

The Good Life | Week Four

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.¹¹ And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.¹² That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

¹³ *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

2 Timothy 1:9-14

Shame is a painful emotion that responds to a sense of failure to attain some ideal state. (Psychology Today)

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I.²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying.

2 Corinthians 11:30-31

The goodness of God is often more about what he brings you

_____ than what he _____ you from.

*And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.
That is why I am suffering as I am.*

2 Timothy 1:11-12a

I don't look at _____ gospel through _____ suffering,

I look at _____ suffering through _____ gospel.

The steps of a righteous man are ordered by God.

Psalms 37:23 (KJV)

Use your scars to declare the _____ of God.

"With all the experience I have, especially in this ocean, I never knew I would suffer the way I did...For 49 hours the wind just blew like heck, and it was rough...my whole mantra this year was 'find a way.' It was really rough that first day after the start and I just said, 'Forget about the surface up. Get your hands in somehow, and with your left hand, say, push Cuba back, and pull Florida towards you.'"

—Diana Nyad (long distance swimmer, after swimming the 110-mile distance from Cuba to Florida, on her fifth and final attempt in 2013)

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* ¹³ *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:10-14

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Luke 24:28-31

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was something impactful that you learned from your devotionals over the past week? Did the conversation around godly sorrow vs. worldly sorrow inspire you to do or change anything? If so, what was it?
2. Would anyone be willing to share with us a pain, hardship, or suffering that you have experienced that God has brought you through, and that you feel you are now better because of it?

For the following questions, reflect on the statement, *“The goodness of God is often more about what he brings you through than what he keeps you from.”*

3. So many people have a “crisis of faith” when they face major pain or tragedy. When you read the statement above, how does that impact the way you view hardships and trials?
4. Looking back over the course of your life, are there any pains, hardships, or sufferings that you have experienced that you may have never truly healed from? Share one of these things briefly if you feel comfortable doing so.
5. Thinking about some of those pains, hardships, and sufferings, what are some reasons you have never healed from them or even faced them at all?

When we look at “that suffering” through the wrong filter, it can keep us from really facing it and dealing with it in ways that produce healing. However, if we look at it through the filter of the goodness of God (“this gospel”), it allows us to take a deep dive into it and find healing.

Week Four | Weekly Reflections

Day 1 | Glory From Scars

1. Have you ever questioned God because of certain experiences that you have gone through? Why or why not?

Point of Interest:

It is easy to question why bad things happen in life. Bad things make us question God's goodness, his intentions, and even his existence. However, in Genesis 3, we see that one of the results of sin is a broken world. Because of sin we experience pain, loss, grief, sickness, etc. However, because of God's goodness and grace, pain and suffering isn't the end of our story. The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus can turn any tragedy into a story of hope.

2. Look up Romans 8:18 and rewrite it in your own words. What hope do you find in this verse?
3. How do you think your scars can be used for God's glory?

Read John 20:24-29

4. How does Jesus use his scars for our good?
5. Is there anything that you need to bring to God in order to find healing? Take some time to write down those things as an act of asking God to help heal your wounds.

Reflect on the following verse today:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

Day 2 | Shame Off You (Part 2)

Read Genesis 3:6-10

1. How do Adam and Eve respond to the shame that they felt after they sinned?
2. Write down some examples when your shame caused you to “hide” from God. Other than shame, what was the underlying emotion you felt that caused you to feel like you needed to hide?

Read Hebrews 12:1-13

3. What do you learn about God in this passage of Scripture?
4. How do verses 10-13 make you view the idea of submitting your actions and, ultimately, your life to God? Based on this scripture, how would you describe God’s desire for your life?

Romans 10:10-13

5. Rewrite verse 11 in your own words.
6. After reading all the Scriptures above, look back at your answers to question 2. Take some time to articulate why you do not need to hide or avoid God, and even more so, why we, as followers of Jesus, do not need to feel shame anymore.

Day 3 | Suffer Well

Read *Philippians 2:3-11*

1. How does knowing that Jesus suffered affect the way you are able to relate with him?
2. How does God respond to Jesus' humility and willingness to suffer in this passage?
3. In light of Jesus' pain and suffering, how does the way that you view your pain and suffering change?
4. Describe the mindset of Jesus in this passage. In what ways can you change your mindset to reflect that of Jesus'?
5. How does it make you feel knowing that your suffering can actually be meaningful?
6. Do you think it is possible to waste your suffering? What might be some examples of this and how can you avoid it?

Reflect on the following quotes today:

"I don't look at 'this gospel' through that suffering, I look at 'that suffering' through this gospel."

"God is in the business of turning rough coals into diamonds through pressure. When we suffer, it is a God-given opportunity to become more like the One who suffered most."

—Randy Alcorn

Day 4 | The Lord Is My...

Read Psalm 23

1. What kind of feelings stir in your heart when you read this passage?
When it comes to suffering, it can be easy to feel alone or even isolate yourself from those around you. Take a moment to reread verse 4.
2. How do the pronouns shift when David is talking about God in verses 1-3 compared to verse 4?
3. What does this suggest about God's whereabouts when you walk through your darkest valley?

Point of Interest:

David, who authored most of the book of Psalms, knew exactly what he was talking about when he wrote about God being our shepherd. Why? Because he intricately knew the character and nature of a shepherd because he had been one. He knew well what kind of person it took to manage sheep.

Read John 10:1-15

4. Write down the characteristics of a shepherd described in verses 1-5.
5. How would you describe the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep? Is your relationship with God similar to the one described in this passage? If not, in what areas do you want to grow?
6. Think back to a time you were in a "darkest valley" season or a time when you were suffering. Spend some time thinking about where you saw God show up during that time, or an area where he was intervening or protecting you, that perhaps you did not notice at the time.

Reflect on the following statement today:

"The goodness of God is often more about what he brings you through than what he keeps you from."

Day 5 | A Day of Reflection

Reflect on this passage:

*I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and **participation in his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, **but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me**. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.***

Philippians 3:10-14

1. Over the next week, take time to focus on each of the bolded phrases in the passage above. Ask yourself where you currently have opportunities to practice these things?
2. Pray about the upcoming part two of “The Good Life,” that God will open your heart and mind to what he wants to reveal to you. Then prayerfully commit to attending each week and giving it your all.