Christ (Vroegop).

Lament and remembering the promises of God is how you beat the real enemies of bitterness and / or despondency. If you stuff your tears and your pain "with a stiff upper lip", they will come back and bite you later. Grief is a roller coaster that is not linear. Lean into your grief and sadness. Let the tears come when they come. Pray to God whatever comes out. Write down some promises of God on 3"x5" cards or print them, memorize them, and call them to mind. They are true.

4. The bad will be undone. What is heaven? Is it playing harps on clouds after we die? No, Scriptrue teaches it is a material future in a completely restored earth and heavens. Do you believe this? Adam was called to make the whole earth like the Garden of Eden. In sin he failed. But, what he failed to do, the "Second Adam" Jesus will do by one day presenting the whole earth redone and restored to his Father. Brokenness will not just be made right, it will be undone. The world will be set right. Jackson will walk in a real, restored place with me and with God. There is real hope in what is next.

5. It cannot mean he does not love me. If God already did the impossible, why would he not do the lesser too? In Romans 8, Paul argues this when he says, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he

Some Next Steps?
Here is a true promise to memorize so you can TELL it to yourself instead of LISTEN to yourself on things that may not be true, especially in grief:

"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me" (Psalm 57:1-2).

What are the promises here? He is a real refuge to run to when real destruction comes like a storm - AND he is powerful enough to still accomplish his purpose which he does have AND cannot be thwarted (blicksblog.org/memory).

not also with him graciously give us all things?" When we suffer, we know that whatever the reason is, it CANNOT be because he does not love us. He already proved his love by killing his beloved Son for you.

How do I know I am not being punished? Did this tragedy happen because God has it out for me or is getting back at me? There is no "double jeopardy" with God. He cannot punish both you and his Son for the same sin. Either Christ's death covers the sins for his followers or people will pay for their own sins in hell. It can't be paid twice. Now, when Jesus intercedes for his own daily before the Father, he does not pray for mercy but rather for justice. He prays, "Give them, Father, the love and true life and care and counsel and help that belong to your own children who are forgiven and loved."

Your suffering is not wasted. "...Jesus took away the only kind of suffering that can really destroy you: that is being cast away from God. He took that so that now all suffering that comes into your life will only make you great. A lump of coal under pressure becomes a diamond. And the suffering of a person in Christ only turns you into somebody gorgeous. Jesus Christ suffered, not so that we would never suffer but so that

when we suffer we would be like him" (Tim Keller, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering). God is for you, he now gives you justice, and he is using even the pain to make you look and act like the deep character of his Son.

So what? Fear him by finding him still to be beautiful and good, even in grief, pain, and unspeakable sorrow. He still knows how to calm storms and comfort his own with his words. He is the only One for whom the wind and the waves still obey. It is not true, as the disciples surmised that day on the lake, that he does not love you. God is for his own in immeasurable love.

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