

Stand Firmly on These 3 Biblical Truths When You're Struggling

As my 7-year-old daughter curled up on the couch with stomach pain, she looked up at me with sadness and confusion in her eyes and said, "Mommy, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I kind of wish you hadn't had us when you were sick—then you wouldn't have given us all your Lyme Disease."

Although that comment would typically have felt like salt in a wound, thankfully, the Spirit gave me the ability to hear her words as words of searching, not of accusation.

As my own mind raced for answers to the very question that I have often wrestled with as well, I anchored myself back in the truth that God has sovereignly allowed this. I shared with my daughter that God knew the number of our days, the hairs on our head and the struggles we would face, even before we were created. As we continued to talk through how hard it is to be hurting, how it doesn't feel fair, and how sometimes this illness makes us feel angry, sad and confused, I reminded her (and my own heart) that because he is a loving and good God, the only reason he would prevent me from knowing I would pass down this awful illness to my children is if he had a good and loving purpose for it. We may not understand it now, but one day, if we place our trust in him, we will no longer battle this disease and we will be with Jesus.

As her eyes began to brighten, we talked about heaven and the promise that if we put our faith in Jesus, our pain and suffering will come to an end and we will be with him in new bodies for all of eternity.

I tucked my daughter into bed shortly after and heard her pray, "Jesus, thank you that you have a purpose for my Lyme

Disease and that it won't last forever."

My heavy heart felt a little lighter that night because I saw the power of the gospel at work in my little daughter's heart through the pain I long for her to be freed from. Even though she may only grasp it at a surface level, it was a powerful image for my own heart—reminding me how the gospel takes our grief, questions and pain, and infuses hope and life into what would otherwise be hopeless.

Brother or sister, if you are hurting today or struggling to understand why God is allowing something in your life, I encourage you to remind yourself of these gospel truths that are ours in Christ because of what he did for us on the cross:

Because of the gospel, we grieve with hope.

Just as my daughter and I must each walk through the process of grieving the pain that sin has caused in this broken world, those who are in Christ are given the freedom to wrestle with, and process through, the emotions and grief suffering often brings.

We can pound our fists in anguish and weep over what we've lost or hoped life would be, as we lay our hurting hearts bare at the feet of Jesus, trusting He can handle our emotions. However, we can't wallow there. We need to allow the truth of the gospel to speak into our grief and questions.

We can say to our pain, "Because of Christ's sacrifice, this pain is no longer pointless and it is a reminder of the hopeless eternity that I have been saved from. I can dry my tears, rise up and walk forward in the strength of Christ, confident that He is in control and faithfully working in ways I may not see in the moment."

As John Piper so powerfully said, "Occasionally, weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have."

Because of the gospel, our pain has a purpose.

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2, ESV).

If we haven't surrendered our lives to Christ, then pain can be purposed to awaken us to our need for Him. Once we have placed our faith in Christ, God purposes our pain to draw us nearer to Christ, loosen our grip on the world, make us more eternity-minded, mold us more into His image and bring glory to Him through it.

Though we may not see any earthly good coming from our circumstances, we can be confident that God is in control and working according to his purposes for us.

As we see in Job, the Lord allowed him to wrestle with his anguish, even despairing of life and questioning why God had brought such destruction upon his life. This was not to destroy Job, but to lead him to a place of greater humility, repentance and surrender, and to use his life as a testimony to the power and sovereignty of God. Above all, God revealed himself to Job as the all-powerful, all-knowing God, which, in the end, silenced his “whys.”

If we get stuck in the cycle of asking why and refuse to surrender and humble ourselves under a God who we won't always understand, then we will find ourselves trapped in the miserable pit of despair, discontentment, and hopelessness.

However, if we ask Christ to help us bring our grief, mourning, and wrestling to the cross—being reminded of our ultimate hope in the gospel—we will be humbled, softened and able to rest in faith that God is who he says he is and he will be faithful to his promises.

By his grace, we will be able to say with Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.

Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

Because of the gospel, our pain will end.

Apart from Christ, our earthly pain would be nothing more than a despairing glimpse of our eternity. But because of Christ’s sacrifice, taking the pain and punishment we deserve upon Himself, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and can trust God’s promise that our earthly pain will come to an end and even be used for our eternal gain.

For this reason we do not lose heart: Even though our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day. Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

As my daughter and I wrestled with the painful realities that this illness has caused in our family, our eyes were lifted and our burden was lightened as we marveled at the promise of what was to come. It didn’t take the pain away, but in that moment, it lifted our spirits out of the place of hopelessness and self-pity.

Though our outer selves may be experiencing the pain of wasting away, we (as children of God) have the guarantee that our “light affliction” is working “for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (see 2 Cor. 4:17). This requires us to look beyond what we can see and understand in the moment, fixing our eyes on what is unseen. And as we gaze upon Christ, we will become more and more like Him, loving him more, and yearning for that day when we will be at home with him in glory for all eternity.

No matter what you or I are facing today, the gospel can breathe hope into our grieving hearts, give strength to our weary bodies and fill our weak and broken lives with the power of Christ.

Today, let's bring our pain to the foot of the cross and rejoice in Christ's resurrection! Praise God that, having defeated the power of sin and death, Christ now lives to intercede for us. If Christ gave his own life for us, we can trust that He will surely be faithful to equip and carry us through whatever He has allowed for His good purposes. One day, we will be free from the pain of this world and enter into an unimaginable and glorious eternity with our Savior.
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*Adapted from Revive Our Hearts. **Sarah Walton** is a stay-at-home mother of 4 children under the age of 9. She is releasing her first book, co-authored with her sister-in-law, Kristin Wetherell, *Hope When It Hurts: Biblical Reflections That Help You Grasp God's purpose in Your Suffering* in April. Her writing has been featured in The Gospel Coalition, Revive Our Hearts, Crosswalk and .*