



The Cry Of The Soul In The Waiting Room Of God

By David Christensen

*“My soul is often a chariot without wheels,
clogged and hindered in sin’s miry clay;
Mount it on eagle’s wings and cause it to soar upward to thyself.”*
(A Puritan Prayer)¹

Waiting rooms are hard places. When our daughter was only nine months old, my wife discovered a large lump in her abdomen. Her kidney had ballooned to the size of a grapefruit in her tiny body. Surgery was immediate, and Kari began the long road to recovery. We learned what it was like to live in the waiting room of the Pediatric Critical Care Unit. Tiny bodies in little cribs lined the walls of the unit while parents took turns standing by them or sitting in the waiting room outside. United by our fears for our children, we stood next to each other in the unit or dozed in chairs nearby. We rejoiced for each other when the news was good and agonized when a child took a turn for the worse. Janie and I took turns staying the night in the hospital, sleeping on a cot in the waiting room, or caring for our older daughter at home. Mostly we just waited through long hours and deep worries. We waited to find out that the enlarged kidney was benign. It was! We waited to hear her cries from the pain slowly subside. We waited to see the terror and confusion in her eyes slowly turn to trust and hope. And we prayed. We cried out to God in our fear and confusion, seeking hope in Him. The week before Christmas, we brought Kari home. She was the only Christmas present that mattered that year!

The cry of the soul is the beginning of hope. David, from the cave of Adullam, running for his life, wrote: *I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD; I make supplication with my voice to the LORD. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before Him* (Psalm 142:1-2). David knew that he was in desperate need. He was beyond His ability to cope with the

situation. He was in God's waiting room. All he could do was cry out to the Lord. *Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low*" (Psalm 142:5-6). David wrote some of his greatest psalms from the waiting rooms of life because he knew where to go when feeling overwhelmed. Only when we are most helpless, do we become most zealous in our cries to God. The greatest crises of life elicit the greatest cries of the soul. God allows us to sit in the pit until we recognize our helplessness and cry out to Him who can help.

The cry of the soul is the beginning of hope because God is the author of hope. God can fulfill our greatest needs when the walls of life are closing in around us, and the pressure is too great to bear any longer. The reason we have hope when we cry out to God is that we are trusting in three essential principles about God that create hope for us (Psalm 57:2-3). First, God has a purpose in His waiting room. If God did not have a purpose and all this was mere chance, then we would have no hope. Our cries demonstrate faith that God has a purpose in our circumstances otherwise why cry out to God. Second, God has the power to meet our needs, and God will use that power on behalf of His people. If either God does not have the power or God refuses to use His power, then we have no hope. There is no point in prayer. Third, God loves us with a loyal love. He is reliable. He loves us faithfully even when we are unfaithful to him. We must come to accept this premise too before we truly will cry out to God from the waiting room of life.

CRY OUT TO GOD IN HONEST PRAYER.

When you are in pain, where is God? Has He forgotten or abandoned you? Is He playing some cosmic game of hide and seek? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. God is sometimes "hiding" from us because He wants us to seek Him with our needs. The "hiddenness" of God is a biblical mystery. The prophet Isaiah resolved to *wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob* (Isaiah 8:17) during a time of suffering for the nation of Israel. Jesus hid Himself from the crowds of people despite his brothers' attempts to get him to reveal Himself. He told them it was not the right time, so He went secretly to the feast (John 7:6, 10). Jesus frequently cautioned those He touched during his ministry not to publicize His works, and He spoke in parables to hide the truth from those not ready to hear it (Mt. 9:30; Luke 8:8-10, 56). He often said, *He who has ears to hear let him hear*. Jesus hid His power to stimulate a search for His message. Jesus withdrew behind a curtain of normalcy to draw out the interest of those listening with the ears of faith.

God's "absence" often causes temporary pain. Mary falls at Jesus' feet when He arrives "too late" to save her brother Lazarus from death and cries out in agony, *Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died* (John 11:32). The "if" of God's momentary absence hides the truth of God's perfect timing. His distance is not by chance for God's purpose is greater than our expectations. After his resurrection, Jesus is walking with two disciples on the path to Emmaus and the text tells us that *their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him* (Luke 24:16). Jesus' hiding is intentional. Later he pretends to be traveling farther (Luke 24:28-29), but the disciples prevail upon Him to stay the night with them. Only after the evening meal when Jesus broke the bread were their eyes opened and they recognized Him. God has a perfect sense of timing. Why did Jesus play the game of "hide and seek" with these disciples? They understood and said, *were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining*

the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32) God often teaches us more through his distance than through His presence.

There are several reasons why God hides from us, but the fundamental one is love. God seeks us in His love to seek him with our love. Philip Yancey called it “divine shyness”² and pointed to God’s attempts to woo our love. We would never seek God unless He first sought us. In seeking us, God never coerces our love. He draws us to seek Him. God is caught on the horns of His own dilemma. How does an omnipotent, omniscient, infinite person have a mutual relationship with a finite, limited, fragile person like man without the relationship being all one-sided? God is all powerful. He could easily force our surrender. But God is love, so God seeks our love. Not because He needs our love to be complete but because God knows we need to love Him for us to be complete. God is perfectly complete in Himself, but God created man incomplete apart from a relationship with God. The void in our lives can only be filled by God. God draws us to seek Him because in seeking Him we fulfill our greatest need. Sometimes God draws us to seek Him through spectacular displays of His power as He did on Mt. Sinai. Sometimes God draws us to seek Him through a powerful display of His love such as Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Sometimes God draws us to seek Him by withdrawing Himself from us in a loving “game” of hide and seek. He hides to make us seek. He woos us through temporary withdrawal.

Troubles extended over time test our resolve to seek God. We become distracted in our search. We don’t know that we need God so God must find a way to help us discover our need through problems without obvious solutions. God wants us to wait expectantly for Him to show Himself to us. Our job is to seek God in our pain even if He hides His face from us for a time. David wrote, *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud of the mire, and He set my feet upon a rock, making my footsteps firm* (Psalm 40:1-2). In God’s time, He turns. The Psalmist writes that God turned to him. The verb means to bend or incline – to reach out. The New English Bible translates this phrase; *He bent down to me*. God is like a father who bends down to the level of a toddler crying out in pain. He does not make us rise to His level. He bends to ours. God listens to us in our pain. God hears our cries. Brother Lawrence wrote: “You need not cry very loud, He is nearer than we think.” The father is never far away in this game of “hide and seek.” I have learned what many others have learned by experience. The deepest prayers have no words. They are the inward cries of a heart in pain to a God who loves. Such cries need no words. The soul is connected to God’s heart in a spiritual embrace. Prayer at its deepest level is a mind melt. God is there with us in our tears. We can cry out to God when no one else can hear.

THE PARADIGM FOR THE CRY

David, in Psalm 13 teaches us how to cry out to God. There are 150 psalms, and over 50 of them could be classified as Songs of Lament. Songs of Lament have several basic characteristics³, but they start with a cry for help followed by a request that God would do something about their predicament and, finally, praise for God’s victory. Psalm 13 is an intensely personal song of lament. This psalm can be divided into three stages that mark the cry of the soul to God. It is a good paradigm for prayer. The cries of our soul would do well to follow this pattern.

Stage One: Complaint – we express our feelings to God in the first stage of the process (Psalm 13:1-2) We must cry out in honest prayer. God knows our deepest thoughts. To hide our

complaints behind a façade does not fool Him. Dishonesty always hinders intimacy in relationships. This is never truer than with God. We think to hide the truth because it seems irreverent to speak our real thoughts to God but He can take it. Stage one is a necessary part of crying out to God. All the great men and women of God down through the pages of biblical history have known times of complaint. Patient Job and faithful Moses; melancholy Jeremiah and the Psalmist David have all complained bitterly to God. David may have composed this psalm during his days when King Saul was chasing him, but whether or not he did, we know that David was prone to despair. As C.H. Spurgeon remarked, “David’s heart was more often out of tune than his harp.” We are all prone to “play most on the worst string,” as Spurgeon writes, whenever we are filled with despair.

Relational language like this erupts into accusations when we feel hurt. There are four “*How longs*” in Psalm 13:1-2. They express four accusations which David makes against God, not unlike the accusations we feel today. The psalms are the private prayers of real people. These are the words we say to God sometimes in the privacy of our souls although we don’t often put them on public display. We still think them when in the grip of despair.

YOU ARE FORGETTING ME. David writes, *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?* The word “forever” used here should probably be understood rather loosely. It could well be translated “completely,” “continually” or “utterly.” David blames God first as the source of his troubles. We do the same. We’re in a mess, and the first person we blame is God. Where is God? Why did He allow this to happen? Why doesn’t He bail me out? God doesn’t care about me. He has forgotten me. I am not important to God. These are the common lies of the soul in despair, and we voice them to God in prayer.

YOU ARE AVOIDING ME. *How long will you hide your face from me?* David feels alienated from God. On a human level when we are angry with someone we often avoid them. We may walk on the other side of the street or sit on the other side of the church. We avoid people toward whom we feel hostility and tension. Then we project this same experience on God. We think that God must be avoiding us because He is angry like we avoid others when we are angry. Of course, it isn’t true. There is no sin here that causes God to hide his face from us, only our imagination, born of despair.

YOU ARE NEGLECTING ME. *How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart all the day?* David was mentally restless, obsessed with gloomy thoughts. When we despair, we tend toward morbid introspection. Our thoughts run wildly through our brains. We cannot control them. They torment us through sleepless nights. We have intense inner turmoil. The insides of our heads feel like human pinball machines. We feel neglected, left to our own devices. We are wrestling with ourselves but where is God to rescue us from this inner battle? The result is anarchy and tension.

YOU ARE FAILING ME. *How long will my enemy be exalted over me?* When we turn to look around us, we see only our enemies. We feel the paranoia of loneliness and despair. We become fearful and anxious. We blame God and wonder why He lets our enemies win. Why do I lose my job while my supervisor covers his failures at my expense? God, I trusted you to protect me from those who would hurt me. You failed me, God.

Jeff Gray was a 28-year-old relief pitcher for the Boston Red Sox at the pinnacle of his career when he suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. In 1994 after 2 ½ years on the comeback trail, he was forced to give it up. He thought that he might make it back to the major leagues because he was throwing hard in December of 1993. Then, suddenly, mysteriously, his strength was all gone, and the doctors have told him that he will never pitch again. Jeff had a wife and a one-year-old daughter, but he became bitter. He said in an interview, “I feel very bitter. I’m still very upset about it. I’m very religious, and I’m very confused with the Lord right now. I feel like I’ve been teased.”⁴

Stage two: Request – In the second stage we release our needs to God. (Psalm 13:3-4) One problem with expressing our feelings is that we often exaggerate our predicaments. Elisabeth Elliot helps us here. “The word suffering is much too grand to apply to most our troubles, but if we don’t learn to refer the little things to God how shall we learn to refer the big ones? A definition which covers all sorts of trouble, great and small, is this: having what you don’t want, or wanting what you don’t have.”⁵ God listens to us as a father listens to a child. When you are a little child in a big scary world, sometimes you need a night light. When we are spiritually vulnerable and worried sometimes, we just need spiritual night lights. God knows that and forgives our tendencies to exaggerate our problems. Prayer is often simply asking for a night light from heaven.

David makes three requests in Psalm 13:3-4.

PAY ATTENTION TO ME. *Consider me.* David is crying out to God for attention. When my youngest daughter, Kari, was just a toddler and I was watching a ball game on television she would sometimes come up and take my face in her hands and forcibly turn my eyes to hers. She would say, “No watch T.V., Daddy.” Admit it. Don’t you sometimes feel like God is paying attention to everyone else’s situation but yours? Prayer is taking God’s face in our hands and asking Him to pay attention to us. It is anthropomorphic language for we are talking to God as if he were a man. The truth is that God can look at you and me at the same time. As a human, I tend to project my limitations onto God even in prayer.

ANSWER ME. *Answer me, O LORD my God.* I want a positive response from God. I want to experience His favor. I want to know His blessing. I want to feel His presence when I am hurting. Prayer is our way of releasing to God our hurts and looking to God for His answers. The truth is that what we want is not answers but reassurance.

REASSURE ME. *Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death.* When we worry, our eyes get dark and heavy. We need God to put the sparkle back in them. Death here does not have to be understood as literal death but is probably a figure of speech for despair and failure. We need God’s reassurance when facing the unknown. We don’t want our enemies to gloat when our fears shatter us. When our path is dark, and we don’t know the way, then light is a wonderful reassurance. Walking through a dark alley in the middle of a strange city at 2:00 AM we are comforted by a strong light and even more comforted when the light is held by a strong police officer! Light is a metaphor for reassurance from God.

Prayer is the way we release our needs to God. Stage one is easy enough because we just express our feelings honestly to God. Stage two is tougher because now we must begin to release our fears to God. Stage three requires us to trust God to get us through the problem we face. The cry of the

soul must lead to the praise of God in faith, or else we have not released the needs to God. Stage three is the goal.

Stage Three: Expectation – We must learn to expect His results when we reach stage three of the process (Psalm 13:5-6). Often, we stay at stage two because we won't let go of the weight. There is an old story of a local farmer riding along to market in his horse-drawn wagon. He meets a woman carrying a large basket of dairy products, and he offers her a ride. She gladly accepts. After a few moments, he notices that the woman was sitting there hugging her large basket on her lap. He suggests that she put the basket down on the floor of the wagon. To which she replies, "Oh no Sir, I'd prefer to hold it on my lap and keep the weight off the horse." If we are ever to gain our composure in the waiting room we must learn to:

TRUST HIS LOVE. *I have trusted in Your lovingkindness.* Sooner or later if we want to find peace in the middle of our struggles, we must trust his loyal love for us. God will take care of us. We sing, "*Faith is the victory we know that overcomes the world,*" but faith is not equivalent to victory for that would be faith in faith. God wins the victory. As we shall see, it is God that pulls us from the pit. Faith is not a work at all. Faith is our willingness to let God be God and produce His results.

REJOICE IN HIS SALVATION. *My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.* Joy comes when we see the salvation of God because we trusted in His loyal love to pull us through our difficult problems. We cannot mix up the order of these principles or else we will misunderstand the process of healing. Faith comes before joy. Joy is the result of faith.

SING HIS PRAISE. *I will sing to the LORD.* Our song of praise to God is the result of having let God be good to us. God will give us more than we could ever ask. God is not limited by our faith or lack of faith or by the smallness of our request. He loves to give to us out of His abundance, but He longs to see us trust His love. It is hard to think this way in the pit. In the pit, we see only the walls of the pit and the limits of our opportunities. In the pit, we see our fears and find it hard to sing His praises. Yet it is only in the pit that we learn what faith is. Faith sings God's praise even when we don't feel like it. Faith sings God's praises even when we don't understand His ways.

THE ROLLER COASTER OF EMOTIONS

The cry of the soul is the first step in the process of healing. Often the very act of crying out to God leads to some immediate relief. We feel a little sense of hope. We allow ourselves to sing a little melody – to feel again. The world looks better. Maybe the situation is not as bad after all. I can see light ahead. Life continues. Then darkness overwhelms again. We look around, and our situation has not changed. David cried out to God in Psalm 40. God lifted Him up (40:2) and put a new song in his mouth (40:3). David was singing again. Yet, the psalm goes on to speak of David's despair. David is riding the roller coaster of his emotions. We start to sing only to slip into brooding all over again (Psalm 40:12).

Henri Nouwen experienced and explained the process through his time at Daybreak, a community for the disabled. While serving in that ministry, Henri experienced the deepest pit of his life. He felt betrayed and alone. He found no peace in his soul and no hope for the future. He

wrote a journal during this lengthy period of renewal, and that journal was eventually published years later under the title, *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey through Anguish to Freedom*. He expressed the process this way.

While you may feel physically and mentally strong, you still experience a forceful undercurrent of anguish. You sleep well, you work well, but there are few waking moments when you do not feel that throbbing pain in your heart that makes everything seem up in the air. You know that you are progressing, but you can't understand why this anguish keeps pervading everything you think, say, or do. There is still a deep, unresolved pain, but you cannot take it away yourself. It exists far deeper than you can reach. Be patient and trust. You have to move gradually deeper into your heart. There is a place far down that is like a turbulent river, and that place frightens you. But do not fear. One day it will be quiet and peaceful.⁶

God has a remarkable sense of symmetry. He designed the human being for balance. God created humans with the need to balance conflicting tensions. Sin has only exacerbated those tensions. The human being is body and soul, the material and the immaterial. Humans need to do and to be, to work and to rest, to serve and be served, to love and be loved. All humans need to relate to others socially and to develop the inner man privately. We need to release and to renew. All of these conflicting pressures must be kept in balance. The waiting room is one of God's primary methods for balancing lives out of control through the distractions of busyness and the sins of misplaced priorities. The time necessary for the soul to heal in the waiting room is proportional to the level of unbalanced life that led to the waiting room. Time does not heal all wounds, but it is God's ally in the healing process.

WAIT ON GOD IN SILENT READINESS.

Everything depends on the waiting. Waiting on God is the great condition for all spiritual renewal. David wrote, "*I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me and heard my cry*" (Psalm 40:1). The verb translated to "wait patiently" is a word that means to look eagerly for, to strain the mind expectantly. We are to wait on God with a particular direction of the mind that is oriented toward what God will do in the future. The word is sometimes translated "hope" in the Old Testament for that reason. The term patiently does not capture the intensity of this word very well at all. Waiting on God is not passive but active. Waiting on God is not apathetic but intentional. This is further brought out by the Hebrew construction that literally reads, "*waiting, I waited on the Lord.*" The word means to strain the mind in a Godward direction.

Waiting for the Lord is a grand theme of the Psalms (Psalm 27:14, 130:1, 130:5-6). I was a night watchman once in center city Philadelphia. O did I wait for the morning light to come because the night seemed interminable, the drowsiness inescapable and the boredom overwhelming. Hoping, waiting and trusting are interchangeable concepts in many of the Psalms (Psalm 31:24; 33:18; 119:43). The Greek Septuagint translates the common Hebrew word for "wait" with the Greek word for "hope" nineteen times because the two are so closely linked. Job uses the word for wait or hope when he says, "*Though he slay me, yet will I hope/trust in him*" (Job 13:15). We cannot hope without trust, and we cannot wait with faith.

The prophet Isaiah treats us to a great word picture in Isaiah 40:31. The eagle soars only when the wind fills its wings. Like the eagle, we wait until we feel the wind in our wings so we can soar above the trials. Zechariah calls the Israelites going through terrible times of suffering “*prisoners of hope (literally waiting on God)*” (9:12). Jeremiah talks about how God is the hope of healing for those who are wounded (17:13) and when the city was under siege by the Babylonians, Jeremiah encouraged the believers to hope in God’s future (31:17). Waiting on God is hoping in God’s future no matter how dark our present is. I hate to wait, but God renews us while we wait. There are times when God brings us so low that we can do nothing but wait on him. The secret lies in the waiting. Waiting is the beginning of renewal. Trust Him. You will soar again, but everything depends on the waiting.

Waiting on God embraces God in our pain. It is not so much that we embrace the pain. This is masochism or a martyr complex, both of which commonly exist in Christian circles. Far more important it is that we embrace God in the pain. God allows the pain to drive us to Himself. We embrace Him when we stop fighting His will. We embrace Him when we embrace what He sends our way. There can be no other way to wait on God.

Job was a man who suffered as deeply as any man has suffered under the sovereign hand of God and he felt the sting of that suffering as deeply as any man has expressed it. Many humans have turned away from God under far less suffering. Many Christians have lived with false blame and shame for years because of lesser pains than Job’s. Job became frustrated with his “friends” for their attempts to blame him for his sufferings. When he needed friends to come alongside and help him, he found them to be false counselors and self-righteous prosecutors instead. Like many of us who have experienced the caustic correction of critical Christians, Job reacted in self-defense (Job 13:4-5).

Job refused to embrace the pain as a martyr. He fought the pseudo-spirituality that blames the victim for the suffering. “If your husband left you then it must be your fault.” “If your children turned to drugs then you must be a bad parent.” “If you lost your job then you must have done something wrong.” These are the accusations common to pop theology that assume all suffering to be a direct result of sin or failure on the part of the sufferer. Jesus corrected this destructive theology so common in churches today (John 9:1-3). Suffering is not necessarily a direct result of specific sin or the consequence of specific failure. The sinner is to blame for his sin. Sometimes God punishes the sinner through suffering, and often victims suffer because of the sinner’s sin. Many times, however, God allows His children to suffer simply to display His sovereign work through that suffering. All suffering cannot be wrapped up in neat little packages of blame and shame. Job knew that truth and fought that battle with his self-righteous counselors.

Job was frustrated with God. He suffered horribly as God withdrew His restraining hand of protection from Job’s life and allowed Satan to afflict Him. Job screamed at the injustice and boldly cried for an audience with God to plead His case before God’s tribunal. Yet Job’s cries were not the cries of sinful rebellion. His cries were the cries of true faith. He trusted God. There must be an answer, and Job used the language of “waiting on God” to express that faith. He said: *Though he slay me, I will hope in him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him* (Job 13:15). Job would not blame God even in his frustration. He would trust God even if God should kill him. The Word “hope” is our Hebrew term to “wait on God.” Job would wait on God even if God should take his life. He embraced God in his pain.

We experience frustration and disappointment in pain precisely because we live with faulty assumptions about life and God. We assume that life with God should be free from disappointments, fears, confusion and grief. After all, if we are living for God shouldn't we enjoy His blessings? We forget that God lives in our pain. He suffers too. When we can embrace God in our pain, we come to understand what it means to enjoy God fully. The frustration of false expectations is only eliminated as we embrace God in our pain.

Philosopher John Feinberg devoted his life to explaining the ways of God with men yet when tested in the waiting room he learned just how faulty was his understanding of God. His wife was diagnosed with Huntingdon's disease, and John Feinberg wrote how angry he became with God. He needed to work through his anger until he came to understand who God really is and how much his false expectations of God contributed to his anger at God. He wrote, "I understood that much of my anger rested on a misunderstanding of what God should be expected to do."⁷ We will never embrace God in love until God corrects our faulty misunderstandings about His nature and purposes. We enter into a love relationship with God at conversion with a prenuptial agreement in our minds. We expect God to perform in certain ways as long as we perform in accord with His expectations. This is not love. This is a business contract, and God must correct the misunderstanding before He can draw us into true love with Him because true love operates only on the foundation of true knowledge.

One purpose for the waiting room is to draw us to embrace God, not after all is clear, but in the fog of the suffering. Sometimes God must hurt us to help us. God must empty us before He can fill us. We fill our lives with distractions rushing everywhere and getting nowhere. The waiting room is the place where God empties us of our self-interest so He can fill us with Himself. The waiting room tests our response to God. The question is not so much how do we explain our feelings but will we embrace God in the waiting room?

Jeremiah witnessed the utter destruction of his home and the captivity of his friends and neighbors, hauled off to far away Babylon (Lamentations 3:1). Jeremiah did not suffer because of personal sin but because of national sin. God was judging the nation of Israel for her national sins, and when national sin is judged all who are in the nation suffer. The suffering is intensely personal for Jeremiah. He acknowledges that God "*has turned His hand against me again and again, all day long.*" (3:2) Jeremiah's skin and flesh "*grow old*" and his bones are broken (3:3). He looks at the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and sees God besieging and surrounding him with bitterness. God has "*walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains.*" (3:7) Jeremiah feels like God refuses even to hear his prayers. "*Even when I call out or cry for help, He shuts out my prayer*" (3:8). However, Jeremiah determines to wait on God. He says, "*The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.*" *The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.* (3:24-26) Why? Because the Lord's faithfulness is so great to those He loves (3:22-23). God may put us in the dust, but there is hope because "*men are not cast off by the Lord forever.*" (3:31) Jeremiah embraces God in the pain.

In truth, God is not absent at all though hidden from view. The waiting room is not beyond the scope of His presence. He is there, and He gives us glimpses of His presence. Meister Eckhardt, the medieval monk, once said, "God is like a person who clears his throat while hiding and so gives himself away."⁸ God does so intentionally. The cosmic game of "hide and seek" is designed

for us to “catch” God in the pit for God is deeper than our deepest pits. If God draws us to seek Him, then we will find Him in our seeking. God is not beyond our reach in the pit. He enters the pit with us looking for us to embrace him. P.T. Forsyth wrote: “The depth is simply the height inverted, as sin is the index of moral grandeur. The cry is not only truly human but divine as well. God is deeper than the deepest depth in man. ... Think more of the depth of God than the depth of your cry. The worst thing that can happen to a man is to have no God to cry to out of the depth.”⁹

Waiting on God requires dependency. When we are in a hole, we usually claw frantically to climb out. We look for every available means to get us out. But God puts us in some holes where there is no way out but by Him and His grace. He humbles us. We become accustomed to fixing our problems and paying lip service to Him so God must humble us. He drives us to the point where only He can deliver us. Only then are we ready to wait on the Lord. No pretense. No pride. No self-justifying. No self-made men are ever renewed by God. Renewal means the end of self. Renewal means that God, and God alone, lifts us from the hole. We stay in the hole until God lifts us out.

We must avoid the temptation to act independently – to see our own solutions, to push our own agendas. We must expect God to act but not expect God to act as we expect Him to act. Much frustration comes from expecting God to act in the ways we have determined that He should act. This sets us up for disappointment. We plan our solutions. We manage our circumstances. We manipulate people whenever we seek to impose our solutions on the situation. The stronger the leadership personality, the greater the tendency is to solve the problem independently of God. But it is a trap. For when we follow our instincts to solve the problem ourselves, we inevitably act apart from God. We either run ahead of God with our plans – impatient that He is not acting fast enough to fix our problem – or we seek alternatives that lead us to greater problems. In either case, we fail to wait on God, and we fail to gain His victory in our lives.

Waiting on God means letting go of selfish ambition and what I am doing to join God in what He is doing. Our insistence that God prove Himself to us through some miraculous intervention on our behalf betrays our lack of faith in God. We make God’s fulfillment of our expectations the condition for our faith in Him. God owes us no such “answers.” When we make our faith contingent on God’s servitude to us, we doom ourselves to disappointment. Waiting on God in prayer means asking not prescribing, seeking not demanding.

Jesus expressed this principle with a powerful metaphor. He taught us to take his yoke, and we will find rest for our souls (Mt. 11:28-30). This is at the same time the hardest challenge we face in life and the easiest work we do in life. We come to God with our soul’s burdens. We are tired of carrying the load, so we release that load to the Lord by faith. Our Lord calls us to take His yoke on our shoulders. A yoke is made for two. We are yoked with Him. Faith replaces our burden with His yoke. Faith lets God carry the load. Faith is not work. Faith is the essence of rest in His work. We stop working to earn God’s favor. We realize that we can never perform well enough to win God’s approval. What a wonderful calling – to serve God by letting Him do the work.

I went through some personally dark times and took a leave of absence from the ministry for three months. When I came back, one of the members of our church gave me a special gift. Several years earlier I had led the memorial service for her father, a godly member of our church,

and she wanted me to have a gold pin that he had worn. He was a quiet, humble man who had lived faithfully for the Lord over many, many years. She could not remember a time when she had not seen him wear the pin on Sundays. Now she wanted me to have his pin as a reminder of God's sustaining grace. The pin is a golden replica of a yoke, and I have worn it often since that day to remind myself of God's true calling for my life – to yoke myself with the Lord. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light because He is in the yoke with me.

Yet the yoking process is the hardest challenge we face in life. To yoke myself to the Lord is to let go of my self-sufficiency. I have to release my control of life along with my burdens. I cannot retain my independence while releasing my burdens. The two must be released together if I am to find rest for my soul. I must surrender to God's control if I am going to let Him carry the load. Arthur Matthews, the last missionary to be released from Communist China in 1953 wrote, "The yoke is LIGHT only as it is TAKEN, and not as it is suffered."¹⁰ John Piper uses the analogy of the monkey holding onto the nut in the jar to illustrate the difficulty of the challenge. The monkey merely has to release the nut in the jar and pull his hand out to find freedom. The monkey refuses to release the nut and is captured with his fist wrapped tightly around it. To paraphrase John Piper, this is the "battle to love the freedom of faith" more than the nut of self-sufficiency.¹¹ The Apostle Paul learned this lesson only through his "thorn in the flesh" a "messenger of Satan" sent by God's plan to keep Paul from "exalting himself." *And he has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Cor. 12:9)

Christian Reger was a member of the Confessing Church in Germany and opposed Adolph Hitler along with men like Martin Niemoller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The organist in his church betrayed him to the Nazis, and he spent four long years as a prisoner in Dachau, personally witnessing many of the atrocities of the Holocaust. In the years after the war, Christian Reger spent many hours at Dachau helping tourists understand the horror of that experience. So many people died one winter in the camp that their bodies were stacked naked in the snow with numbers stenciled on each with a blue marker. Reger was quick to point out that he experienced God's love in Dachau. He says, "Nietzsche said a man can undergo torture if he knows the Why of his life. But here in Dachau, I learned something far greater. I learned to know the Who of my life. He was enough to sustain me then, and is enough to sustain me still."¹²

Waiting on God begins with expectancy. The Hebrew word for "wait" also means "hope." (Ps. 40:2; 42:5, 11; Lam. 3:26; Job 13:15) Biblical hope is not a mere wish that pacifies our feelings with pleasant but uncertain results. Biblical hope is an expectation founded on faith in a God who fulfills His promises. Waiting on God means enduring patiently our present circumstances while looking confidently for God's deliverance. There can be no perseverance unless there is the expectation that God will one day act to fix the problem. We wait eagerly for that day like a child waits for Christmas morning. So hope, faith and waiting on God are inextricably connected in the process of renewal (Isaiah 40:31).

We must avoid the trap of cynicism that drains the soul of healing hope. If everything is fixed by the fates, then the soul has no hope and cynicism takes over. To become cynical is to die inside. The temptation to cynicism is powerful. When we hurt, we naturally cope by hardening the shell of proud protection around us. We become cynical of others especially if they seem filled with joy and trust. We mark them as naïve. We talk of being realists – people who know the real intentions of men and women – the dark side of the soul. We become suspicious of all acts of

forgiving love and tender appeals. “What is your real agenda?” we ask. “What do you really want from me?” We see the impenetrable darkness instead of the power of the light breaking through the darkness. We forget that the light can eliminate the darkness and we choose to become dark people seeking the shallow comfort of darkness. There is a pseudo-comfort in cynicism, but it is the cold comfort of being right when others wrong us. Such comfort is self-fulfilling for rejection and avoidance by others are the fruits of cynicism. Such comfort is self-defeating for who wants to be hurt more to be right more.

Waiting on God changes cynicism into expectancy, suspicion into hope. We make a choice to expect God to act. We choose to see the light breaking through the blackness even when the light is a sliver – a tiny shaft that tantalizes us with the promise of more. We choose not to question the motives of others. We choose not to wallow in the melancholy of self-absorption and critical examination of every act and word. We refuse to become cynical about God most of all. We replace the false idea that God must not love us with the truth that God loves us so much He wants more for us than we can comprehend. Jeanne Guyon wrote, “It is the fire of suffering which will bring forth the gold of godliness.”¹³ God wants more for us than we want for ourselves. He knows that our godliness is more important than our happiness, so He leaves us in the waiting room. He wants us to grow into a greater dependence on Him in His love. This is the only way to deeper intimacy, so we wait with expectancy for God to act in love.

Waiting on God with expectancy takes perseverance. God tests the resolve of all who wait on Him. The spiritual life is a battle, and the temptation is to faint during the wait. Moses exhorted the Israelites not to faint or become terrified of the enemy (Deut. 20:3). The word means to become soft or timid – to lose resolve. Jesus taught believers to pray so that they would not faint (Luke 18:1). When the believer expects God’s answers in prayer, he does not become spiritless or exhausted. Paul taught that the stripping process of suffering produces renewal so we must not faint or quit before God has completed His renewing work in us (2 Cor. 4:16-17). The author of Hebrews encourages us not to dissolve in despair when God rebukes us (Heb. 12:3, 5). We must learn to accept correction without falling apart for God grows us spiritually through this process. There is a purpose for the struggle. We invest in God’s work without seeing immediate dividends, but we must not give up for in God’s time we will reap the results of our work for God. Paul wrote, “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*” (Gal. 6:9). The promise is conditional. We must persevere to reap the harvest.

Waiting on God is not passive but active. Diligence, not laziness sees the victory. We wait on God expectantly by focusing on God’s promises for our lives. The promises of God are the antidote to quitting. If we curl up into a spiritual fetal position and dissolve into despair, we will never see God lift us from the pit. How do we stay expectant while living in God’s waiting room? We do so by constantly reminding ourselves of God’s promises. Sometimes we cannot hear God’s gentle call until we are alone in the silence of our despair. Then God opens us up to His possibilities and promises us His victories. We learn to wait with expectancy for God to act in this world. I lay it down as a principle of spiritual renewal that we must focus on God’s promises when we are in the pit. Meditate on the promises of God to find hope. God will always be faithful to His promises so cling with naked faith to that singular truth. We must wait expectantly for God to change us in the pit so He can use us for His plans. There is an old Puritan prayer that expresses this truth.

Help me to see that although I am in the wilderness
it is not all briars and barrenness.
I have bread from heaven, streams from the rock,
Light by day, fire by night,
Thy dwelling place and thy mercy seat.¹⁴

Waiting on God means ‘preaching’ the truth to ourselves. Dr. Chris Thurman, a Christian psychologist, says that “the #1 cause of our unhappiness is the lies we believe.”¹⁵ He advocates what he calls “truth talking” as the primary rule of therapy. We make a conscious effort to talk to ourselves. We tell ourselves that we have been lying to ourselves. We argue with ourselves by telling the truth to ourselves. We fight the wrong feelings with the truth. How we think can begin to change how we feel.¹⁶ Events do not cause despair. What we think about those events causes despair so we must first change our thinking to change our feeling.

The psalmist who wrote Psalm 42 and 43 may well have accompanied King David on his flight from Absalom, and his words reflect David’s feelings. Psalm 42/43 reflects the principle of truth talking. The psalmist talks to himself and exhorts himself in this psalm, so it is a marvelous pattern for our own prayer life while we wait on God for His solution. Three times the psalmist commands his soul to hope in God (v. 5, 11, 43:5) and the refrain forms the framework of the psalm. Biblical hope requires a willingness to wait. Waiting patiently on God is the antidote to despair, but waiting is not passive. Waiting is active. We fight the lies of despair with the truth of God while we wait.

We begin the battle by recognizing the truth about ourselves (Ps. 42:1-5). We must recognize the truth about our desires (vs. 1-2). When we feel separated from God, when God seems distant, we must start by acknowledging that truth. Martin Luther described what the psalmist is saying here when he talked about the two faces of God. Martin Luther was one who experienced severe bouts of depression throughout his life. He said that God has two faces. When we feel our failures so deeply that we can find no comfort in God’s grace, then God appears hidden from us. God is covered and does not seem to respond to us. We see the other face of God when He is shining His grace on us. Luther likened it to the sun. The sun does not change, but it is sometimes hidden by the clouds of our lives. God seems hidden from us when we most need Him. Our emotional reactions are the clouds hiding His gracious face from our intense gaze.¹⁷ So we thirst for God like a hiker thirsts for fresh water when none can be found. Like a deer in a drought, we come to a spring of water and find it dry.

We must recognize the truth about our emotions (v. 3). The psalmist realized that he was so emotional he could not eat for his crying. The necessities of life were neglected because of his emotional anguish. It is bad enough to be depressed without friends reminding you about it constantly. Exhortations to trust God only lead the soul into deeper depression. The spiral of emotions digs deeper and deeper into the pit, day after day and night after night. We must acknowledge the truth about these feelings because they have a grip on the soul.

We must recognize the truth about our need (v. 4). Memories can be wonderful sources of encouragement or sheer torture to the soul. The psalmist remembers the days when he joined in worship and even led worship. He was part of the huge throng of people who together to praise God. Now he is alone, and his heart throbs with a sense of abandonment. Depression leads to

loneliness. We withdraw from others. We stay away from church. We pull back into our own little worlds, our private cocoons. Homesickness engulfs the soul. We wish to return to the way things were if only we could just erase the problem and go back to the comfort of past experiences.

William Cowper was a great hymn writer in the 1700's. We still sing many of his hymns today. But William Cowper spent two periods of time in an asylum (1773, 1787). He was kept in a straitjacket during his second admission because of his suicide attempts. One of his major problems was that he refused to attend church or even, as time went on, to talk with Christian friends about the subject. He believed that while God's grace could be applied to everyone else, he was a special case, beyond the reach of God's grace. God could forgive everyone else but him. So he sunk deeper and deeper into the pit of depression.¹⁸

In contrast to Cowper notice the strategy of the psalmist in verse 5. He truth talks to himself. He argues with himself. He commands himself to hope in God. He fights despair with truth. We must ask the hard - why - questions of God. We must not fear an honest dialogue with God, but we start with the truth about ourselves. If I break my arm, I can do one of two things. I can read textbooks about broken arms and amass all sorts of explanations, or I can get to a doctor and tell him what is wrong with my arm. The first step in truth talking about my soul is to say to God, "I am depressed. I know I am hurting and lonely. I feel abandoned. I miss all that I used to enjoy about life." We must tell God the truth about ourselves for He knows it anyway.

We must remember the truth about God (42:6-11). We can use our memories to recover from depression, or we can use our memories to drive ourselves deeper into depression. The choice is ours to make. The psalmist reminds himself of God's character to bring healing to his soul. When we feel abandoned by God, it is easy to let our emotions overwhelm our souls. It is hard to fight back and tell ourselves the truth about God and His grace. William Cowper refused to listen to friends like John Newton who wondered that a man with such a keen mind for God's truth could be so convinced that he was the one exception to God's grace. We must argue with the lie that we are the exception to God's grace by telling ourselves the truth about God's loyalty (v. 8). God loves with a loyal love. The Hebrew word is often translated "faithfulness" or "lovingkindness." The truth about God is that He is absolutely loyal no matter what we do or don't do. The truth is that God has not abandoned us nor has God condemned us as exceptions to His rule of grace. We begin to sense God's healing when we remind ourselves of God's loyal love. Next, we tell ourselves the truth about God's reliability (v.9). The psalmist calls God "*my Rock*." God is our rock in times of trouble. He is reliable. He never fails. God is so reliable that we can go to Him and "sound off." We can share our doubts and fears with him, and he will not change. We are not the exceptions to God's grace.

We can do something about our feelings. We can fight our feelings with His truth. The psalmist comes back to the refrain (v. 11). The word for "despair" or "downcast" means to be brought low or humiliated. The word for "disturbed" means to murmur, groan or be in a state of commotion. It is that fluttery feeling we get inside when things are not going well. Our nervous system gets so "wired" that the slightest stimulation sets off our emotional reactions. The psalmist talks to himself about the truth of God's nature. William Cowper wrote hymns about God's nature and these hymns were Cowper's way of truth talking. He was reminding himself not to believe the lie that he was the exception to God's grace. These hymns kept him sane as long as he kept writing. Unfortunately, the last six years of his life he refused to write any more hymns. He spent

those last six years in a speechless stupor from which he never recovered. He stopped fighting his despair with God's truth. He wrote to a friend, "I could not sing the Lord's song were it to save my life, banished as I am, not to a strange land, but to a remoteness from his presence."¹⁹ If we are to ever get out of the pit, we must fight the lie that says, "My case is so special and unique that there is no hope for His cleansing grace." We fight that lie by speaking the truth about God to our souls.

We request the truth about our future (43:1-5). This psalm belongs with the previous psalm for the refrain in verse 5 is the same as the refrain in Psalm 42. The psalmist is still arguing with himself. Prayer is the great antidote to despair in the pit. We cannot create or command our feelings, but we can take those feelings to the Lord and ask for His healing. We can request the truth about our vindication (43:1-2). King David has been wronged. His nation had turned against him. He had been lied to, deceived and abandoned by those he loved so much that he now accused God of abandoning him. When you feel lied to, deceived and abandoned by your family and friends; when you feel that even God has abandoned you, then take it to the Lord and tell him all about it. Ask God to vindicate you and then leave it with Him. Wait on God for His answer. God will vindicate you in His time. He is a good and fair God, and we can trust our future to His hands. We can request the truth about our restoration (43:3-4). When we are in the black hole of despair, we need the light of God's love shining into our hole. In this passage, light seems to relate to God's loyal love and truth to God's reliability. The psalmist remembered these principles earlier in the psalm, but now he prays for these principles to become a reality in his experience. He personifies light and truth as guides who will lead us out of the pit. We need to ask God for these guides to lead us back into the place of worship. Restoration is complete when we are again able to praise God in the place of corporate worship (Psalm 43:5).

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones summarized this concept as well as anyone.

I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self-talk to talk to us instead of talking to our self. ... This is the very essence of wisdom on the matter. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? ... The essence of the matter is to understand that this self of ours, this other man within us, has got to be handled. Do not listen to him; turn on him; speak to him; condemn him; upbraid him; exhort him; encourage him; remind him of what you know, instead of listening placidly to him and allowing him to drag you down and depress you. For that is what he will always do if you allow him to be in control.²⁰

Waiting on God means resting in His presence. We are ready to be lifted from the pit when we stop fighting God and start fighting ourselves. The psalmist wrote, "*Be still and know that I am Lord.*" (Psalm 46:10) To "be still" means to leave it alone, to abandon the battle. To be still before God is to surrender to God's purpose. God calls us to be still before Him meaning that we are to abandon our goals and surrender to His purpose for our lives. We spend so much time fighting God, seeking our own fulfillment, wanting our own ways, advocating our own solutions, and God says, "Stop, let it go. Surrender to my purpose."

What is God's purpose in this universe and our lives? God's purpose is God's glory. The Westminster Catechism says it succinctly. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Whatever happens in life, this is the end to which we were created. God's purpose never changes. No matter what we experience, no matter what we face, the goal of God is to bring glory to Himself (Eph. 1:11-12). He seeks to bring glory to Himself in our lives, in our churches, and our nations. We must surrender to God's purpose and live for God's glory. As long as we are centered on ourselves, we will stay in the pit. The only way to conquer ourselves is to fill our lives with someone greater than ourselves so that we no longer think about ourselves first. When we become absorbed with God's purpose, then we can lose ourselves in God's objectives and free ourselves from our obsessions.

We must learn to live in the moment accepting what God has for us in the present knowing that what God has for us now is part of His grand purpose for us in the future. To live in the moment is either good or bad depending on the focus. To live in the moment and ignore all consequences for our actions is not what it means to wait on God. Waiting on God means that we live in the moment – experiencing what is and what God has for us right now – without ignoring the future implications of our present choices. Waiting on God is what Jeanne Guyon calls “beholding the Lord” or “waiting in His presence.” She considers this the second type of prayer. The first kind of prayer is praying the Scriptures. The second is waiting in His presence. Here we seek to avoid the distractions of our minds that tend to wander from subject to subject. We do not seek to analyze as much as we seek to experience God's presence. We seek to experience God's presence by waiting on Him in silence, by remaining in His presence and not moving quickly on to new ideas.²¹

To live in the Lord's presence, I must learn to waste time with God.²² I have often prayed like I work – task oriented, complete the checklist. I am learning to pray as God wants even though it seems wasteful and inefficient. Stop, sit and listen. I am used to treating God like a busy executive or medical doctor. I make my appointment and do my business. “God must have better things to do than to sit in silence with me.” But He doesn't. Really, he doesn't have better things to do. I have learned from the Christian mystics to waste time with God, to enjoy the silence of love. This is not easy. For many years I was skeptical of any Christian mysticism contending that such meditation practices exposed the soul to potential error. I was a biblical rationalist, making revelation and reason the sole physician for the soul and neglecting the important work of the Spirit of God in healing. The truth is that I often feared the exposure of silence. I can hide from my inner failures and inadequacies if I stay busy with “important” matters of life but in reality, I am only avoiding real intimacy with God. Like a spouse who runs away from intimacy by avoiding any real exposure of the inner person, we often avoid God by staying busy in God's work. Henri Nouwen wrote, “We often use these outer distractions to shield ourselves from the interior noises. It is thus not surprising that we have a difficult time being alone. The confrontation with our inner conflicts can be too painful for us to endure.”²³

Waiting on God seeks God's answers in prayer. This is not the prayer of intercession nor the prayer of simple petition. This is the prayer of surrender. Yet it is a sweet surrender for we surrender to love. We allow ourselves to be loved. To love, we must be loved, yet to be loved is a moment of great vulnerability. We must risk the exposure of our true selves if we are to enjoy the intimacy of love. Our instincts drive us to avoid such a surrender for our past is filled with times when we allowed ourselves to love and be loved only to find ourselves violated and abused by

those we exposed ourselves too in love. Now we find ourselves called to let God love us even when we don't know what He will do for us. Our prayers take on the characteristic of love language with its desire for solitude and its lengthy periods of silence. Watch two lovers in a park, and they do not say much. They don't need to say much. They want to be alone with each other. They communicate in a silent love language. This is the language of waiting on God. We wait on God in silence trusting that His answer will find us in His time. Meanwhile, we will embrace God in the sweet surrender of loving prayer.

Perhaps we could approach the process by setting up dates with God. Dates are not utilitarian. The important matter in a date is not the quality of the activity but the quality of the time "wasted" with the lover. If we learn to date God, we learn the language of love. Set aside some time each day to reflect in silence with God. Perhaps one block of time each week could be set aside to "waste" with God. We could try one day a year set aside to get away with God alone. When we do this, we should not seek to study and read like the analytical discipline many of us perform when preparing to preach or teach. We should not make the date utilitarian. It should be purposely useless. It is time set aside to be intentionally non-productive. It is time alone with God. Read some Scripture to get the mind focused but try not to analyze the text. Let God move in your soul. Don't pray for others or even for yourself. Ask God to open you up and search you. Confess what you see in yourself to God and let God heal the inner wounds. Enjoy God. Tell Him you love Him and let Him love you. The process is a healing process as we learn to rest in His presence.

Carll Grathwohl spent a lifetime of service for the Lord as a pastor, church planter, and educator. I had the privilege of serving with Carll during the last years of his life and preaching the message at his memorial service. Tucked beneath the glass on Carll's desk where he could see them as a constant reminder were numerous clippings, quotes, and admonitions. One of the clippings was the following anonymous quote that summarizes these principles quite effectively.

"It is easier to work than to wait. It is often more important to wait than to work. We can trust God to do the needed working while we are waiting; but if we are not willing to wait, and insist upon working while He would have us be still, we may interfere with the effective and triumphant working that He would do on our behalf. Our waiting may be the most difficult thing we can do; it may be the severest test that God can give us."²⁴

A single mother in our church who had several mini-strokes and eventually was unable to hold a job told me that the doctors were "stumped" by her series of problems. The medical tests showed that she hadn't had another stroke, but her symptoms were consistent with a stroke. Finally, her doctor said that he knew what was happening. She was going through a "spiritual emergency." She thought about that assessment and cried out to the Lord in prayer. Peace came over her like she had never experienced before. She had always worried about finances and providing for her teenage daughter which created great stress for her. Now she knew that God was in control no matter what happened and she felt great inner peace in turning it over to God. Her doctor later told her it was like a "new birth" for her.²⁵ There comes a turning point in every waiting room. It is a time when the soul turns everything over to God and trusts God to change whatever needs changing. The release from the waiting room begins when we learn to trust in His plan.

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- ¹ Arthur Bennett, The Valley of Vision, p. 90.
- ² Philip Yancey, Disappointment With God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), p. 113ff.
- ³ William VanGameron, Psalms vol. 5 in the Expositor's Bible Commentary edited by Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), p. 30. He identifies 6 classic characteristics of a lament song. (1) Cry to God for help, (2) Reference to God's past help, (3) Description of the problem or complaint, (4) Confession of trust, (5) Request or Petition and (6) Vow of Praise.
- ⁴ Maine Sunday Telegram, 2/7/94, p. 3D.
- ⁵ Elisabeth Elliot, A Path Through Suffering, p.56.
- ⁶ Henri J.M. Nouwen, The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom, p. 55.
- ⁷ John Feinberg, The Many Faces of Evil (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p.336. See also, John Feinberg, Deceived by God? A Journey through Suffering (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 1997).
- ⁸ Quoted by Philip Yancey, Disappointment with God, p.237.
- ⁹ P.T. Forsyth, The Cure of Souls, p. 128 quoted by Eugene Petersen, A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p.134.
- ¹⁰ Quoted by Isobel Kuhn, Green Leaf in Drought, p.81.
- ¹¹ John Piper, Future Grace, p.313. The actual quote is the "*battle to love the freedom of faith more than the nut of sin.*"
- ¹² Philip Yancey, Where is God When it Hurts, p.158. You can read the full story of how Christian Reger experienced God's love in the book (pp. 157-160).
- ¹³ Jeanne Guyon, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ, p.46.
- ¹⁴ Arthur Bennett, The Valley of Vision, p. 85.
- ¹⁵ Chris Thurman, The Lies We Believe (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), jacket.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.
- ¹⁷ H.C. Leupold, Exposition of the Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint 1969), p. 337.
- ¹⁸ Virginia Stem Owens, The Dark Side of Grace (CT, July 19, 1993), pp. 32-35.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- ²⁰ Lloyd-Jones, Spiritual Depression, pp. 20-21.
- ²¹ Jeanne Guyon, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ, p. 46.
- ²² Klaus Issler, Wasting Time with God.
- ²³ Henri J.M. Nouwen, Making All Things New, quoted by Richard Foster, Devotional Classics, p. 96.
- ²⁴ Private files
- ²⁵ Private conversation. Used by permission.

