

# Finding Hope When You Hit Rock Bottom

“Then she [Naomi] arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food” (Ruth 1:6).

Have you ever hit rock bottom? Have you ever lost someone you dearly loved? Have you ever felt like your whole world came crashing down, that there was no one to turn to and God seemed far away? That’s what these wounded widows felt as they wept together at the funerals for their husbands.

But then, there’s a hint of hope from God that lit up the night sky of their darkest days. Ruth 1:6 provides a very important underlying theological revelation of God in Ruth for two reasons. First, while God is mentioned 23 times in the book, this is only one of two occasions where the unknown author directly mentions God (1:6 and 4:13). These bookends at the beginning and end of the story show God blessing with food and a child, while the other 21 occasions when God is spoken of are on the lips of the various characters in the book explaining *how* He is working in their lives. This shows us that a lot of what we learn about God is from other people who speak His truth into our lives.

The second reason this verse provides an important underlying theological revelation of God in Ruth is because here, the providence of God is revealed and stands as the theme of the entire book and thread, which weaves all the lives therein together. Much like a song needs a beat to hold together, so a story needs a theme to hold together. And here the theme of God’s providence is revealed.

In speaking of God’s providence, Christians have always held

that God works through His visible hand of miracle (e.g., a burning bush, parted sea, visible angel, etc.) and invisible hand of providence, which is only seen by those with faith that gives them eyes to see it at work in their lives. In Ruth, God's visible hand of miracle is never revealed, but God's invisible hand of providence is continually revealed in the lives of ordinary people and ordinary events such as food, marriage, and children. An angel never arrives, God never speaks, and a miracle never happens in Ruth. But God was quietly, subtly, and certainly at work. This gives us hope that He is also at work in our lives, even if we don't see it at first.

When we speak of God's providence, we confess that God is BOTH sovereign and good to us personally. This means God not only created us and our world, but He also sustains and rules over all creation in general, including the details of our lives. This doesn't mean that everything that happens is God's will, as God is repeatedly grieved and angry at sin, as is confirmed throughout Scripture. But, it does mean that God is free to do as He pleases and ultimately works out all things for His glory and our good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28). And, this provides home amidst hardship.

*Looking back at your life, how have you seen God's hand of loving providence at work through circumstances? {eoa}*

**Mark Driscoll** is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Spirit-Filled Jesus, which you can preorder here. He currently pastors The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of Pastor Mark Driscoll's Bible teaching, please visit or download the app.

Click here to get a free devotional ebook from Pastor Mark Driscoll.

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# Why God May Give You a 'Sanctified Affliction'

“In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years, and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.” (Ruth 1:1-5)

The Book of Ruth is the Cinderella story of the Old Testament, and it's one of the most wonderfully written stories in all of Scripture. It's also one of only two books in the entire Bible named after a woman, and the only one named after someone who wasn't racially Jewish. Furthermore, it focuses on a female friendship between the young new convert Ruth and the older Naomi, who struggled with bitterness. And the love story between Ruth and Boaz is on par with anything a Hollywood filmmaker can dream up.

The story opens in one of the darkest seasons of Old Testament history when God's people were living in sin during a famine brought on as a consequence of their hard hearts toward Him. Naomi was a Jewish woman whose husband moved her to the godless town of Moab, whose inhabitants descended from incest in the days of Genesis. There, Naomi saw her sons marry Moabite women and then she experienced the death of her sons

and husband, leaving her destitute and alone. Funerals where three grieving widows say goodbye to their husbands serve as a bleak backdrop for the beginning of an epic adventure of faith.

Throughout the book, we see the theme of God's good providence. Practically, this means that He can and does bring us both blessing (like bread) and what the Puritan John Flavel called "a sanctified affliction." There's a difference between "hurt" and "harm," since hurt can at times be helpful and not harmful. For example, the pain of a surgeon cutting cancer out of our body does hurt, but is helpful rather than harmful. Like a surgeon, God at times does allow, or even cause, some things that are painful in the short term but helpful in the long term—much like a doctor who allows the brief hurt of surgery for the greater good of removing deadly cancer that would harm and kill the infected person. Yes, the women are hurting, but healing is coming to move them from harm's way.

*Ruth begins with an honest look at a painful season in the life of Naomi and Ruth. Have you ever had a season like theirs where maybe you had financial troubles, lost a loved one, or had to move? {eoa}*

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# Liberation or License: The Problem of Grace

I can still remember being a senior in high school, when a fellow student who was a Christian attempted to share the gospel with me. He began by telling me I was a sinner, to which I chuckled. I asked him if he had ever done any drugs or had any alcohol, and I said I was not really much of a sinner because I hadn't done those things. I then went on to list all my good deeds.

I thought it funny that someone who was, in my eyes, more sinful than I was sought to convince me I was a wretched sinner who needed God's grace. To me, all religions were much like hospitals for sick and dying people—and as long as people were not sick or dying, they had no need for any religion.

Since I was doing just fine and excelling in life, the thought of needing God and religion made as much sense as a healthy person needing a surgeon and a hospital. Yet in my heart I was filled with self-righteousness, pride, condemnation of others and no real love for God, though I was somewhat spiritual.

Awareness of my own sinfulness hit me in college during a state university philosophy class, of all places. There, God broke through and revealed to me the depth of my sin. We had to read some writings by the church father Augustine, who said the root of all sin is pride—that pride is the greatest sin of all and, in effect, the mother sin that births all other sins. Furthermore, he argued biblically that sin is not just what we do but is, in fact, a far deeper problem of who we are by nature. As I read Augustine's words and the fact that Satan was the proudest person who ever lived and Jesus the humblest person who ever lived, it was as if my entire world turned upside down.

I was shaken to my core when I heard that pride was the root of my corruption and not the source of my righteousness. I had not sought to merit my salvation but simply assumed the “good” life I was living was adequate enough for God to be pleased with me and to take me to heaven when my “good” life was concluded.

The Bible told me the unvarnished truth: Sin has infected and affected all of me. Sin has corrupted my mind so that I do not think God’s thoughts (Eph. 4:18). Sin has corrupted my will so that I do not desire God’s desires (Rom. 6:16-17). It has corrupted my emotions so that I do not feel what God feels (Titus 3:3). It has corrupted my body so that I do not experience the health God originally intended for me (Rom. 8:10). It has corrupted my relationships with God and people so that I am separated by sin (Col. 1:21). And it has corrupted my behavior, as I do the opposite of what God commands of me (Rom. 7:15-20). Apart from the grace of God, I am doomed to misery for all eternity.

Put simply, nothing in all of Christianity makes any sense apart from a proper understanding of our sin and God’s grace. Indeed, the Bible is a sword, and anyone who fails to understand grace will wield it to their own demise and the devastation of their hearers. For this reason, it’s important to recognize the two directions in which we drift away from the grace of God: legalism on the right and libertinism on the left.

### **Grace and Legalism**

Legalists see only the demands and commands of Scripture and make long lists of rules by which to judge people and enslave them to the law of duty that kills delight. They also overlook all that Jesus has done to fulfill the demands of the law in our place so that our hope and trust is in our own efforts and not Jesus’ finished work, which is a disgrace to grace.

Paul condemns legalists, saying, "You have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4, ESV) to people who basically thought they were saved by grace but were kept by their own works and law-keeping so that God would love them. They wrongly believed that if they obeyed, God would love them, rather than believe the truth of grace, which is that God loves us so that we will then want to obey. That is why Paul says the entire domain in which true Christians live is no longer works but grace, "this grace in which we stand" (Rom. 5:2).

The self-effort of works that dominates every religion but biblical Christianity focuses legalistically on what we must do so that God will accept us, forgive us, embrace us or, in a word, love us. Conversely, Christianity alone says that human works are antithetical to God's grace. Romans 11:6 declares that "if [salvation] is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace." Indeed, we are saved by God's saving grace, and we are saved to good works.

Nonetheless, those good works also come by God's grace working powerfully by the Holy Spirit through us: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10).

The issue is not whether Christians should do Spirit-empowered good works, such as loving their city, feeding the poor, caring for single mothers and their children, loving their enemies or telling the truth, but rather how and why. The answer is not that we do good works so that God will love us or because we have to do them. Rather, we do good works because by grace in Jesus Christ, God does love us and we want to do them.

God's grace through the Spirit not only accepts us as we are,

but also changes us to be increasingly more like Jesus out of new hearts with new desires. Therefore, telling a Christian empowered with the Holy Spirit that they have to obey God is like telling a child they have to eat their dessert—there's no need to yell or threaten, as that's what they want to do at the deepest level.

### **Grace and Libertinism**

Contrary to legalists, libertines fail to understand that Jesus' death for sin and God's saving grace enable us to put our sin to death. They are prone to simply see God's grace as having no effect until after we have sinned. To them, grace merely forgives the evil we do without transforming us to change what we do.

Anticipating such an abuse of grace, Paul argues, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2).

In context, Paul is not declaring that anyone will achieve sinless perfection in this life. Rather, he is declaring that anyone who has experienced the saving grace of God knows that Jesus can and will forgive sin—and that in addition, He transforms us. Subsequently, those who want to keep sinning and simply expect Jesus to forgive them without experiencing any real repentance or life change have no true saving relationship with God and are abusing the grace of God. A sinning Christian is a miserable Christian.

Perhaps the most pathetic man I have ever argued with about this point was an adulterer. He had been divorced a few times, on each occasion for committing adultery on his Christian wife while claiming to be a Christian and then running off with other women. When I confronted him on his repeated violation of the seventh commandment, he espoused the sorriest view of grace I have ever heard.

When the man first married, his wife had said she would never divorce him and would always forgive him. He interpreted that as a free pass to a life of adultery. He also said that as far as he was concerned, God's grace meant that he could do whatever he wanted and that Jesus was obligated to forgive him and give him grace. In his mind, Jesus was not his Lord but rather his clean-up crew.

I told him that if his response to a gracious wife was habitual, betraying sin, he was an evil man who had no understanding of grace. I also told him that, by definition, God is not obligated to give him grace because grace is a gift to the ill-deserving. I told him God's grace not only forgives our sin but also transforms our lives so that we put sin to death because Jesus died for sin.

He disagreed and said he could not lose his salvation so he was not worried. I replied that Christians cannot lose their salvation—but that by all I could surmise, he was likely not a Christian. I then shared 1 John 2:4, which says, "Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar." This man's walk with Jesus resembled the walk of Judas.

### **Too Good to Be True?**

I do believe in the grace of God. But I must confess that sometimes I easily forget and wander from it. Why? Because it all seems too good to be true. God's grace is true and found only in, by, through and for Jesus Christ. Therefore, I keep reminding myself of the grace of God and its sufficiency for every aspect of every day of my existence.

From beginning to end, the Christian life is by the grace of God to the glory of God for the good of His people.

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*of and co-founder of the Acts 29 church-planting network. Pastor Mark and his wife, Grace, have five children. This article is adapted from his book Religion Saves: And Nine Other Misconceptions, published by Crossway, reprinted with permission.*

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Mark Driscoll answers the tough question of why God's saving grace allows so many to live as "lukewarm" Christians at

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## **How Can the Tired Mom Stay Connected With Hubby?**

Courtney asks, "Any advice on marriage in the trenches—when you have multiple little ones, money is tight, date nights are tough, sleep non-existent, etc.?"

Courtney, congrats on the "little ones." They are a blessing. An exhausting blessing, but a blessing nonetheless.

Grace and I understand your season of life. We had five children in eight years. When the kids were little, we were also planting the church, which meant long hours for both of us. Toss in any combination of cold or flu running through the house, teething or travel, and things can feel overwhelming and exhausting.

Most of the time, money is tight in this season as well, as you are trying to live off of one income and dad is trying to get his career started. Admittedly, these were tough years for us. Looking back, Grace and I did not get this right all the time. But we would offer the following suggestions, as Grace

thinks aloud and I type along:

## **1. Pray**

Get prayer time in the morning to start the day. Grace says even if you have to get up a few minutes early and pray while you are lying in bed, it's worth it. Spend time in prayer with your husband, and during the day use texting to stay connected and in prayer for one another.

## **2. Worship**

Keep your relationship with the Lord going. Listen to podcasts or the YouVersion audio Bible while you do your chores, pick a verse to meditate on, read Scripture to the kids—whatever works for you, you need to do. Try not to miss church.

Even if you have to get up a few minutes early and pray while you are lying in bed, it's worth it.

## **3. Sleep**

Don't feel guilty about taking a nap. Jesus took a nap in the Bible. Sometimes, you just have to sleep when the kids sleep. If you don't get enough sleep and you try to keep up with every task, things might not fall apart—but you will.

## **4. Prioritize**

Don't try to do it all, but discuss what the priorities are. Kids are unpredictable. They make a mess, get sick, get hurt, break something, need you to hold them and love them, etc. You will never check everything off your list, so give yourself some grace. You and your hubby need to figure out what the priorities are, do the most important things first, and get to the rest if and when you can.

Your car will be filled with action figures, crushed crayons and decaying snacks. Your laundry will at some point be stacked up to what Paul calls the "third heaven." At some

point, your kids will likely be wearing a swimsuit and rubber boots with chocolate in their hair. Take a photo, make a joke, and let it go.

## **5. Date**

See if you can organize a date night co-op with people you trust who are family or church family. You cannot trust just anyone with your kids. But if there are godly people you do trust, maybe you could find, say, four couples, and each one can take turns watching the kids on date night. This way, you would at least get three weeks out of four without having to spend a ton on babysitting.

Also, godly college gals sometimes like to do this as a ministry. When we were dating in college, for example, we knew a godly family who could not afford childcare for date night. So Grace and I volunteered to do that for them a few times a month. We wanted to marry and have kids, and we figured we could learn a lot by being with their kids and serving them at the same time.

## **6. Get Creative**

Ask for date night gift cards for holidays and birthdays. Stacking up a few gift cards to restaurants and using them during a happy hour can stretch out a few nice date nights.

## **7. Have a Night In**

Learn to get time together at night at home. Whether this is soaking in the tub, sitting by the fire or just getting a favorite beverage to enjoy while visiting over a board game, at least it's some adult connecting time. This kind of time multiple nights a week goes a long way in the little years. Some couples just enjoy having the kids out of the house for a few hours so they can come home to have dinner and do whatever without interruptions for a few hours.

## **8. Be Silly**

If you are stressed, your kids will be stressed, so take time to do some silly and fun things with the kids. If you don't have any fun until your husband gets home, you can be pretty frazzled by the end of the day. So try to find some ways to have fun even with the kids.

## **9. Pursue Hope and Joy**

What can happen when you are both busy, exhausted and depleted is that you start to feel overwhelmed and hopeless. Throw in some hormones or post-birth troubles, and your outlook can get dark fast. What you need is some hope.

Putting in place some plans and patterns can go a long way toward keeping you both hopeful, which helps you be joyful. Not to do yet another shameless book plug, but if you have *Real Marriage*, the appendix on "Reverse Engineering Your Life and Marriage" is a very practical tool that might help with some of these issues as you try to architect your life together.

You will never check everything off your list, so give yourself some grace.

Lastly, these years go way too fast. These are hard years but wonderful years. Once these years are gone, they are gone forever.

Our oldest just got her driver's license. I can still remember when her main mode of transportation was a piggyback ride from me. Do all you can to not just endure but also enjoy these years.

Thank you for asking this question. You are not alone. A lot of people have this question. We are praying for you, your hubby and your blessings! We've been there. We get it. And we appreciate you inviting us to speak in to your marriage and

family. Thank you!

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## All the Many Graces

The grace of God includes forgiveness, but it’s far more than just that:

- God’s **electing grace** chose to save us (2 Tim. 1:8-9).
- God’s **saving grace** was preached to us through the gospel (Col. 1:5-6).
- God’s **regenerating grace** made us born again through the Spirit (1 Pet. 1:3).
- God’s **converting grace** grants us repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8).
- God’s **justifying grace** declared us righteous in His sight (Rom. 3:23-24).
- God’s **adopting grace** made us members of His family with an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:4-6).
- God’s **ministering grace** gifts us to serve others in

ministry (1 Pet. 4:10).

- God's **sanctifying grace** keeps changing us to be more like Jesus by the Spirit's power (Rom. 6:14).
  - God's **provisional grace** sustains the practical needs of our life (James 1:17).
  - God's **financial grace** allows us to pay our bills and be generous toward God and others (2 Cor. 8-9).
  - God's **miraculous grace** allows us to experience the power of God in a variety of ways (Acts 6:8).
  - God's **persevering grace** enables us to endure tough times (Phil. 1:6-7).
  - God's **glorifying grace** will permit us to worship Him for all eternity in joy (Rom. 8:30-32).
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## Why the 'New' Tolerance Is Actually Intolerant

After the release of our book [Real Marriage](#), my wife, Grace, and I had media interviews set up with a number of folks in the mainstream press. But the interview I was most concerned about was with [CNN's](#) Piers Morgan, who seems to enjoy kicking evangelicals as much as David Beckham likes kicking soccer balls.

A few days prior to my interview, Kirk Cameron had been a guest on the show, and Piers took him to the proverbial woodshed for his biblical views on homosexuality and gay marriage. I decided to handle the show alone, rather than subject my lovely wife to what I was sure would amount to juggling live grenades in front of an international audience.

To be honest, I feared that if Piers Morgan was unkind to my wife, I would lose my cool and our interview would result in a

legendary YouTube clip featuring me vaulting over the desk while yelling my dad's old construction-worker words to extend what the apostle Paul calls "the right hand of fellowship."

By God's grace, however, things went well with Piers. He was an enjoyable guy for the most part. We are both Irish, formerly Catholic and stubborn, so it felt familiar. I brought him a nice study Bible, and he thanked me, saying I was the first person to ever give him such a gift. The show was edited fairly, though I was bummed they took out the segment where I told him that one day he would be sitting across the desk from Jesus Christ to answer God's questions and that he was not ready for that day.

### **Which Definition of Tolerance?**

At one point, our discussion turned to the subject of tolerance. Piers gave a lot of weight to the issue, as do many in our culture today:

**Piers Morgan:** Do you think you're a tolerant kind of guy?

**Mark Driscoll:** I love people very much and—

**Morgan:** That's not the same thing.

**Driscoll:** Well, how do you disagree with people that you love? That's a very difficult issue for everybody, but for a pastor in particular, because—

**Morgan:** But do you preach tolerance?

**Driscoll:** I've preached that we should love our neighbor, that we should accept—

**Morgan:** But tolerance. Tolerance in particular.

**Driscoll:** You keep hammering it. What do you mean by tolerance?

**Morgan:** Tolerating people who may have a lifestyle or a belief

that you don't agree with.

**Driscoll:** Yes, we have to. When Jesus says, "Love your neighbor," He knows you're not going to agree with all your neighbors, but He wants you to love them, to seek good for them, to care for them.

Our conflict was around the old definition of tolerance (which I hold) and the new definition of tolerance (which he holds). Theologian D.A. Carson explains how the definition of tolerance has changed from accepting that lots of people have different views, some of which are wrong, to agreeing that all views are equally true.

### **The Old Tolerance vs. the New Tolerance**

The old view of tolerance assumed that (1) there is objective truth that can be known; (2) various people, groups and perspectives each think they know what that objective truth is and (3) as people/groups disagree, dialogue and debate their conflicting views of the truth, everyone involved will have an opportunity to learn, grow, change and possibly arrive together at the truth.

The new tolerance is different from the old tolerance. The new view of tolerance assumes that (1) there is no objective truth that can be known; (2) various people, groups and perspectives do not have the truth but only what they believe to be the truth and (3) various people, groups and perspectives should not argue and debate their disagreements because there is no truth to be discovered, and to assume otherwise only leads to needless conflicts and prejudices.

### **Absolutely No Absolutes**

A few things are perhaps most curious about the new tolerance. One, it denies moral absolutes while holding to the moral absolute that there is no **moral absolute**. I know that's confusing. It's like saying, "There is no such thing as

absolute truth”—to which the question should be asked, “So does that mean you’re lying when you want us to believe your absolute statement that truth does not exist?” You cannot say absolutely that there are no absolutes. I hope you see that the statement itself saws off the very limb it’s sitting on.

Two, the new **tolerance** is dreadfully intolerant. Ask average people arguing that every moral view is equally valid and respectable whether they think it’s right for big corporations to destroy the planet, that women at one time could not vote or that people once smoked on airplanes, and see if they are willing to truly welcome, embrace, celebrate and tolerate everyone and everything.

I’m pretty sure if an old guy smoking a cigarette while buying stocks in oil companies and gun makers and bemoaning it was a big mistake to let women learn to read was sitting on a plane next to a feminist on staff with Greenpeace, she would not defend his equally wise and welcomed alternative lifestyle to the flight attendant who was being **intolerant** for asking him to put out his cigarette.

### **Morality as Wine Tasting**

Today morality is more like wine tasting than banking. In banking, there is a right and wrong answer. If you deposit \$1,000 in a new bank account and a week later try to withdraw \$80, you would not be willing to agree to disagree when the teller says your account is empty.

But we don’t see morality like banking anymore. Instead, we see it more like wine tasting. In wine tasting, everyone has their favorite blends and no one is necessarily right or wrong—it all depends on individual palates. No one has the right to declare as an absolute truth that simply because they prefer a specific grape or vintage, it is superior to all other wines.

The problem is, the God of the Bible sees **morality** like

banking, not wine tasting. This is why Jesus referred to sins as “debts” in the world’s most famous prayer (Matt. 6:12).

Today there are not sins. There is only one sin, and that is calling anything a sin.

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## **Will 21st-Century Society Honor Christian Conscience or Destroy Our Livelihoods?**

“This [suffering] will be your opportunity to bear witness” (Luke 21:13, ESV).

Good luck building any Christian tribe on an invitation to suffer. Western Christians are, generally speaking, bad at suffering. You can’t major in suffering at Bible college or seminary. Preachers are reticent to speak on it because people don’t want to hear about it.

### **God Works Through Defeat**

Instead, we’d rather believe that faith is a stick and God is a piñata and if we swing hard enough, health and wealth will come pouring down upon us. We don’t want to hear that we have to “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” and so we keep buying books and listening to teachers who promise to give us a map showing us how to walk around the valley of the

shadow of death. We don't want to embrace suffering. We want to avoid it.

God's will, we are wrongly told, involves blessing. Yet we fail to accept that suffering for Jesus is a blessing.

Who or what we fear determines what we do and how we live. What are you fearful of? Rejection, criticism, mockery, conflict, hatred, loneliness, unemployment, poverty, a loss of status?

Pastor Doug Wilson once quipped that "a great reformation and revival ... will happen the same way the early Christians conquered Rome. Their program of conquest consisted largely of two elements—gospel preaching and being eaten by lions—a strategy that has not yet captured the imagination of the contemporary church."

### **Thrown to the Critics**

Today we are more likely to get thrown to the critics rather than the lions. A number of high-profile cases around the world will indicate whether 21st-century society will honor the Christian's conscience or destroy the Christian's livelihood. At this point, a favorable outcome only seems likely in the sense that we serve a God who works through hardship and defeat.

In the western United States, we've heard about the florist in Washington and the photographers in Albuquerque—all dealing with lawsuits after declining to participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies. Those of us on this side of the pond may be less familiar with England's Peter and Hazelmary Bull. Due to their Christian convictions, the elderly owners of a small bed-and-breakfast in Cornwall will only allow married couples to rent rooms with double beds.

This policy became a problem five years ago when the Bulls turned away a gay couple who responded with legal action. The case is now headed to the British Supreme Court, but too late

to save the Chymorvah Hotel. The Independent reports the guesthouse went up for sale after vandalism and death threats started taking a toll on Peter and Hazelmary.

Thrust into the spotlight of public scrutiny (and scorn), the Bulls appeared on British national television to face a furious line of questioning from a pair of morning talk show hosts. Watch as this dear grandmother puts most evangelicals to shame with her gracious but courageous responses:

### **A Chance to Bear Witness**

Somehow the myth has gotten around that if something is difficult or if we encounter opposition, it must not be God's will. God's will, we are wrongly told, involves blessing. Yet we fail to accept that suffering for Jesus is a blessing.

Through Christ, God identified with us and suffered for us in order to save us. In turn, we identify with him and suffer for Him in hopes of glorifying Him and sharing His salvation with others. Jesus tells His disciples to expect this kind of opportunity in opposition. In Luke 21:12–13, He says, "They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness."

Christians will have more and more chances to "bear witness" through hardship in the coming years, I am certain. I praise God that Peter and Hazelmary Bull have provided an example of what faithful witness looks like in our context today. As Hazelmary said, "God demands that our faith doesn't end at the kitchen door. He means for your faith to run in every corner of your life."

Please pray for this couple and for the millions who will hear about Jesus through their story. And get used to hearing a lot more stories like it as the jack-booting intolerance of tolerance marches on.

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# Mark Driscoll: 7 Things That Will Ruin Your Sabbath

The **Sabbath** is a gift from God, which means Satan and our own sin will stand in the way of our enjoyment. No matter what the Sabbath looks like for you, you're likely to experience a few of these obstacles along the way:

## 1. A Poor Work Ethic

If you don't do your **work** during the week, you will end up doing your work on your day off. If you are disorganized, lazy, late, or prone to procrastinate, your day off will get devoured by a bunch of tasks that should be done already.

## 2. Religious Rules

Let the **Holy Spirit** guide and direct your Sabbath. **Religious** people want to remove the Holy Spirit and replace him with their rules, but their rules never work. We are not to be filled with rules; we're to be filled with the Spirit who helps us to obey the word of God. Everyone's day off is going to look a little different. If you find something that works for you, you can make rules for yourself, but you can't impose your rules on anybody else—because you didn't write the Bible.

## 3. Observing A Sabbath Day Without A Sabbath Heart

Sometimes you get to your day off, but you're still anxious, stressed, sleepless, and unable to sit down and enjoy it. Your heart isn't able to Sabbath. Perhaps your **identity** is in your work, so when you're not working you lose all sense of value. Or perhaps you need to find away to take your thoughts captive. I always carry a notebook, and if something comes to mind on my Sabbath day, I write it down so that it's out of my head and I can get to it later.

#### **4. A Pharaoh**

Our pharaoh today tends to fit in our pocket. One of the great Sabbath-killers is the **smartphone**: ever-present, dominating our whole life, interrupting at all hours, and demanding our constant attention with e-mails, social media, articles, calls, texts, and more. Technology will kill your Sabbath if you don't establish some boundaries. If your phone does not Sabbath, your soul cannot Sabbath.

#### **5. Not Planning Your Sabbath—In Pencil**

Have you ever made it to your **day off** only to find you have no plan and no idea how you want to use it? The day disappears before you even begin to enjoy it. Or maybe you're more likely to over-plan and turn your **Sabbath** into another day filled with tasks. Plan your Sabbath, but plan it in pencil. Allow a little flexibility and spontaneity, and make adjustments as you go.

#### ***6. Resting From Your Work Instead of Resting For Your Work***

Work is not sinful. Before sin ever entered the world, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 1:15). It wasn't until after the Fall that work became toilsome. In some way, a fruitful Sabbath must prepare you and energize you for the work God has called you to do during the other six days of the week.

#### **7. Stimulants Instead of Sabbath**

We sabotage our **rest** when we use stimulants instead of Sabbath. Rather than taking a break, we consume coffee, carbs, candy, energy drinks, and soft drinks all day. Then we go home stressed, we watch TV, we surf the Internet, and some will drink into the evening. The result is a population full of caffeinated, drunk, grumpy, phone-answering, Sabbath-violating wrecks. We call it "America."

On this point, it's worthwhile to consider God's pattern at creation, which includes the refrain, "And there was evening and there was morning" to mark each day (Gen. 1). According to the Bible, a new day starts at sundown. Your day doesn't begin when the alarm goes off; it starts with a healthy dinner and a good night's sleep to replenish you for the daytime ahead.

The average person needs 8–9 hours of **sleep** and gets much less than that. Those who cannot get time to sleep because they have too much work are forgetting that part of the work God has assigned to them is sleep.

### **Remember the Sabbath**

Look at your whole life. Seek to arrange your days in such a way that allows you to get things done, and make sure that one of those things is resting in God, enjoying time with him, using the life he has given you, and being with the people he has surrounded you with. That is the heart of the Sabbath.

Are you prone to kill yourself by working too hard? Or do you avoid work as much as possible? In which direction is the **Holy Spirit** calling you to repent? A Sabbath cannot save you—only Jesus can do that—but there is great wisdom in working hard for six days and then enjoying a true day off as he did while on the earth.

*This article was originally posted, here, on The Resurgence website.*

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