

Week # 7

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JOY OF BEAUTY  
FROM ASHES:  
UNEXPLAINED  
SUFFERING

*The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,  
a stronghold in times of trouble.*

*Those who know your name trust in you,  
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

—Psalm 9:9–10

# WEEK SEVEN

## JOY OF BEAUTY FROM ASHES: UNEXPLAINED SUFFERING

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Suffering comes in many forms—hardships, physical pain, mental health, broken relationships, grief, financial problems, struggles and addictions—the list goes on and on. Whether it’s the little things that build and cause stress, or the big things that knock the breath out of us and take us to our knees, suffering affects us all at some time in our lives.

My story is one of unexpected suffering in the form of grief. During the first part of my day, everything was wonderful. I was on a fun camping trip with my husband and grandsons. At the end of the day my life had changed forever when my husband of 42 years died of a massive heart attack.

Sometimes in our pain and suffering it’s easy to question God or to be angry with Him for what we’re going through. We’ve all heard the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” We ask ourselves, “Why did God let this happen to me?” “What do I do now?” “How can I go on?”

What do we do when we’re met with unexpected suffering? How can any “beauty” be found in the ashes of devastation and pain?

As I’ve struggled through my personal season of suffering, it’s helped me to:

- Remember Who God Is and What He Has Done
- Reflect on God’s Character
- Remember God’s Promises
- Trust God’s Plans
- Keep an Eternal Perspective
- Look to Jesus and Keep Going Forward
- Always Remember I’m Not Alone

## DAY 1 – REMEMBER WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE

Read Genesis 1.

Throughout the Bible, God’s Word tells us who God is—the Creator of life. Read Genesis 1 and take some quiet time to deeply reflect on the scriptures as they remind us about God as the Great Creator. What does this chapter say to you personally?

Make a list of everything God created in the chapter. Think about each creation and how it affects your life each day. What if you never saw the ocean? What if you never heard a bird sing? What if you never smelled a flower? What if you never felt the warm sun on your face? Pray over your list thanking God for who He is and for all He has done.

Read Job 38.

The Lord speaks to Job. He did not answer Job's questions about the suffering he was going through. Instead, what did the Lord say to Job to remind him of who God is and what He has done?

What do the following scriptures reveal to us about God? Do you believe He is who He says He is?

Isaiah 40:25–26

Jeremiah 10:12

Psalm 65

Colossians 1:15–23

Revelation 5:9

Revelation 7:9–10

## DAY 2 – REFLECT ON GOD'S CHARACTER

Our Heavenly Father is not mean or vengeful wanting anyone to suffer. He is kind, loving, faithful, caring and compassionate. What do the following scriptures tell us about the character of God? Write down the characteristics or what He has done in each of the following verses that shows us His unconditional love.

Psalm 103:8, 11, 17

John 1:11–13

Isaiah 53:5–6

Titus 2:11–14

1 Peter 1:3–5

2 Corinthians 5:21

Colossians 1:13–14

John 1:12

1 Timothy 2:3–4

Philippians 2:9–11

Psalm 145:9

1 Peter 2:24

Psalm 86:5

Psalm 9:9–10

Psalm 68:19

Are there other verses about the character of God that are meaningful to you?

God is my Father, my Rock, my Refuge, my Protector, my Redeemer, and my Hiding Place—these characteristics have helped me tremendously through my times of personal suffering. What are some names of God that symbolize what He is to you personally?

Do you believe God cares about us and the pain we're going through? Do you share openly and honestly with Him? Why or why not?

## DAY 3 – REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISES

God loves us with an everlasting love. His promises are true and He is faithful. It's been stated there are over 7,000 promises in God's Word. What promises in scriptures have helped you or can you cling to in times of pain and suffering?

Do you believe and trust in God's promises?

Do you believe God is true to His word and you are not alone in your suffering?

Do you trust He is faithful in what He has promised?

Read each of the following scriptures and write out God's promises to us in each verse.

Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 40:29

Deuteronomy 31:8

Psalms 34:18

Joshua 1:9

Exodus 14:14

Isaiah 43:2

Jeremiah 29:12

Isaiah 26:3

1 Peter 5:10

Psalms 37:23–24

Matthew 11:28–29

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

Isaiah 40:31

Lamentations 3:22–23

Philippians 4:6–9

Psalms 91:14–15

Psalms 145:13–14

Psalms 145:18–20

What encouragement do you receive after meditating on God's promises?

Write down your special promises from God and put them where you can see them each day to remind you of God's presence with you.

## DAY 4 – TRUST GOD'S PLANS

In times of personal suffering, we wonder, "What now?" "What is next in my life?" Our personal goals and plans for the future are shattered. We feel lost and alone. Things did not turn out the way we expected, the way we had planned. At times we just want to shut down and stay in the darkness of our pain. We have no motivation or desire to keep moving forward. We get discouraged and depressed and wonder what difference does it make to keep trying. But God cares and loves us and we can trust Him with our pain. As we lean on

Him, He guides us forward in small baby steps, one day at a time. He gives strength, encouragement, peace, and hope.

God has plans for each of us. Sometimes it's hard to see His plans and His purposes when we're living in pain and darkness. But His plan is for us to prosper, to grow spiritually, and to have a personal relationship and eternal life with Him.

What do these verses tell us about God's plans?

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:28

Psalm 33:11

Jeremiah 1:5

2 Peter 3:9

Psalm 32:8

Proverbs 3:5–6

Ephesians 1:3–14

What is God teaching you during seasons of suffering?

How can our suffering make us stronger? Bring us closer to God?

How do we find peace in suffering?

## DAY 5 – KEEP AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Suffering is for a season. The season may be short and sudden, or it may be long-term with no end in sight. We can endure with God's help and in His strength. It helps me personally to remind myself this world is not my home, that one day I'll be face to face with Jesus and the suffering seasons will be no more.

Reflect on the following verses. Write out each one. What do they say to you? Do they encourage your heart and give you hope?

John 3:16

Revelation 7:15-17

Revelation 11:15

John 10:27–28

Psalm 23:6

Hebrews 11:16

Romans 8:18

John 16:33

Revelation 21:3-4

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

## DAY 6 – LOOK TO JESUS AND KEEP GOING FORWARD

I feel like I have a choice—I can choose to live in pain and darkness or choose light and life. I can trust my Heavenly Father as I go forward each day—trusting He will guide every step, every choice, every decision, step by step, day by day. I can't do it in my own strength but only through His help and with His strength.

Is there any good to be found in seasons of suffering? Can we praise Him in the midst of our pain? Can you think of ten things to be thankful for?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What is God's will for us?

What has God taught you in this hard time?

Can you look back and see how God has helped you?

What does Psalm 119:105 tell us about God's Word?

What has God's Word said to your heart and how can you apply it to your life especially in times of suffering?

How can you look forward with hope?

## DAY 7 – ALWAYS REMEMBER I AM NOT ALONE

God loves us with an everlasting love. The cross is God's response to suffering, pain, the brokenness of humanity and society. He walks through every season of life with us. We are never alone. He sees the exhaustion, the uncertainty, the hurt and pain that life brings. He loves us so much and He's already shown us how much by going to the cross.

Our pain is never wasted. God will use it when we surrender our pain and hurt to Him. Out of pain and hardship stories have been written, songs composed, poems penned, programs started, and much much more. What difference has God made in your life in times of suffering?

Is there someone you can talk to, cry with, and share your heart with that will walk alongside you and pray for you faithfully? We are not meant to do life alone. Reach out when you're having a difficult day. Make a list of those who would be available if you need them.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3–7, God's Word tells us about sharing in the sufferings and in the comfort.

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

Do you believe God can use our suffering and the season we are in to help others?

Do you feel God has given you a story to share about how He's met you in your season of suffering?

As God comforts us, how can we speak words of encouragement to others going through suffering?

How can we give God the glory for the beauty He brings out of the ashes of our unexplained suffering?

How have you seen God glorified in others' lives as they've gone through periods of suffering?



Always remember we are never alone in our suffering. God is before us, behind us, beneath us, beside us, and He loves us unconditionally. He is our SOURCE of all that's needed for life.

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen*  
(Ephesians 3:16–21).

In times of suffering, let's remember who God is, what He has done, how much He loves us, and that we are never alone! Nothing can separate us from His love!