

Image: Art is an interesting thing. I can't make sense of this art by Michael Murphy. To me, it's just a bunch of random, disconnected blobs floating in space with nothing to connect them to one another.

Need: But I find it an interesting depiction of how we view our lives - especially in times like these.

Random, disconnected events - some near, far, high, low, that, as we look, we can't make sense of - long for pattern to predict (*examples trying to chart course and then unexpected happens - sickness, relational breakdown*)... We like to be able to connect dots, but when we look at life, sometimes we can't.

Context: **Eccl. 5:8-ch. 7** are about perspective. In **5:8-6:12** we see prosperity is not always good...it won't deliver ultimate things... First half **7** adversity not always bad...God is at work through it. Today I want us to think about what we do when this jumbled mess is all we can make of our lives and circumstances.

Preview: How do we live in a world that - so often - doesn't make sense? That we just can't put together.

- I. **Prob:** When things aren't straight and clear, we get discombobulated (anxious, fearful). We like straight and clear (*experience searching for causes and trying to connect dots*) but not that simple (**13-15**)
- A. Frustration/fear arise bc times we are unable to understand. We aren't as smart as we'd like to be
1. Our experience in life move like this (good and bad intertwined and curving) and we can't make them straight (**13-14**). We can't figure out what will come next as much as we would like to.
 2. Often surroundings don't make sense (**15**). See in **Psalm 73:1-3; 12-14** and it can be frustrating/fearful when things don't fit. And if only have our understanding, we're in heap of trouble.
- B. But God doesn't operate within our frame. So, we wrestle with 2 things which seem to be opposed.
1. One hand, we know from Scripture that God is sovereign and good in all His ways.
 - a) While not responsible as a direct cause (mankind as sinners are still responsible agents - **v. 29**), nothing happens in this world that is outside of God's control.
 - b) But He sovereign in such way that His absolute goodness not compromised. He is sovereign over every virus and disaster, and yet, not just in spite but through them will accomplish a plan that is ultimately good. In some sense, though not directly, He stands behind them. And we can't makes sense of that. We can't unravel that knot, as wise as we might be.
 2. So do we believe, on the one hand, in the God presented to us in the Scriptures (one whose ways are not our ways - **Is. 40:13-14**) or do we become cynical/angry succumbing to frustration and fear bc we feel we deserve to be able to connect the dots (which, if there is a God, we should not expect that we could understand the intricacies of His plan even if he told us).

(So, our teacher here is trying to use wisdom to figure these things out, and he's feeling our pain. He's seeing what we already know - as wise as we might be, we can't unravel the knot. So what's the solution to our feeling of fear or frustration? How do we live in a world that doesn't make sense?)

II. **Sol'n:** Fear of God is what should mark out the frame in which we live our lives **IND B**.

A. (**16-18**) What we can't do is to place our trust in anything within us.

1. Neither w. nor r. will unlock door to complete understanding. We can't manipulate God (**16-18**).
 - a) While we should avoid wickedness and foolishness (which will kill you **v. 17**), we can't think that r. and w. will keep us from difficulty or give us answers. Job was righteous (**1:22**) but difficulty still found him and God never answered his inquiry (**Job 42:1-6**).
 - b) Difficulty still finds r./wise. "**Overly r.**" those who use right living to compel God to make their lives good (*r. as talisman - read Bible = have a good day; go to church = blessing*). We drive selves crazy if we think this is how things work ("destroy self = drive crazy").
 - (1) In Proverbs, the general rule that life of w. And r. Leads to blessing (Gen. 1/2 world). But Eccl is telling us that's not always how things work in Gen. 3 world.
 - (2) *We should never think God owes us only good. He owes us judgment. In mercy He pushes it out to end time when will be full and complete; and He has met that justice in XC so we can repent now and avoid the judgment to come. But understand God owes us nothing.*
2. Now he says don't be stupid. Wisdom and righteousness are worth pursuing more than wickedness (**17-18**), but don't be overly dependent on them...rather...

B. Fear and reverence for God is what should mark out the frame in which we live our lives.

1. That calls for pursuit of w. and r. (the two are related (**James 3:13**)) bc they are better pursuits than wickedness (**v.19**), but are not sufficient in themselves because of sin (**20-22**). No matter how wise you are you're still a sinner saved by God's grace (*John Newton in Nelson, 114*).

2. And sin blurs our vision. The pursuit of wisdom and righteousness in humility is good, but it's not enough to build a house on. In **23-29** he's going to test and observe the limits of wisdom.
 - a) **23-25** - His observations on wisdom still did not yield the answers he sought. He still couldn't make sense of the world around him.
 - b) **26-29** - He observes that the fault lies with man. Mankind is fallen. We are not what we were.
 - (1) In all his observations he cannot find one who is righteous. All are tainted by sin.
 - (a) While the wise/righteous might escape some temptation (adulterous woman in **v. 26** and **Proverbs 1-9**), humans generally are morally crooked.
 - (b) **v. 28** (I didn't write it) is his observation - not a universal truth. underscoring point that humans are corrupt. He may not know everything, but he knows that we all sin.
 - (2) And that fallenness because of sin creates the illusion of control when, in reality, only God is in control. Fearing God demands humility to know that He is God and we are not.

(So how do we approach this paradoxical world as Jesus followers? This world that doesn't make sense and doesn't behave the way we want it to? I still remember the words of an old pastor from years ago.)

III. Don't let what you can't understand destroy what you know and can enjoy

A. Our foundation and frame must be built around trusting that our God is in control.

1. So the frame in which we build our lives must be bounded by what we see in Scripture - chiefly that God is sovereign and good. That becomes the area in which we live. We can wonder why things are going this way or that, but we trust that God is sovereign and good no matter what.
2. So we cling to His promises as we find them in Scripture. **Hebrews 6:19** as anchor for soul. Look we can't make sense of some things we see, but when we look, we see God there. And...

B. We can be thankful even in midst of difficulty and uncertainty. Teacher here is telling us to do more than just see what God does, but to trust and surrender, and even praise and thank Him in all things.

1. We know 1) God uses it (**Rom. 8:38-39**) to serve His purposes. 2) chief purpose to make us like XC. 3) That is where joy is maximised (**Jn. 15:9-11**). 4) He will straighten it all out in His time.
2. Part of thankfulness demands humility. We pursue closeness with God - w. and r. while letting God be God (**Psalms 131; Matt. 6:31-33**). Trust your heavenly Father and don't let what you can't understand destroy what you can enjoy (**14 - paraphrase - nothing is certain**).
3. We are thankful for every good gift as a gift of His grace, and then we trust His grace to get us through what we can't make sense of - For our good and His glory.

Conc: We've all experienced the frustration of not being able to make sense of what is in front of us.

Perhaps at this particular time more than any other. We like A to B, straight lines, but sometimes God's sovereign plan weaves from C-D-E). It doesn't look like we would like for it to look. But it's at those times that, in humility, we need to build our house on who God is, and not on what we think we are. If you will live your lives within that framework - within the bounds of His sovereignty and goodness, it will alter the perspective of how you view difficulty. He is good and He is sovereign. Again, who would have thought God could redeem the worst thing that ever happened in history - death of a righteous man, Jesus - for our good and His glory. But He did. From before time began He intended the death of Jesus - God the Son - for sinners like me and you...all sinners. That means there is life on offer even in the shadow of the cross. Jesus came to call sinners! If you're a sinner, you're in a good spot. You can receive life even now by responding to the call of Jesus in faith, believing that He did it all for you.

Image: Remember that photo from Michael Murphy? Turns out it's all about perspective; the point of view from which you view it. Viewed from our perspective, it doesn't make sense. But from another perspective, we can see. Now when we view our lives and the circumstances we don't understand from a new perspective, we still may not get total clarity. But we see God there, and we trust that He sees.

Read **psalm 36:5-9** - the light by which we see

Joni Erickson Tada comment about wheelchair as teacher? Paul in **2 Cor 12**.

Ps 73:1-3 - But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.

Ps 73:12-14 - Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.

Is. 40:13-14 - Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

Job 1:22 - In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job 42:1-6 - Then Job answered the LORD and said: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

James 3:13 - Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Nelson, 114 John Newton - (former slave trader and author of Amazing Grace) "When I get to heaven, I will be amazed at three things. I will be amazed at those I thought would be there who are not there, those I did not think would be there who are there, and the fact that I am there at all."

Hebrews 6:19 - We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Rom. 8:36-39 - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jn. 15:9-11 - As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Psalms 131 - O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.

Matt. 6:31-33 - "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Rom. 11:33 - Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Isaiah 53:10 - Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Heb. 12:1-2 - let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

2 Cor 12:8-9 - Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Rom. 8:28-29 - And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Greidanus - Even today, the warning is to the point: “Do not be too righteous.” Jesus said, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Matt 9:13). It is impossible for us to be so righteous that God simply must give us a long life, let alone eternal life. But by believing in Jesus, we can be clothed with his righteousness. Paul writes that God “is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). And Christ promised to give us not a long life on earth but eternal life. He said, “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish” (John 10:27–28). “Do not be too righteous” and “Do not be too wicked.” Rather, hear Jesus’ voice, follow him, and you will receive eternal life.

Tada alternative ending - When asked in another article to recount how she has been able to make it for 50 years, here’s what she said...

It has everything to do with God and his grace—not just grace over the long haul, but grace in tiny moments, like breathing in and out, like stepping stones leading you from one experience to the next. The beauty of such grace is that it eclipses the suffering until one July morning, you look back and see five decades of God working in a mighty way.

Grace softens the edges of past pains, helping to highlight the eternal. What you are left with is peace that’s profound, joy that’s unshakable, faith that’s ironclad.

It’s the hard, but beautiful, stuff of which God makes 50 years of your life. Like . . . when did *that* happen? I cannot say, but I sure love Jesus for it.

Psalms 36:5-9 (NLT) - Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the ocean depths. You care for people and animals alike, O LORD. How precious is your unfailing love, O God! All humanity finds shelter in the shadow of your wings. You feed them from the abundance of your own house, letting them drink from your river of delights. For you are the fountain of life, the light by which we see.

“A PSALM OF ASAPH.

Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth. Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them. And they say, “How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

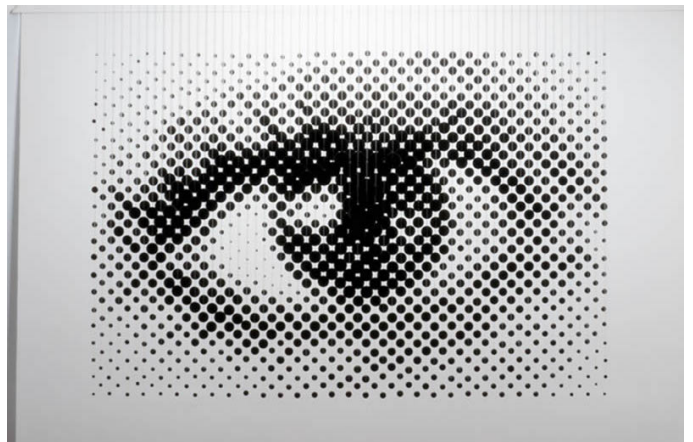
But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.

Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.

Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”

(Psalm 73:0–28 ESV)



Tada - We need to embrace the God who is found in suffering. He is the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He's the Lord who was impaled on a cross. We'd rather Jesus be mild-mannered and mild-tempered, and we'd rather listen to him preach about lilies in a field of flowers. We don't want to go down that hard path of Calvary. But once we do, I think *then* we can gain compassion. Because *compassion* means "with suffering." Christian compassion means suffering with the sufferings of Christ.

Tada - The core of God's plan is to rescue me from sin and self, and to keep rescuing me. The apostle Paul calls it "the gospel . . . by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you" (1 Cor. 15:1-2). I'm in constant need of saving. My displaced hip and scoliosis are sheep dogs that constantly snap at my heels, driving me down the road to Calvary, where I die to the sins Jesus died for. Sure, I have a long way to go before I am whom God destined me to be in glory, but thankfully my paralysis keeps pushing me to "strive to reach for that heavenly prize" (Phil. 3:14).

Tada - God uses suffering to purge sin from our lives, strengthen our commitment to Him, force us to depend on grace, bind us together with other believers, produce discernment, foster sensitivity, discipline our minds, spend our time wisely, stretch our hope, cause us to know Christ better, make us long for truth, lead us to repentance of sin, teach us to give thanks in time of sorrow, increase faith, and strengthen character.

Tada - Real satisfaction comes not in understanding God's motives, but in understanding His character, in trusting in His promises, and in leaning on Him and resting in Him as the Sovereign who knows what He is doing and does all things well.

Swindoll - If we truly believe God is sovereign we must believe that the pain is just as important as the pleasure. CS Lewis - Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

In his book *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis observes that "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Suffering often helps us to redirect our focus. It shifts our thinking from immediate circumstances so we can listen to God concerning His work in our lives. Life as usual is replaced by a spiritual schoolroom.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-shouts-to-us-in-our-pain>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2017/july/joni-eareckson-tada-fifty-years-wheelchair-walk-jesus.html>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reflections-on-50th-anniversary-of-my-diving-accident>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joni_Eareckson_Tada

<http://joniarecksonstada.com/jonis-story-page-1/>

Affliction as the Training Camp of Holiness

Therefore, preach to your people a theology of suffering that places all our trials in the hands and will of a loving Father. [Hebrews 12](#) teaches us to view our sorrows, even the persecutions of wicked men, as part of God’s fatherly discipline: “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” ([Heb. 12:4–6](#)). Why would a loving God discipline his children so severely? He does it so “that we might be partakers of his holiness,” for without that holiness, “no man shall see the Lord” ([Heb 12:10, 14](#)). He is drawing us into his fatherly presence by engraving his image upon us, even through the strokes of a rod.

Teach your congregation to view their sufferings as their training for holiness. Encourage them to submit to the rod of their Father, trusting in his goodness and love revealed at the cross ([Rom. 8:32](#)). Show them the many benefits of submitting to God’s sanctifying trials with meekness. Thomas Brooks says that Christians should be “mute” or quiet under the smiting of God’s rod so that they can (1) learn from God’s correction and repent of sin, (2) distinguish themselves from the world, which murmurs against and curses God, (3) become like Christ, who suffered quietly as a lamb led to slaughter, (4) escape the curse of a fretful spirit, which is a thousand times worse than any outward affliction, (5) enjoy the comfort of inward peace, (6) avoid a futile striving against almighty God, (7) frustrate Satan’s design to tempt them to blaspheme God, and (8) follow in the footsteps of other saints who patiently endured suffering before us.² - Joel Beeke

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6 Pillars of a Christian View on Suffering

June 2, 2013

Ever since the ancient revolt, suffering has been woven, with perplexity and pain, into the fabric of human experience. We all live and move and have our being amid Eden’s wreckage. Affliction and evil—universal as they are real—haunt us, stalk us, plague us.

In a recent lecture delivered at Houston’s [Lanier Theological Library](#) titled “Going Beyond Clichés: Christian Reflection on Suffering and Evil”, Don Carson proposes six pillars to support a Christian worldview for stability through suffering. “A Christian worldview rests on huge, biblically established, theological frameworks—all of which have to be accepted all of the time,” the research professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and author of [How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil](#) explains. “And this massive structure is stable and comprehensive enough to give you a great deal of stability when you go through your darkest hours.” His proposed pillars aren’t cute musings, in other words, but crucial bulwarks.

After differentiating “natural” evil (e.g., tornados), “malicious” evil (e.g., sexual assault), and “accidental” evil (e.g., a bridge collapse)—and observing that this isn’t a uniquely Christian

challenge (“No matter your worldview, you must face the reality of suffering and evil”)—Carson proceeds to reveal the six pillars.

1. Insights from the beginning of the Bible’s storyline.

The scriptural narrative opens with God crafting a world of breathtaking beauty and unfathomable goodness. Paradise pulsates with order, harmony, wholeness, and life. But this garden scene is short-lived. Indeed, in contrast to other worldviews such as Hinduism and dualism, the Bible insists we are now dwelling in a [Genesis 3](#) world marked by sin, suffering, death, and decay. Concerning Jesus’ reflection on suffering in [Luke 13](#), Carson observes: “What Jesus seems to presuppose is that all the sufferings of the world—whether caused by malice [as in [Luke 13:1–3](#)] or by accident [as in [Luke 13:4–5](#)—are not peculiar examples of judgment falling on the distinctively evil, but rather examples of the bare, stark fact that we are all under sentence of death.”

2. Insights from the end of the Bible’s storyline.

The believer’s ultimate hope is that the created order—now so disordered by the effects of sin—will one day be set right ([Rom. 8:18–25](#)). In Christ the King, everything sad will become gloriously untrue. Properly understanding and anticipating the story’s end, then, helps us to eschew a naïve (and ultimately crushing) utopianism now. As Carson reminds us, “We have just come through the bloodiest century in human history. This is a damned world. Human life has never been, is not, and will never be ‘perfectable-so-long-as-we-get-our-politics-right.’”

3. Insights from the place of innocent suffering.

“[Job 42](#) is to the rest of Job what [Revelation 21–22](#) is to the rest of Revelation,” Carson observes. “Not only is justice done, it’s also *seen* to be done.”

Until the curtain drops, however, we live in “all kinds of ambiguities where we do not know the mind of God—and we dare not act as if God owes us detailed explanations.” There are times when the godliest thing we can do is say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him” ([Job 13:15](#)). Indeed, Carson suggests, “God wants our trust [even] more than he wants our understanding.”

4. Insights from the mystery of providence.

Here Carson sketches a brief defense of compatibilism in which he demonstrates two scriptural tensions: (1) God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions to mitigate human responsibility, and (2) men and women are morally responsible creatures, but their moral responsibility never makes God absolutely contingent.

5. Insights from the centrality of the incarnation and the cross.

God was not blindsided by Calvary ([Acts 2:23; 4:27–28](#)). In fact, because of his supreme sovereignty, Christians can proclaim that the cross was a throne. With mystery and glory, the bleeding Nazarene reigned from where he hung. Christianity is uniquely comforting because only the Christian God plunged into the suffering we experience. As Edward Shillito once wrote in a poem titled “Jesus of the Scars”: “But to our wounds only God’s wounds can speak / And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.”

6. Insights from taking up our cross (learning from the persecuted global church).

Though we often think of suffering primarily in terms of “cancer or old age or poverty or war,” Carson notes, the New Testament texts that most commonly speak of suffering have to do with *Christian* suffering—“and they are remarkable” (see, for example, [Acts 5:40–42; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:20–23](#)). As he observes, “There have been more Christian conversions since 1800 than in the previous 1,800 years combined, and there have been more Christian *martyrs* since 1800 than in the previous 1,800 years combined. And to this you have been called [[1 Pet. 2:21](#)].”

A robust theology of suffering is necessary but not sufficient, Carson insists, for at least two additional attitudes characterize mature Christians: (1) they admit their guilt before God and cry to him for renewal and revival (see, for example, [Neh. 8–9](#)), and (2) they are quick to talk about the sheer goodness of God.

To be sure, Carson's framework is *not* necessarily the most helpful thing to offer someone first entering the throes of terrible suffering. "You've just been diagnosed with Stage 4 Melanoma; do you want this lecture?" he asks. Of course not—and you shouldn't. The importance of relational sensitivity and tangible compassion in the midst of crisis cannot be overestimated. Moreover, when the immediate needs are concrete (e.g., water, security, shelter), God's people should be quick to respond in love.

Every believer, Carson concludes, would do well to ponder these six pillars prophylactically—*before* the evil days come. Only then will we be best positioned to face the complexities of suffering with stability, humility, compassion, and joy.