

The Concurrently Companion



Episode 22: Suffering with redemptive intention

Topic Introduction

Stories from around the globe point to the fact that suffering is a very real part of human life in general. But it has a specific place in the Christian walk in particular. With the recent loss of Tim Keller (one of our mentors in the faith), it seemed an appropriate moment to consider this question: How do we talk to our children and students about loss, suffering, and death?

*“We live in the creation/fall/redemption/consummation paradigm. So the question is, how am I going to walk in it? We’re called as image-bearers to suffer with purpose. We’re called to move towards love and relationship, because we’re made in His image, and he’s a Trinitarian God. From all eternity, He’s always lived in communion. We’re made for communion. Everyone we cling to and everything we love is in the process of dying. We don’t like to talk about that. But **we walk around every day in the dying days. So how are we to live in them?**”*

Discussion

To help you in looking back, the discussion included the following:

- » Authors who have shaped our thinking regarding suffering.
 - Scripture, such as 1 Corinthians 15
 - A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis
 - A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken
 - Shattered Dreams* by Lary Crabb
 - The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 - John Piper’s lecture series, “Men of Whom the World’s Not Worthy”
- » Heroes of the faith (refer also to Hebrews 11)
 - J.R.R. Tolkien
 - C.S. Lewis
 - Eric Liddell
 - Elisabeth Elliot
 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- » Key terms: *Incarnational presence, redemptive narrative/paradigm, redemptive intentionality, suffering intentionally/redemptively, holistic awareness*

Questions for self-examination

- » How do I disciple my children to live intentionally and discerningly with the suffering they will witness and experience in the world?
- » From the episode:
 - What happens when suffering creates a crisis of identity?
 - What happens when suffering creates, from our angle, a crisis of God's character?
 - What happens when we realize we cannot escape suffering?
 - And how do we suffer with redemptive intention?
- » What does it mean to *suffer redemptively*? How can I help my children understand this idea?
- » What losses have I experienced that I can share with them to help form their thinking? What does it mean to "lose my life" that I can gain Christ?
- » How do I as an individual respond to the loss I'm experiencing? How do I respond to the loss that my children are experiencing? How do I respond to others in my community who are experiencing suffering and loss?
- » What ministers to you in the midst of suffering or struggle? What gives you perspective?
- » James 1:2 encourages us to "consider it all joy when we face trials of any kind." How do I do that, trust the Father in that, and entrust the children in my care to the Father in this process in their lives as well?

Questions to ask your kids and students

- » What does it mean to suffer? When have you experienced suffering, struggle, or pain?
- » What kind of suffering and struggle do you notice in Bible stories? In news stories?
- » Does man's suffering mean God doesn't love us? Explain.
- » What does the Bible say about Jesus' experience of suffering? Why did He suffer?
- » What ministers to you in the midst of suffering or struggle? What gives you perspective?
- » Is there an incorrect emotional response to suffering? Explain.
- » How do we "suffer redemptively"? What could that look like? What does it mean to "die to self"? How is that a picture of the gospel to others?
- » How do wisdom and suffering relate? Refer to James 1.

Scriptural Anchors/Provision

- » 1 Kings 19
- » Psalm 73:21-26
- » Mark 8:34
- » 1 Peter 1

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