

Suffering and Adversity...Why me?

By Jocelyn Wallace

Isaiah 43:1-3a

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

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.

For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Scripture About Suffering

- Genesis 45:1-11; 50:20
- Deut 8:1-10
- Psalm 13, 42, 73, 77, 88
- The book of Job
- Jeremiah and Lamentations
- John 9:1-3
- Romans 5:3-5; 8:17-39
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18
- 2 Timothy 3:12
- Hebrews 4:14-16; 10-12
- James 1:2-18
- 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:11-29

Losses and Crosses

J.I. Packer "Suffering...may conveniently be defined as getting what you do not want while wanting what you do not get. This definition covers all forms of loss, hurt, pain, grief, and weakness – all experiences of rejection, injustice, disappointment, discouragement, frustration, and being the butt of others' hatred, ridicule, cruelty, callousness, anger, and ill-treatment – plus all exposure to foul, sickening, and nightmarish things that make you want to scream, run, or even die. Ease is for heaven, not earth. Life on earth is fundamentally out of shape and out of order by reason of sin... So strains, pains, disappointments, traumas, and frustrations of all sorts await us in the future, just as they have overtaken us already in the past."

John 16:33 – "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

1 Thess 4:13 – We grieve but not like the rest of men who have no hope.

Frank Lake "There is no human experience which cannot be put on the anvil of a lively relationship with God and man and battered into a meaningful shape."

- _____ – a lively relationship with God and his people
- _____ – battering
- _____ – meaningful purpose

Robert Kellemen "With the backdrop of a lively relationship with God it is crucial to face suffering face-to-face with God. When tragedy occurs, we enter a crisis of faith. We either move toward God or away from God."

Biblical Sufferology

Level One Suffering – _____ Suffering

Circumstances: What Happens to Us – Relational Separation

Theological Reality: Our World is Fallen and It Often Falls on Us

Level Two Suffering – _____ Suffering

Condemnation: What Happens In Us – Spiritual Depression

Personal Reality: Our World Is a Mess and It Messes With Our Minds

Stages of Hurting

“It’s normal to hurt. It’s necessary to _____.”

Stage	Typical Grief Response	Biblical Grief Response
1	Denial / Isolation	Candor: Honesty With Myself
2	Anger / Resentment	Complaint: Honesty With God
3	Bargaining / Works	Cry: Asking God for Help
4	Depression / Alienation	Comfort: Receiving God’s Help

Stages of Healing

“It’s possible to _____ and supernatural to grow.”

Stage	Typical Acceptance Response	Biblical Growth Response
5	Regrouping	Waiting: Trusting With Faith
6	Deadening	Wailing: Groaning With Hope
7	Despairing / Doubting	Weaving: Perceiving With Grace
8	Digging Cisterns	Worshipping: Engaging with Love

Source: Robert Kellemen “God’s Healing For Life’s Losses”

Level One Suffering

- Robert Kellemen “All suffering is the dying, separating, and severing of relationships.”
- Walter Wangerin “Death doesn’t wait till the ends of our lives to meet us and to make an end. Instead, we die a hundred times before we die; and all the little endings on the way are like a slowly growing echo of the final bang before that bang takes place.”
- Robert Kellemen “In suffering, God is not getting back at you; He is getting you back to Himself.”
- Suffering _____our hands to God. Augustine said “God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full – there is nowhere for Him to put it.”
- “Suffering causes us to groan for home and to live in hope” (Heb 11:13-16)

Level Two Suffering

- Robert Kellemen “Suffering is not only what happens to us, it is also what happens in us.”
- We may feel spiritually _____, socially betrayed, or contemptuous toward ourselves.
- In spiritual abandonment I may feel like because life is bad and God controls life, then God must be bad too, and I can’t trust him.
- In social betrayal, I learn that I cannot trust people, because they betray me.
- In self-contempt I feel _____and unworthy at my spiritual and social problems. I begin to worry that the problem must be me.

Stages of Hurting

1. _____– Courageous truth telling to myself about life in which I come face to face with the reality of my external and internal suffering.
 - In candor, I admit what is happening to me and I feel what is going on inside of me.
2. _____– Vulnerable frankness about life to God in which I express my pain and confusion over how a good God allows evil and suffering.
 - Complaint is an act of truth-telling faith, and a rehearsal of the bad allowed by the Good.
 - When we complain, we live in the real world honestly, refusing to ignore what is occurring.
 - In complaint, we hide nothing from God because we trust His good heart and because we know He knows our hearts. (Ps 62:8; 73:28)
3. _____– A faith-based plea for mobilization in which I humbly ask God for help based upon my admission that I can’t survive without him.
 - Cry – the shriek of a wounded animal
 - C.S. Lewis “God whispers to us in our pleasures...but shouts to us in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”
 - The opposite of cry is arrogance...the tough, stoic, self-made lone ranger who needs no one, especially not God.
4. _____– Experiencing the presence of God in the presence of suffering – a presence that empowers me to survive scars and plants the seeds of hope that I will yet thrive.
 - Faith does not demand the removal of suffering, it desires endurance in suffering, temptation, and persecution.
 - Co-fortitude – being fortified by the strength of another, having been given courage.

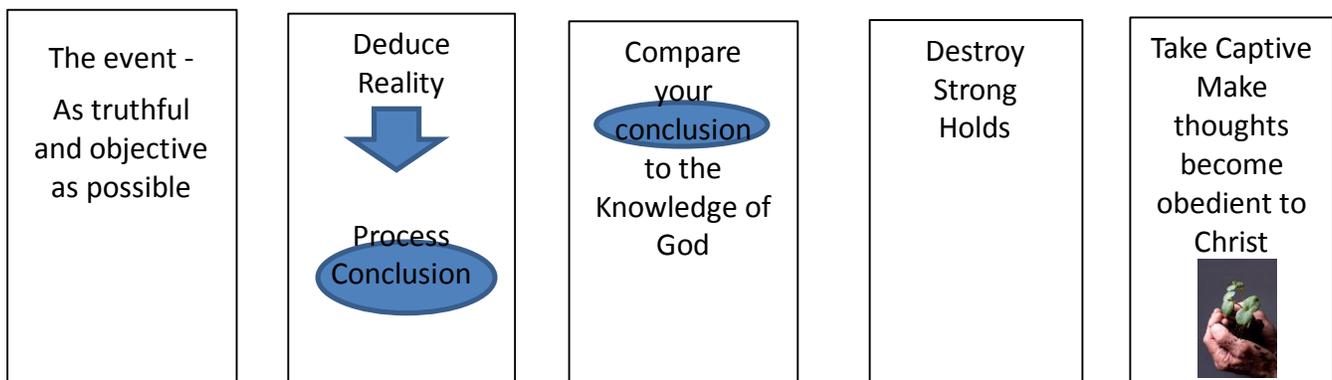
Stage of Healing

5. _____ – Waiting is trusting God’s future provision without working to provide for oneself. It is refusing to take over while refusing to give up. It refuses self-rescue.
- We neither numb our longings nor fulfill them illegitimately.
 - Faith looks back to the past recalling God’s mighty works, and hope looks ahead remembering God’s coming reward.
6. _____ – Longing for heaven and living passionately for God and others while still on earth.
- We are designed for paradise, but we live in the desert.
 - It is about being pregnant with hope...groaning for paradise, walking with God, being naked and unashamed, and for shalom.
7. _____ – Entrusting oneself to God’s larger purposes, good plans, and eternal perspective
- We are always wondering what God might be up to in all of this.
 - Present suffering plus God’s character equals future glory.
8. _____ – Wanting God more than wanting relief. Finding God even if you don’t find answers. Walking with God in the dark and having Him as the light of your soul.
- Suffering’s ultimate purpose is worship – intimate, loving engagement with God, knowing and worshipping God as our Spring of Living Water, our only satisfaction, and our only joy.

II Corinthians 10:3-5

- Take “_____” thoughts (voema, plans, plots, and schemes); 2 Cor 2:11 – Satan’s schemes, designs, and plots. You don’t need God. You can make it on your own..... Which is exactly what sin is. (Kellemen, 2007)
- Demolish (means to take down by force by destroying the foundation) foundations, _____, and pretensions . In 2 Sam 22:3 God claims to be our stronghold....we must rip out the foundation under anyone who lives without needing God
- Arguments / imaginations (logismos)...mental _____, adding up reality, getting rid of warped or out of joint arguments that arrogantly factor God out of life (Kelleman, 2007)
- _____ – (hopla, is an offensive weapon, a battering ram) Eph 1:18-23

Processing Suffering



Resources for Further Study

- [God's Healing for Life's Losses](#) by Robert Kellemen
- [Soul Physician](#) by Robert Kellemen
- [Putting Your Past In Its Place](#) by Stephen Viars
- [Trusting God](#) by Jerry Bridges
- [Is God Really In Control?](#) By Jerry Bridges
- [Suffering and the Sovereignty of God](#) by John Piper
- [It's Not Fair](#) by Wayne Mack
- [Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety](#) by Elyse Fitzpatrick
- [Will Medicine Stop the Pain?](#) By Elyse Fitzpatrick and Laura Hendrickson, M.D.
- [A Tearful Celebration](#) by James Means