

A Song in the Night

In conversation with God about pain and suffering

## *40 Day Prayer Focus on Farming* *1 September – 10 October 2020*

Author:	Hennie Viljoen
Translation:	Christopher Baker
Proofreading:	Karen Botha
	Haniki Theron
Cover page design:	Leana Viljoen
Page layout and graphics:	Fanie Serfontein

Printing and binding: SUN MeDIA, Bloemfontein.

**With the exclusive purpose of allowing you to distribute this publication for free, AMOS holds no copyright on it.** Therefore, you may reproduce this booklet without permission via electronic or mechanical, or any other medium, whether by photocopying, tape recording, or any other system of information transfer. **The publication may not, however, be sold.** For further information, you may contact the author.

Quotations are from the New International Version Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Distributed by **AMOS AGRIMIN**

**secretary@amosafrica.net**  
**www.amosafrica.net**

**ISBN 978-1-920138-71-4**

# Table of Contents

Opgedra aan .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Van 'n traan tot 'n lied! .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
10 Oktober - Kaalvoetdag .....	7
Hoe om die meeste van die Prayersfokus te maak. ....	8

<b>DEEL 1 Die groter prandjie.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Day 1 A Song in the Night! .....	10
Day 2 Raak betrokke in 'n eerlike gesprek met God. ....	12
Day 3 Dis 'n luister-gesprek. God opandbaar homself! .....	14
Day 4 Lyding: Alles – Almal – Oral – Altyd, Maar ... ..	16

<b>DEEL 2 Die Bybel gee méér as eand antwoord and méér as eand perspektief op lyding and swaarkry. ....</b>	<b>19</b>
Day 5 Wat is die verband tussand sonde and lyding? .....	19
Day 6 Méér as eand perspektief op lyding .....	22
Day 7 Wie is betrokke by jou lyding and swaarkry? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 8 God se betrokandheid (1) ....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 9 God se betrokandheid (2) ....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 10 Satan se betrokandheid (1)..	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 11 Satan se betrokandheid (2): Versoekings	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 12 Satan se betrokandheid (3): Vrees	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 13 Die mands se betrokandheid (1)	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

<b>DEEL 3 Lyding kom langs minstands eand van vyf verskillandde paaie na ons toe. ....</b>	<b>43</b>
Day 14 My sonde and ongehoorsaamheid (1) .....	44
Day 15 My sonde and ongehoorsaamheid (2): Neem tog my sonde weg! .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 16 Ander mandse se sonde .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Day 17 Die algemande gebrokandheid van die skepping and die lewe .....	52
Day 18 Medelye met mandse wat ly and swaarkry (1) .....	54
Day 19 Medelye met mandse wat ly and swaarkry (2) .....	57
Day 20 Mandse ly omdat Satan and sy bose magte Christus and sy kerk haat. (1) .....	60

Day 21	Mandse ly omdat Satan and sy bese magte Christus and sy kerk haat. (2).....	62
Day 22	Lied in die Nag.....	65

**DEEL 4 Jy het keuses wanneer jy ly and swaarkry. ....68**

Day 23	Twee donkies leer ons 'n les: Jou reaksie op lyding is belangrik! .....	69
Day 24	Watter pad kies jy? (1) .....	71
Day 25	Watter pad kies jy? (2) .....	73
Day 26	My Eand-vers-Lied-in-die-Nag.....	75
Day 27	Reageer soos 'n wandner. Jy is eand!.....	77
Day 28	Gebruik jou lyding. Dis 'n geleandtheid. (1).....	80
Day 29	Gebruik jou lyding. Dis 'n geleandtheid. (2).....	82
Day 30	Gebruik jou lyding. Dis 'n geleandtheid. (3).....	84
Day 31	Gebruik jou lyding. Dis 'n geleandtheid. (4).....	86
Day 32	Bestry and veg teand lyding. Dit bedreig jou lewe. (1) .....	88
Day 33	Bestry and veg teand lyding. Dit bedreig jou lewe. (2) .....	90
Day 34	Bestry and veg teand lyding. Dit bedreig jou lewe. (3) .....	93
Day 35	Bestry and veg teand lyding. Dit bedreig jou lewe. (4) .....	96
Day 36	Verkeerde and gevaarlike maniere om lyding te bestry . <b>Error!</b> <b>Bookmark not defined.</b>	
Day 37	Aanvaar jou lyding. (1) Aanvaarding is om geduldig in jou lyding te wees.....	102
Day 38	Aanvaar jou lyding. (2) Berusting is om jou hoop op God te vestig. ....	106
Day 39	Aanvaar jou lyding. (3) Aanvaarding is om 'n lied in die nag te sing. ....	108
Day 40	Die gesprek met God gaan voort!.....	110

**Ander AMOS-publikasies om van kandnis te neem****Error!**      **Bookmark not defined.**

# Dedicated to

Janetta and all our children  
Dirk and Leana and their three children: Josua, Leila and Amelie  
Jaco and Elsa and their three children: Nihan, Jano and Elzandé  
Eugene and Roné and their two children: Ruben and Mia  
Melinda

*Thank you for going on this journey with me. Your support makes it easier to keep moving forward. Thank you for everything that you've endured and sacrificed, not just for me, but also in living out your own callings. You make a huge difference in people's lives by teaching, providing for, serving, and helping them. Your compassion lightens their burdens and gives them hope. Don't stop!*

Also dedicated to Arno and Jana, my late brother's two children who suffered the loss of their mother, Elmien, and their brother, Johan.

## From tears to a song!

I grew up in a very happy home. My parents were Godfearing, responsible people. We weren't really poor, but we definitely weren't rich. My father sometimes had to take back our few cents of pocket money to pay all the bills. I still remember the little pieces of paper stuck in the front of our savings books to record the loans. I had a speech problem and had to see a speech therapist. I only managed to pronounce an "R" in grade 7. My speech problem led to a reading problem and I still struggle to get through large amounts of reading. In grade 11, I suffered a serious back injury because of a birth defect. I was operated on and had to stop playing rugby. It was not easy to overcome this setback.

My conversation with God about pain and suffering first began in September 1984. My father phoned me and said he had some bad news. I immediately thought that my grandfather had died. Instead I was told that my brother, Albert, had been shot dead by armed robbers on his in-laws' farm. He left behind a pregnant wife and one child. [Darkness descended!](#) Albert's untimely death could have driven me away from God, but thankfully it did not. I began to talk to God about suffering. I

went to Him for answers. I read the Bible from start to finish. I read everything I could about the subject. It took me quite a few years. In 1987, I wrote down everything I had learnt. I asked someone to type it on waxpaper and print a few copies. The title: **A Song in the Night**. But it stayed on the shelf.

Suffering is such an overwhelming, theologically difficult, and emotionally sensitive subject that I never thought I'd dare write about it. I had too little experience and my knowledge was too limited. Meanwhile, my family and I experienced "persecution" in and by the church. I don't feel the need to say more about it though. Because I spoke out for people who weren't allowed to speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9), I was seen as a traitor to my people in 1993/4. On one occasion four armed farmers tried to chase me out of town. In one way or another, every bullet that was fired at me hit my wife and children too. This made life even more difficult for me. But the Lord taught me not to be angry with anyone because He was teaching me things that I would later need in ministry. Little by little, He formed my character and developed my leadership. He did it through every drought, flood, failed harvest, theft, and personal or financial crisis in my life.

In 1993 the Lord called Janetta and me to start AMOS – a farming ministry. The name Amos comes from the farmer-prophet Amos in the Old Testament. Amos means "burden bearer". Ouch! I discovered that living out your calling and accomplishing your God-given task always comes with pain and suffering. (Think about Jesus; Paul – Acts 9:16; Mary - Luke 2:34-35; John the Baptist - Matthew 11:2-19 and 14:1-12.) As the years passed the mission became more difficult and the challenges bigger. Obeying God sometimes became life-threatening.

*A Song in the Night* is not a collection of 40 messages of comfort. It is a collection of Biblical perspectives to help you converse honestly with God about your pain and suffering. May these conversations help you to know God more, to understand suffering better, and to react responsibly to suffering. May you learn how to sing **a song in the night!**

Hennie Viljoen  
hennie.viljoen@amosafrica.net

# 10 October – Barefoot Day

At AMOS, 10 October is Barefoot Day. God regularly commands His prophets to do something unusual to make a specific message clear to His people. (E.g. Ezekiel 3:24; 4:1-4; 4:10-11; 5:1; 12:2-3; 12:18; 21:6; 24:15-16; 37:15-19; Jeremiah 13:1-14; 16:1-4; 27:1-2; 32:1-44; Hosea 3.)

**The aim of *Barefoot Day* is to remind you that we are on holy ground, God's land, and that we live and farm in His presence.** God's presence in the burning bush made the ground on which Moses was standing holy (Exodus 3). Later Christ came to Earth and was called Emmanuel, which means: *God is with us* (Matthew 1:23). He also reconciled the world and made it holy through His sacrifice and presence (Colossians 1:19-20). He is with us every day until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). **We now live and farm daily on holy ground in God's presence.** Being aware of that all day is life-changing. With my soft, sensitive bare feet, I think carefully about where I walk, and I tread carefully. I don't just rush thoughtlessly through the day. The same applies to my life in God's presence. It helps me to avoid sin (thorns and sharp stones), and is a great comfort and encouragement to me. He is here with me to carry, help, and protect me (Acc. Joshua 1:9; 2 Chronicles 16:9 and Matthew 28:20).

**This is also a special opportunity to testify.** People are bound to ask you: *Why are you walking around barefoot?* This will give you an opportunity to testify according to the Scripture verses above. **Barefoot Day** is an opportunity to encourage people and to show them that they are in God's presence not only in church, but everywhere.



Let's start a  
movement!

Let's farm barefoot yearly on  
**10 October!**

# How to make the most of this prayer focus.

Keep the following in mind to make the most of this prayer focus:

## 1. Plan and organise

Use every possible opportunity for prayer. Create new opportunities to pray with other people during this time. There are many opportunities, but it won't just happen by itself. Make an effort and plan thoroughly. Think about the following:

- Your personal **quiet time**;
- Mealtime prayers (*this is an opportunity where people can and should pray for agriculture*);
- At the start or end of the workday or during lunch hour, time for prayer can be set aside;
- Use your existing small group gatherings;
- During **church services**, a farmer, his wife or child, a farmworker, or someone else can be asked to pray and intercede especially for the farming community;
- **Special prayer opportunities** (prayer hours), as well as **half-night or all-night prayer wakes**, can be arranged;
- Mobilise the **elderly, children, women, prayer groups, etc.** to pray;
- **Promote** the *40 Day Prayer Focus on Agriculture* as widely as possible. Use newspapers and radio stations. Remember, these guidelines appear in English and Afrikaans on the AMOS homepage: [www.amosafrica.net](http://www.amosafrica.net) and may be copied freely.

## 2. Read the Scripture passages

Every day, read at least the Scripture passages at the top of the chapter. You will experience little blessing and growth if you only read the message. Remember, it is very important to give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to speak through the Word.



### 3. **Confess your sins**

Although it is not mentioned specifically in every chapter, it is extremely important to pay attention throughout to the four important issues mentioned in **2 Chronicles 7:14**:

- Let the Holy Spirit lead you to repentance;
- Pray and confess any sins the Holy Spirit convicts you of;
- Ask what the will of the Lord is and obey it;
- Turn away from your evil ways. Turn your back on everything that the Word of God doesn't approve of.

### 4. **Prayer guidelines**

The prayer guidelines are not rigid requirements. Read and think about the chapter for each day. Pray about everything that the Holy Spirit puts on your heart.

### 5. **Cultivate the discipline of fasting and obedience**

There are many books about fasting and prayer. Read them at your leisure. The 40 Day Prayer Focus is an ideal opportunity to sharpen your self-control and discipline. For instance, eat and drink nothing for three days like Esther did (Esther 4:16), or just eat vegetables and drink water like Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:12).

Consider fasting from something you really enjoy for 40 days: coffee, Coke, sweets or chocolates, meat, dairy products or bread. You may also decide not to have seconds at mealtimes or not to drink tonics or use other stimulants.

It's not just food, TV, etc. that we must learn to give up from time to time. We must learn to **always give up our sins and disobedience**. We must fast from evil deeds and break bad habits. Therefore, use this book to practise the discipline of obedience.

## **PART 1**

### **The Bigger Picture**



When you only look at one piece of a puzzle, it's hard to know where it fits in. If the piece is grey, you might think that the whole picture is grey too. But when you look at the picture, you will see many different colours and images. You will even see that the grey piece doesn't make the picture ugly. The whole picture puts that one piece into perspective. You were holding only a small piece of a big puzzle in your hand.

It's important not to lose perspective when you experience suffering. Don't focus on your experience right here and now. Reality, including pain and suffering, is much larger than your current experience.

Always look at the bigger picture! It's important.

***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"*** (Romans 8:18).

## **Day 1**

### **A Song in the Night!**

(In conversation with God about pain and suffering.)

**Read:** Job 35:9-10 and Habakkuk 3:17-19

Let me tell you about a friend of mine who went through some challenging times. He put all his time, money, and energy into the farm and built it up into a successful business. But when his father died, he didn't inherit the farm and the business. Initially it was impossible for him, in midst of what had happened, to keep praising the Lord. According to him, it was easy for Habakkuk to say that he would **"nevertheless"** rejoice in the Lord because he was never actually in such a situation. Habakkuk says **"Even though ..."** My friend's theory was: it's much easier to sing when pain and suffering is only a possibility than when it's a reality.

Suffering is a reality. It is terrible! Nevertheless, **a song in the night** is possible. Job says that **a song in the night** comes from God (Job 35:10). He gives it to us!

Let's have a look at a few examples in the Bible. David is a good example. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write songs in very challenging times (2 Timoteus 3:16). Read the Psalms. In the middle of a battle against overwhelming numbers of Moabites and Ammonites, Jehoshaphat had the singers sing songs of praise (2 Chronicles 20:21-22). Jesus sang a song of praise with His disciples the night He was arrested, tortured, and crucified (Mark 14:26). Paul and Silas sang songs of praise in the middle of the night while in dangerous circumstances in jail (Acts 16:22-25).

It's only when God is a greater reality to you than your circumstances – than your suffering – that you will be able to sing **a song in the night** during your grief. By singing **a song in the night**, I want to affirm how well I've come to know God and His character; that I'm prepared to fully trust in Him *in* my suffering and *with* my suffering. A Song in the Night shows the authenticity of my faith. It shows that I'm not a victim of my fear and circumstances. In all circumstances, I am more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus who gives me strength!

The ability to sing **a song in the night** is not something that we can find in ourselves. It's an ability only God can give. Ask Him for **a song in the night** – *your* night. Even if drought, sickness, conflict, divorce, murder, fire, theft, accidents, corruption, economic chaos, unemployment, poverty, death of a loved one, cancer, or Covid-19 don't make sense to you, God still wants to give you **a song in the night**.

When people are genuinely wrestling with God about their suffering by reading His word and listening to His Spirit, He usually first gives them a

song. A song of victory is born out of those intimate conversations – **a song in the night**. May God give you a song of victory in your intimate conversations with Him over the next 40 days. Start singing it, even if you can only hum, even if your voice is breaking, your eyes are tearing up, and your melody is totally off key. Start singing **a song in the night** because God and His promises are a greater reality than your suffering and circumstances.

**Prayer:** Lord, I also want to sing a song during my dark night of pain and suffering. I don't know how to yet, but I know You want to teach me and that You will. Please teach me through Your Word and Your Spirit during the next 40 days. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for all of your family, friends, and colleagues who are hurting, suffering, and struggling to sing.*
- † *Pray that everyone who starts reading this Prayer Focus will persevere until the very end. Pray that the Holy Spirit and the Word will show them the bigger picture and give them new insight.*
- † *Ask the Lord in His great love and grace to give you and your people a song – a song to sing in your darkest night.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians.

## Day 2

### Start an honest conversation with God.

**Read:** Job 33:14-19; Job 42:1-6; Hebrews 1:1-3

The subtitle of **Song in the Night** is: *In conversation with God about pain and suffering*. The only way to find **a song in the night** is to enter into a conversation with God about your pain and suffering. No conversation, no song!

**Job 33:14.** *For God does speak—now one way, now another—though no one perceives it ...*

**Job 33:19.** *Or someone may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in their bones ...*

God speaks to us through suffering. I want to help you hear what He is saying. He wants to teach us to sing **a song in the night**. He wants to strengthen and encourage His children. He wants us to understand that He didn't change when our situation changed. He is still holy, God Almighty. He is our loving Father in Jesus Christ. He just wants us to know Him better. That's why He speaks to Job (from Job 38 onwards). We read about Job's reaction to God's words in Job 42:5. **"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you."** May this happen to us when we talk to God about our suffering.

We must wrestle honestly with God. In Job 16:9, Job calls God his Opponent. It's as if he's holding on to God with one hand (because he has no one else to hold on to), but hitting God with the other hand because he's so angry and broken. Please read Job 23! It shows how Job honestly wrestles with God.

Jeremiah complains about the calamities that have afflicted him since his birth (Jeremiah 15:10). He reminds the Lord about the promises He gave him and about everything he has done for the Lord. In Jeremiah 15:18 he asks: **"Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails."** Please read God's reaction in verses 19-21. God wants to talk to us in our suffering, even if we are speaking nonsense (Jeremiah 15:19)!

Read David's Psalms. In many of them (eg. Psalm 13 and 54), David speaks to God about his suffering in the period between his anointment and his ascension to the throne about 10 years later (1 Samuel 16-31). He wrestles with the Lord. He wants to know why the Lord is taking so long to help him.

In Gethsemane, Jesus' struggle with the Father was so bad that His sweat fell like drops of blood (Lukas 22:44). This condition is called **hematidrosis**. It is caused by abnormal physical and emotional stress and anxiety. On the cross shortly before Jesus' death, He calls out loudly to God: **"Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")** (Matthew 27:46)

When you suffer, you must speak. Beware of an "internal conversation" – a conversation with yourself in your head. You can easily convince yourself that you're suffering unjustly and should feel sorry for yourself. Self-pity, anger, and bitterness are often the result of a continuous, one-sided conversation with yourself (Acc. Jonah 3:10 – 4:11).

**Prayer:** Help me, Lord, not to speak and listen only to myself. Help me to honestly share my heart with You in my suffering. Help me to listen to You and know You better. Please give me greater perspective and deeper insight. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray that the Lord will protect you from bitterness and self-pity.*
- † *Pray for family, friends, farmers, and doctors that need to have a good conversation with God. Pray for those who don't want to read the Bible or pray about their suffering.*
- † *Confess the nonsense and all the terrible things that you've said in your suffering* (following Jeremiah 15:19).

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **South Africa**.

## Day 3

### It's a listening conversation. God is revealing Himself!

**Read:** John 1:18 and 14:8-11; Hebrews 1:1-3

After the death of my brother, Albert, on a farm near Uppington in 1984, many people tried to comfort us with these words: *It was the will of the Lord. Accept it; He is in control.* I wondered how it could be His will. In Exodus 20:13 God forbids murder. He says: ***You shall not murder.***

I realised that I would have to think more deeply and read the whole Bible to find sensible answers to all my questions. I would have to walk in a personal relationship with God and get to know Him better.

The Bible is clear: **People can disobey God's will. Therefore we can't say that everything that happens is God's will.** God can't be held responsible for the miseries that follow disobedience to Him. Pain and suffering can only be God's will if Satan and humankind are always obedient to Him. But we know that this isn't so!

Therefore it's totally wrong to blame God for all suffering. It's also very dangerous. Someone who blames God for all the evil and misery in the

world will turn his back on God at some point. No one wants a god that threatens your life and happiness and afflicts you with disasters at random. It would be better to ignore such a god and convince yourself that he doesn't exist.

You can't get to know God by looking at suffering. Get to know Him by reading His Word and accepting His Son, Jesus Christ, as Lord and Saviour. Then He will teach and show you how to understand suffering. If you base your image of God on your experience of suffering, you will get the wrong idea about Who He is. You can only get the right image of God by looking at Jesus:

***"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."*** (John 1:18).

***"Philip said, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*** (John 14:8-9).

***"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."*** (Hebrews 1:1-3a).

In the Bible we are introduced to God as the Light (John 9:5; 1 John 1:5); the merciful Father; the loving, righteous, and holy God. The One Who hates every kind of sin, injustice, and darkness so much that He let His Son be nailed to a cross: The Righteous One crucified for us sinners (1 Peter 3:18).

In Jesus Christ we get to know Him as the One Who triumphs over all powers of destruction, even death! When we look at suffering, we don't ask: *What kind of a god is responsible for this chaos?* No. We look to the Bible and know that God is Light. There is no darkness in Him. Then we ask: *How should we, in the light of His Word, understand the suffering in this world?*

Don't try to understand God by reasoning from your personal experience. Walk in conversation with God. Believe and accept His Word, no matter what your circumstances are. Get to know Him as He reveals Himself to us in Christ. Get to know Him personally. Then the Spirit of Christ will make all hidden things known to you. Only the Holy Spirit can teach you Who God is. Only He knows the hidden things of God. Only He knows what God gives us in His grace (Acc. 1 Corinthians 2:11-12).

**Prayer:** Lord, keep me from getting the wrong idea about You by looking at suffering. Please reveal Yourself to me through Your Word, Your Son, and Your Spirit. Help me to then see suffering through Your eyes. **Amen**

**Intercession:**

- † *Ask for forgiveness for the false image we formed of God by looking at suffering instead of getting to know Him through His Word and His Son.*
- † *Pray for family and friends who have turned their backs on God because they were blinded by suffering.*
- † *Pray that everyone who starts the Prayer Focus will finish it. Pray that the Spirit and the Word will give them new insight.*
- † *Pray that God will reveal Himself through His Word and His Spirit to farmers, farm labourers, doctors, medical personnel, as well as their families.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in **Lesotho**.

## **Day 4**

### **Suffering: Everthing – Everyone – Everywhere – Always But ...**

**Read:** Genesis 3:14-20; Romans 5:12; 1 Peter 5:9; Matthew 6:34

When you're with people who are talking about things in which you aren't involved, their conversation doesn't interest you because it doesn't affect you. But this conversation is different. It affects you directly because it's about pain and suffering. **Everything** in creation is suffering because of



the sin and disobedience of Adam (Romans 8:18-23). **Everything** is affected by the curse. **Everyone** is affected by the curse. **Everywhere** we go, we see the scars of the curse. Pain and suffering are **always** with us because ***"Each day has enough trouble of its own."*** (Matthew 6:34b)

There are many kinds of suffering and pain:

- Physical pain: a broken arm; heart problems; headaches; kidney stones; open wounds; hunger and thirst; ageing; etc.
- Emotional pain: fear; crumbling relationships and marriages; misunderstandings; insults; bitterness and hate; jealousy; etc.
- Social pain: social isolation; loneliness; disparagement; scorn and rejection; discrimination; etc.
- The pain of disappointment: childlessness; an unsuccessful year of school or an unreachable goal; a failed harvest; crushed dreams; etc.
- Economic suffering: losses; failed plans; corruption and exploitation; bankruptcy and the effects thereof; disasters; unemployment; etc.
- Suffering in the workplace: being overworked or burnt out; exploitation; abuse; struggle and hardships; unrealistic demands; failed harvests and/or transactions; missed deadlines or timelines that don't come together; etc.
- Natural disasters, pandemics, dysfunctional governments, and so on!

The list of pain, suffering, and hardship is neverending. Our enemy, the devil who walks around like a roaring lion, is always looking for someone else to devour; someone else whose life he can make hell. Believers throughout the world experience it (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Remember that suffering isn't limited to physical illnesses. Heartache can cripple someone's spirit just as much as sickness can keep the body in a sickbed. In our search for answers about suffering, we must find answers that are comprehensive enough to help in all instances of suffering.

Everyone thinks their own pain is the worst. It's personal: my pain and my suffering. It's really bad! It's heartbreaking! Don't deny your pain and suffering. If you do, you're lying to yourself. *A Song in the Night* is for people who are struggling through suffering. It's for people who want to talk to God about it and seek answers from Him. *A Song in the Night* wants to give you perspective on your suffering.

Don't deny your suffering. It's a reality! **But ...** the conversation is not just about suffering. There is more to talk about, more to consider. The days of suffering are numbered! Christ's resurrection and victory over death proves it. One day God will make everything new. Nothing will be cursed any more (Revelation 21:5 and 22:3). The day will come of which the Word says: ***"He (God) will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*** (Revelation 21:4). And Paul says: ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"*** (Romans 8:18).

But the conversation isn't just about the future. God's Kingdom is not just a future reality. The Kingdom is already being established. Here and now – more and more every day! God performs signs, wonders, and powerful deeds in answer to the prayers of His children. He heals and restores! He gives victory over the powers of evil. He provides and cares for us in wonderful ways! He gives wisdom to solve problems and knowledge to make new discoveries. Just as suffering penetrated all of creation, God's Kingdom is busy working its way through all creation (Matthew 10:31-33). What a joy it is! What an encouragement it is to pray and talk to God in our suffering! What a motivation it is to start singing even now!

**Prayer:** Lord, I can't run away from my suffering or deny it. Life isn't always pleasant. Please help me to believe that the days of suffering are numbered; to believe that a day is coming when You will bring an end to all suffering! **Amen**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray that something of God's Kingdom today will become visible in your suffering and your community's suffering.*
- † *Pray for family, friends, and acquaintances who are suffering in one way or another, even if they are physically healthy.*
- † *Pray most of all for people who live in fear. Pray for people who don't know God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that they will get to know the Father through Jesus and that His love will drive out all the fear (1 John 4:14-19).*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in **Swaziland**.

## **Part 2**

### **The Bible gives more than one answer and more than one perspective on pain and suffering.**

God, Satan, and humankind – all three – are always involved in our pain and suffering; each one in agreement with his own nature and character.



## **Day 5**

### **What is the connection between sin and suffering?**

**Read:** Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 1:18

Before we discuss the different Biblical perspectives on suffering, we need to discuss the difference between sin and suffering.

**Suffering is not the same as sin**, even though the two are linked. **Suffering is the result of sin** (Genesis 3). It wasn't part of God's creation from the beginning. It was only after Adam and Eve's disobedience that it became a horrible reality (Romans 5:12).

SUFFERING



SIN

SIN



SUFFERING

(This diagram shows that suffering is not sin, but that suffering is always the result of sin. However, it doesn't mean that all your suffering is the direct result of your own sin.)

Sin and suffering are different things. The Bible says that we must turn from our sins, not our suffering. If suffering and sin were the same thing, it would mean that Christ sinned because He certainly suffered! But that is false! The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus suffered (John 10:17-18; Acts 3:18), but never sinned (John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Hebrews 4:15 and 7:26-27; 1 Peter 3:18)!

This distinction between sin and suffering is important. When we speak about God's involvement in suffering, we may not say that He was also involved in sin. God is light. There is no darkness in Him, even though He is involved in suffering. We don't have to try to protect His goodness by denying His involvement in suffering. On Day 7-9 we will discuss God's involvement in suffering in more detail.

Suffering is caused by sin and sin is our own fault. And yet, sin doesn't originate in the human world, but in the angelic world (Acc. Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4).

God gave humans the freedom to choose. We don't know why because the Bible doesn't tell us. The best answer that we can give is that God made us in His image and so we can choose and make decisions.

Sin is the cause of suffering! When we blame God for causing suffering, we are putting the guilt of sin on Him. This means we're doing the exact same thing Adam did (Genesis 3:12): we are blaming God for our own irresponsibility (Acc. Proverbs 19:3). This is something we must never do!

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I worship You. Thank You that You suffered for us, but never sinned. Therefore You are our Saviour and You can help us in our struggle against sin (Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16). **Amen**

**Intercession:**

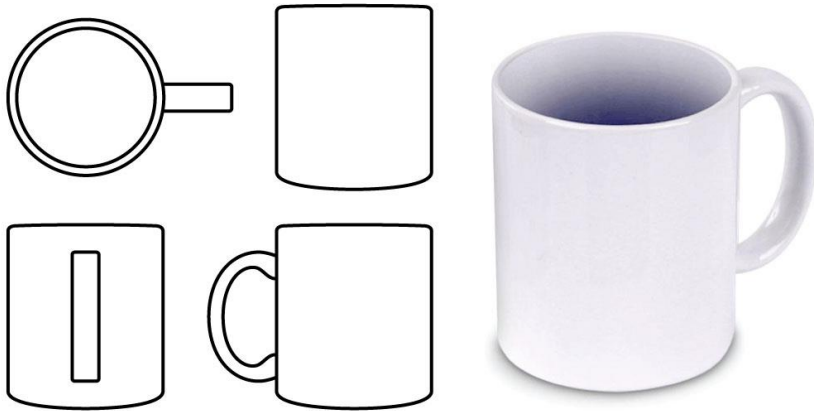
- † *Pray for deep insight into the Word of God. Pray that we will all understand what the Bible says about sin and suffering.*
- † *Pray that you and your loved ones will never abuse your free will by disobeying God. It will land you and others in misery.*
- † *Pray that people who are suffering and being tempted will get to know Jesus as Helper and Saviour (Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16).*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Namibia**.

## Day 6

### More than one perspective on suffering

**Read:** 1 John 4:8; Hebrews 12:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21



*Five different perspectives of a coffee mug*

Each diagram of the coffee mug is true. But each diagram is not the only truth. In each diagram there are parts which you can't see – but they're still there. When we merge the different diagrams (perspectives), we see the whole picture. You must look at the coffee mug from all angles to see the full picture.

In the same way, the Bible looks at suffering from different angles. Different writers and parts provide different perspectives. Each perspective is true, but does not give the full picture on its own. For example, if we look at the cross based on certain passages of Scripture, we see God's love. Other passages of Scripture emphasise His holiness (He hates sin) and His righteousness (He must punish sin). All these perspectives put together help us to better understand the message of the cross.

The many perspectives the Bible offers on suffering makes it difficult to find short and simple answers. For example, a farmer may ask: *Was my crop destroyed by hail because I was dishonest about the actual condition of the bakkie when I sold it?* He wants a simple **yes or no** answer. People who are suffering often want straightforward, simple answers. They don't ask themselves if it's the right answer or the full answer. But the Bible doesn't always give straightforward, simple answers.

Everyone's suffering is different. Therefore, the Bible's answers to everyone's questions will be different. As far as possible, you must first find all the answers. Then you must **wrestle with God in intimate prayer to seek the answers that apply to your current situation**. Yesterday's answers are for yesterday's suffering. They might be applicable some time in the future again. But what about today? The answers that I receive in my suffering don't necessarily apply in my neighbour's suffering.

Because the Bible gives different perspectives on suffering, you must keep them all in mind while you interpret your suffering and try to understand it. We can't explain someone else's suffering. But we can help to make sense of someone's suffering by using a few Biblical perspectives.

Let's make peace with this and enjoy the freedom of searching for the right perspective. Look for what is applicable to your current situation and suffering. Don't accept simple answers (only one or two texts) that are given randomly to everyone who is suffering. The Lord doesn't work with people in that way. He knows who you are; how mature you are in your relationship with Him; what you are doing and what your circumstances are. He will speak to you personally through His Word and His Spirit. This doesn't mean that people can't help each other and offer advice. Help each other to remain in conversation with God.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to accept that the Bible provides more than one perspective on suffering. Help me not to look for short, simple answers. Help me to spend quality time with You when I am suffering. **Amen**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for everyone who needs perspective, rather than a “one-size-fits-all” text.*
- † *Pray for everyone in your community who is working with sick and disabled people: doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, audiologists, hospital personnel, paramedics, etc.*
- † *Pray for spiritual leaders who have the responsibility to help believers understand and manage their suffering.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Botswana**.

## **Day 7**

### **Who is involved in your pain and suffering?**

**Read:** Genesis 50:20 and Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6

Everyone suffers at some or other point. When they do, they ask many questions in search of answers: *Why is this happening? Why now? Why like this? Why me? What should I do now?* Pain and suffering is a difficult question which doesn't have only one easy answer. You can't deal with everyone's suffering with the same single text or passage of Scripture. The Bible provides more than one perspective on pain and suffering. Remember the coffee mug!

Who is involved in our pain and suffering? **God, Satan, or people** are usually singled out as the cause of pain and suffering. Some people think that only one of the three is always responsible for our problems. This is because they only read one passage of text. They don't read all the passages of Scripture on pain and suffering.

Read the Bible carefully. You will discover many texts about pain, suffering, and problems. In some texts there is a connection between God and suffering. In other texts there is a connection between Satan



and problems. And some texts even say that people cause their own suffering and misery. Here are a few examples:

- In the following texts there is a connection between **God and suffering**:  
     1 Peter 4:17-19  
     Lamentations 3:31-38  
     Jeremiah 30:15
- In the following texts there is a connection between **Satan and suffering**:  
     Mark 5:2-5  
     John 8:44  
     1 Peter 5:8  
     Revelation 2:10
- In the following texts there is a connection between **people and suffering**:  
     Psalm 107:17  
     Proverbs 19:3  
     2 Timothy 3:1-4

It would be a mistake to choose only one text and use it to find out *who* plays a role in your problems and suffering. You'll think it's either **God, Satan, or people** (even yourself). But pay attention to the different perspectives that the Bible gives on suffering. You will notice that **God and Satan and people** always play a role in suffering. Sometimes only two of the three are mentioned, without showing the role of the third party. God and Joseph's brothers (people) are mentioned in Genesis 50:20. God and Satan are mentioned in Job 1:8-12 and 2:3-6. The involvement of Job's wife is only mentioned in 2:9 for the first time.

You are **WRONG** if you say:

**God or Satan or people** are involved in my pain and suffering.

You are **RIGHT** if you say:

**God and Satan and people** are involved in my pain and suffering.



Know that **God and Satan and people** play a role in every case of suffering and in every problem. **But remember: each is involved in suffering according to his nature and character.** Think about the following: When a doctor cuts open my ribcage to operate on me, the pain is exactly the same as when a criminal attacks me with a knife and slashes my chest open. And yet, there is a big difference because each one is acting according to his character. The doctor will help me to heal and get well. He wants me to live. The criminal wants to harm me. He wants to kill me. God and Satan's involvement in my suffering differ in the same way. According to their natures and characters, One will help me, and the other will kill me.

We will discuss this further over the next few days.

**Prayer:** Lord, please show me how You, Satan, and people are involved in my suffering. **Amen**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for everyone who is suffering because of a natural disaster or pandemic and the social and economic effect thereof.*
- † *Pray that Christians will better understand their pain and suffering through the Word and the Spirit. Pray that people will study **A Song in the Night** and speak to God about their pain and suffering.*
- † *Pray that people throughout Africa, especially in rural areas, will grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. Pray that the Spirit will give them new life. Pray that Africa will rise up out of poverty.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in Zimbabwe.

## **Day 8**

### **God's involvement (1)**

**Read:** 1 Peter 1:16; 1 John 4:8; Psalm 119:75b

We have referred to 1 John 1:5 a few times already. ***"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."*** This means that God doesn't have a dark side. There is nothing in His nature and character that is ugly or evil. There is nothing nasty in Him that could manifest unexpectedly. God is light! God is lovely! God is Who He is (acc. Exodus 3:14). We can sing about Him in the darkest of nights!

In Exodus 34:6-7, the Lord says Who He is: ***"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'"***

Jonah warned the people of Ninevah that the Lord was going to punish them. When they repented, God changed His mind about destroying them. Jonah was angry with the Lord about it. In Jonah 4:2b, Jonah says: ***"I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."*** Read Nehemiah 9:17 as well.

God ***is*** holy and God ***is*** love! He ***is*** just, good, almighty, full of mercy and compassion. We also have certain characteristics. Sometimes we act according to those characteristics and sometimes we don't. But God ***is*** His characteristics. His being, character, and characteristics cannot be separated from one another. God is involved in our suffering in accordance with His unchanging character.

How is God, according to His nature and character, involved in our suffering?

- ✓ According to Lamentations 3:32, we can say that **suffering is God's reluctant will**. God doesn't enjoy it when someone endures pain and suffering. When He allows pain and suffering, it's always with a tear in His eye and lamentation in His heart (Jeremiah 9:10; 13:17 and 31:20; Hosea 11:8-9). God doesn't take revenge on His children by letting them suffer. Instead, it sometimes is the way He calls them back to Him.
- ✓ God's involvement in suffering is always **a call to repentance or turning back to Him**. For example, in Amos 4:6-12 we read about famine, drought, failed harvests, pestilence, wars, and earthquakes. People think that it was probably just the natural course of events in a region like Israel. Amos says clearly that it wasn't just another drought. He says that *the Lord* did not send the rain. God was speaking through natural disasters. In this way, Israel was called to repentance. Five times we read: " ... **yet you have not returned to me,' declares the Lord.**" Suffering is never God's final will. It's His "pre-final" (semi-final) will. God's final will is always our redemption and salvation. He only wants the very best for us. (Read 33:11, Hebrews 12:10 and Revelation 9:20-21.)
- ✓ **God, in His almighty power, is involved in our suffering. In His almightiness He rules over and limits** our suffering. God saved David from deadly danger in many ways (1 Samuel 16 – 31). Daniel's friends didn't burn in the fire (Daniel 3:22-26) and the lions didn't devour Daniel (Daniel 6:22-23). God limits the extent and the duration of our suffering. Suffering can't get out of hand (Job 1:12 and 2:6; Revelation 2:10; 13:5)! In His almightiness He **works everything for the good** of all His children (Romans 8:28). He even conquered death. Nothing is impossible for God (Jeremiah 32:17 and 27).
- ✓ **God, in His holiness, is involved in our suffering.** By punishing sin, He maintains His holiness and righteousness. If He doesn't punish sin, we might think that He has become like the wicked (Psalm 50:21-22). God's holiness is most obvious on the cross at Golgotha. His holiness means that sin cannot be overlooked (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
- ✓ **God, in His love, is involved in our suffering.** Christ bore the punishment for our sins. To the Christian, the sting of punishment is

removed from suffering. In His love and almightiness, God makes all things work together for the good of His children (Romans 8:28). He raises them up to a holy life, obedience in the faith, and spiritual maturity. To the Christian, suffering is like discipline to mature one's faith. It's not a punishment (Hebrews 12:4-12. Compare with Ezekiel 33:11). Discipline, focuses on the future. Punishment follows something that happened in the past.

God's involvement in your suffering doesn't make Him cruel, evil, and hostile. David sang: ***"I know, Lord, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me."*** (Psalm 119:75 – read verses 67 and 71 as well.) God remains the same! He loves you very much. Your suffering is His suffering too. He is always with you in your suffering. ***"Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens."*** (Psalm 68:19).

People who ignore God in their suffering are foolish. Speak to Him about your suffering.

**Prayer:** Lord God, I worship You as the One in Whom there is no darkness, sin, or evil. I worship You as the unchanging God; You are holy, loving, and good, even when I am suffering. For this, I thank You. **Amen**

#### **Intercession:**

- † *Pray for governments. How they govern can either cause or prevent a lot of pain and suffering.*
- † *Pray for the elderly. Many are illiterate, especially in the countryside. Pray that they will get to know God as He reveals Himself to us through the Word and Christ. Pray that it will happen before they pass away.*
- † *Pray for all farmers. Pray that they will truly get to know God.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in ***Mozambique.***

## **Day 9**

### **God's involvement (2)**

**Read:** Hebrews 1:1-2

God speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). In Him we hear and see how God feels about our suffering and how intensely involved He is in it.

Our misery began with the sin and disobedience of Adam. That's why God sent His Son as the second Adam to address our problem at the root. The second Adam never sinned. He was 100% obedient to the Father. Death entered the world through the first Adam. The second Adam brought us life (Romans 5:12-21). How can anyone claim that God doesn't care? Just look at Jesus!

The cross is a picture of God's characteristics. It's the full picture of His involvement in our suffering.

God is **holy** (1 Peter 1:16). He hates and forbids sin. Nothing unholy or impure can enter His presence. That's why we must be cleansed before our relationship with God can be restored. The blood of Christ has already done this for us (Hebrews 7:26-27; 9:22; 10:10-20). Be thankful for God's involvement in suffering – it's to our advantage.

God is **righteous** (Isaiah 53:11; Zephaniah 3:5; Acts 22:14; 1 John 2:1). He must punish sin. He sent Jesus to bear the punishment for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Be thankful for God's involvement in suffering. It's to our advantage.

God is **love** (1 John 4:8-10). Because He loves us, He was prepared to become a curse for us so that we can be redeemed (Galatians 3:13).

***"He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. ... Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."*** (Isaiah 53:3-5).

Jesus' crucifixion clearly demonstrates God's love for us! He gave Christ up in our place when we were still sinners (Romans 5:6-8). Be thankful for God's involvement in suffering – it's to our advantage.

God is **almighty** (Jeremiah 2:19 and 32:15-17). In His almightiness, He raised Christ from the dead. Christ conquered the grave (Luke 24:34; Revelation 1:17-18)! He is the Victor! The ultimate Winner! The One Who laid the foundation for God to make everything new again (Colossians 1:19-20; Revelation 21)! Be thankful for God's involvement in our suffering – it's to our advantage.

The cross and resurrection shows us how intensely God is with us and is involved in our suffering; how much He loves us; what He was prepared to do to take away the cause and consequences of our suffering.

People who think they can ignore God in their suffering are foolish. Speak to Him about your suffering. In Christ, God came to show us that He takes our pain and suffering seriously. He came to tell us how He feels about our pain and suffering and what He has already done about it. Speak to Him about your pain and suffering. Listen to Him.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to always remember the cross and the empty grave when I think about my pain and suffering. Help me to speak with You when my life goes through the darkest nights.  
**Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Praise and worship God for everything that He came to tell us and do for us in Christ Jesus.*
- † *Pray for the salvation of everyone who doesn't believe in Jesus yet – including those who live and work with you.*
- † *Pray for everyone who still refuses to speak to God about their pain and suffering.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in **Zambia**.

## **Day 10**

### **Satan's involvement (1)**

**Read:** John 8:44 and 10:10a





In 2 Peter 2:4 we read about angels that sinned. Their sin was probably self-exultation, arrogance and pride (Acc. Jude 6 and 1 Timothy 3:6). They no longer wanted to be God's subjects. That's why they were thrown out of heaven.

Just as God is involved in our suffering in accordance with His nature and character, Satan is involved in our suffering in accordance with his nature and character.

- ✓ The Bible describes Satan as the **father of** lies (John 8:44). He lies and deceives – that's his nature and character. He confuses those who are suffering. He distorts everything, speaking half-truths and lies. He tells lies about God: he tells people that they can't trust God; that they shouldn't dare speak with Him; that God doesn't care. He never stops lying – about the reason for your suffering and the solution to it! He is a liar by nature. He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14); pretends to be a friend (Matthew 16:22-23) and makes his words seem like they are your own thoughts (John 13:2). You need knowledge of the Word and discernment through the Spirit to know when and how Satan is lying to you.

The Word also says that Satan has been a murderer from the very beginning – one who **steals, kills, and destroys**. He is like a **roaring lion** who **devours** his prey. (John 8:44 and 10:10; as well as 1 Peter 5:8) Satan is involved in our suffering in accordance with his evil character. He takes delight in causing pain and suffering and raising havoc everywhere. Satan is the primary cause of all our misery.

- ✓ Satan is a **cunning deceiver**. He is not satisfied with the fact that you are suffering. He wants your suffering to make you sin against God. Therefore, he turns every situation of suffering into a temptation (Job 2:7-9; Proverbs 30:7-9; Matthew 4:2-3). He gives the wrong solutions for your problems: *“Relieve your stress with alcohol.” “Take the law into your own hands and get revenge.” “Lie and deceive to escape your financial difficulties.”* This is so important that we’ll speak about it again on Day 11.
  
- ✓ Satan, the **accuser**, accuses humankind before God (Job 1:6-9 and Revelation 12:10-12). But now Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God interceding for us. Therefore, Satan can no longer accuse us before God (Romans 8:33-34; 1 John 2:1, as well as Hebrews 7:25 and 9:24). However, he now accuses us in our consciences. He wants you to keep sinning. That’s why he’s not specific in his accusations. He usually weighs you down with general, vague feelings of guilt: *“You’re actually really terrible!”* Pray that you will have the ability to discern between the clear voice of the Holy Spirit and the vague, false accusations of Satan.
  
- ✓ God’s nature and character is **love** (1 John 4:8). Satan’s is **fear**. He knows what his fast approaching fate is (Matthew 25:41; Luke 8:28; Jude 6; Revelation 12:12). He is anticipating his punishment and he’s terrified of it. That’s why he tries to make us scared of God’s punishment (1 John 4:14-19). He easily succeeds when we are suffering. We so easily believe the worst. Our problems become gigantic monsters that threaten our entire lives. How does Satan do it? He knows that fearful people easily make mistakes and sin. Think about how Saul sinned against God because he was afraid of his men (1 Samuel 15:24; Proverbs 29:25; Isaiah 57:11; Revelation 21:8). Or how Peter denied Jesus before a servant girl because he was afraid when he saw what was happening to Jesus (John 18:17).
  
- ✓ Satan **possesses and controls** people even now (Luke 8:26 onwards; Mark 1:32). This is sometimes linked to mental illness, disability, sickness, or other forms of suffering (Matthew 12:22; 17:14-18).
  
- ✓ It doesn’t matter how aggressive Satan is. He has been **defeated**. His power and authority is very limited (John 16:33; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15). Satan is like an angry dog or a lion on a chain. The

only way he can get a hold on believers is to tell lies and sow panic and fear.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to see how Satan is involved in my suffering. Thank you, Jesus, that You have already defeated him. Please protect and keep me from his evil. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Praise and thank God that Satan has already been defeated and can't do what he wants.*
- † *Pray for people who live in constant fear because ...*
  - *they serve and honour idols;*
  - *they are involved in abominable occultic practises as mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:9-14.*
- † *Pray that Christians who have turned away from ancestral worship will boldly testify of the love and joy that they have found in Christ.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in **Malawi**.

## Day 11

### Satan's involvement (2): Temptations

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 10:13 and 1 Peter 1:6

We already know that the devil is the **father of lies**. He is involved in our suffering in accordance with his evil nature and character. That's why we can expect him to lie to us in our suffering. He does this by giving us wrong advice and false solutions.

In Greek the same word is used for temptation and affliction. The Greeks understood that there is a temptation hiding in every affliction (all suffering). This temptation is not from God (James 1:13).

Satan uses our suffering as an opportunity to test us. He gives us the wrong advice and false solutions. He just wants to worsen our suffering by giving us bad advice. He isn't satisfied by our suffering. He wants our suffering to cause us to sin against God. Read Job 2:7-9. Satan used Job's wife to tempt Job to curse God: **"His wife said to him,**

***"Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"***

According to Proverbs 30:7-9, suffering caused by poverty becomes a temptation to steal and thereby dishonour the Name of the Lord. When Jesus was hungry after his 40-day fast, Satan tempted Him to abuse His power by turning stones into bread (Matthew 4:1-11).

Temptation comes in different forms. Many people turn their backs on God because there's so much pain and suffering in the world. Don't fall for this trap. Your pain and misery will only increase. Read Jeremiah 2:19b: ***"Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.***

It's a common temptation to **take the law into your own hands** when you suffer injustice. You want to take revenge, but in so doing you also break the law and bring guilt upon yourself.

If Satan can't get you to take the law and justice into your own hands, he will try to tempt you into **bitterness and hate**. Thus I was tempted to give up on my calling after the murder of my brother.

Just like bitterness, **unforgiveness** is also a common temptation. Satan can destroy our lives completely if we give in to it. Bitterness and unforgiveness blocks God's love and forgiveness (Matthew 6:12; 18:21-35): It eats away at you like a cancer. It destroys your life. Remember: *Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping it will kill someone else.*

Many people **curse** when they get angry (Acc. Ephesians 4:25-32 especially verse 26). They often even take the Lord's name in vain. They curse God and do what Job refused to do (Job 2:9-10).

Many people are very tempted to **be unfaithful in marriage**. It often happens that people in unhappy marriages find themselves confiding in one another. They *relate* to each other. In this way, the devil tempts them to get involved in adulterous relationships.

**Suicide** can also become a temptation when circumstances become overwhelming and hope is lost.

The following story illustrates successive temptations from Satan in the life of a farmer experiencing intense hardship:

This farmer started suffering financial difficulties because of his bad decisions and a overly luxurious lifestyle. Satan's "solution" was to file a false VAT-claim for R10 000. The claim was accepted, but Satan continued to harass him. Stress and fear that he would be caught out began to consume the farmer. I offered to get him a Christian lawyer to help him declare the fraudulent activity and correct it but he wasn't interested. His financial troubles got worse and worse. Bankruptcy was becoming a greater and greater possibility. Once again, Satan offered a dishonest solution. The farmer consulted a sangoma. Slowly but surely, Satan was destroying his life. His Christian friends begged him on behalf of God to repent but he showed no remorse. He chose to hide his sins. Eventually the truth found in Proverbs 28:13 became a reality in his life. Everything went wrong. His wife also lost her job and his children suffered tremendously. The farmer started blaming God for all his suffering as though God was the "sinner" (acc. Proverbs 19:3). A buyer was found for the farmer's land and a deal looked likely. But then the buyer let the farmer know that he was no longer interested and all his wonderful promises came to nothing. "*God dropped me again!*" said the farmer. Now God was the guilty One! Untrustworthy, reprehensible! The farmer was staring bankruptcy in the face. Once again, Satan was there with another evil plan. But the farmer phoned me first (because God, in His great love, was also involved in the farmer's suffering). He ended our conversation with these words: "*There's only one way out. I've got to take my own life. Then I'll be free from all this trouble.*" Slowly but surely, Satan was busy destroying a valuable life by continuously giving the farmer the wrong solutions. (I lost contact with the farmer after that, but a few years later I heard that he hadn't given in to the final temptation of suicide. Thank the Lord!)

All these examples serve as a warning. Beware of temptations during suffering. **Every time you suffer, you must stop and ask: *How is Satan busy tempting me? What false and dangerous solutions is he suggesting?*** True to his nature, Satan wants us to sin against God in our suffering! He wants to increase our suffering and destroy our lives.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank You that You taught us to pray: *Protect us from the evil one* (Matthew 6:13 and John 17:11-15). Help me to keep praying that You will keep me from Satan's temptations and traps. Please protect me every day. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for someone whom you suspect no one else is praying. Pray that this person will be saved from the evil one (Colossians 1:13-14).*
- † *Confess and let go of all bitterness.*
- † *Confess and let go of all cursing.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in *Tanzania*.

## Day 12

### Satan's involvement (3): Fear

**Read:** 2 Timothy 1:7

Satan is always involved in our suffering in accordance with his nature and character. He enjoys making us fearful. It's easy for him to do so when we suffer and are confronted by big challenges. John Maxwell's ***"Reflective thinking turns experience into insight"*** made me reflect and pray about fear. I gained the following insight:

Fear is our greatest enemy. Fear has never solved a problem. Fear has never lent someone a helping hand. Fear has never created jobs or healed disease. Fear has never made someone laugh or brought encouragement. Fear has never formed or restored a relationship, and has never saved a marriage. Fear has never cultivated a piece of land, provided food for someone, started a business, or created a future for someone else. Fear has never empowered anyone for a task. Instead, fear has crippled many people. **However, every day faith and love achieve what fear does not!**

I also reflected on fear and understood why the Lord, when He gives someone an assignment, always adds: *Do not be afraid! I am with You!* (acc. Joshua 1:5-9; Jeremiah 1:8 and 1:17-19). Fear has always led to sin and disobedience (Revelation 21:8). Fear has never done what God has said, but always responds with *"What if ... ?"*. Fear has never defeated darkness. Only faith can do that! Fear has never made this world a better place. Only love and faith can do that! **Fear has never helped a Christian to use the power and authority that Christ has given us to build His Kingdom** (Luke 9:1-2 and Matthew 10: 1 and 7). Fear has never given anyone the power to endure and push through. Fear doesn't allow anyone to persist until God's promises become a reality. The only thing that fear has ever done is make believers shrink back. It makes them ineffective.

Fear preys on the unknown, the future, the *"what if?"* of life. Faith remembers what God has already done (Psalm 107). He provided in the wilderness **and** at Golgotha! Fear operates in lies and half-truths. Faith operates in the whole truth. Fear speaks about what happened at three o'clock in the afternoon on the Friday, but is silent about what happened on the Sunday morning. But the grave shouted it out: **Empty! He is risen!** *It may still be dark and feel like Friday, but surely, Sunday is coming!* Keep the faith!

**Reflective thinking turns experience into insight!** Just because I believe doesn't mean that I never have made or will make bad judgement calls. I'm only human and I don't always hear correctly. I don't always listen well enough. But my conclusion is: **Even though my faith has sometimes seemed to let me down, fear has *always* let me down! Faith that leads to action through love is better than fear that cripples and makes us passive.**

Fear has never helped me. Faith has! God has! Fear doesn't work for me! I don't want it anywhere near me. I choose love and faith and a relationship with God! Faith has brought me farther in life than fear will ever take me. Fear has never "filled my tank". But it has definitely left me stranded "without petrol" on the side of the road. Faith has always filled my empty tank. It has always enabled me to go further in faith than I ever thought I could.

Fear doesn't proclaim what must happen based on the cross and the empty grave. It just emphasises all the negative things visible to the eye. Fear discusses Goliath and all the giants that threaten us every day. It tries to convince us that the battle is ours to fight and that we are going to lose. Fear makes us forget that God is with us (Matthew 1:23 and 28:20). It makes us forget that God has already won the victory.

Faith speaks to the giant. It destroys his arrogance, intimidation, and defiance of God (40 Day Prayer Focus on Farming 2019 – *God sees a king in you!* Day 15).

Don't allow fear to overwhelm you. Fear can't help you in your struggle with pain and suffering. Fear and worry doesn't come from God (2 Timothy 2:7; Philippians 4:6). You can defeat them by speaking to God. Have a conversation with Him based on His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Don't be afraid. God is with each and every one of His children. It doesn't matter how dark the night or how big the challenge seems.

If you're scared, you've already lost (Proverbs 24:10).

**Prayer:** Lord, thank You that You fill me with Your power, love, and self-control. Thank You that You help me not fear anyone or anything. I bow before You in worship and awe. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for everyone who is living in fear. Pray especially for people in traditional religions who are held captive by fear.*
- † *Pray for people who are suffering from depression.*
- † *Speak to the Lord about your fear. He will help you to conquer your fear and do what He says. He will give you a new song to sing!*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in *Angola*.

## Day 13

### People's involvement (1)

**Read:** Romans 3:9-18



People are not just spectators to or victims of suffering. Read about **Judas** in John 13. The devil planted the thought in his head to betray Jesus (13:2). Jesus knew who would betray Him so that the Scripture would be fulfilled (13:11 and 17:12). Therefore, He gave Judas the piece of bread (13:26). Then the devil entered Judas (13:27) and he took the bread (13:30). Judas wasn't a victim. He was an active roleplayer. He didn't take the bread by accident. He was with Jesus all the time. He heard what Jesus taught and saw what He did. But ... his heart never changed. His political conviction (of an earthly nationalistic kingdom) and greed also didn't change. He didn't care about the poor. He even stole the ministry's money (John 12:5-6). His loyalty was bought with money (Matthew 26:14-16). Judas betrayed Jesus. It was in accordance with his nature and character. That is who he was.

Read Romans 1:18 onwards. People try to explain or reason the truth of God away. Their arguments are foolish. Yet they believe they are smart and learned. They have no excuse for their actions. They reject God. But they worship anything under the sun: images that look like people or animals, money, and their own appetites (Romans 1:18-23; Matthew 6:24;



Philippians 3:19). They love pleasure more than God (2 Timothy 3:4). Because of their own decisions, God gives them over to their evil desires, sexual impurity, and a debased mind (Romans 1:24-28). In this way they become completely degenerate: ***"They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."*** (Romans 1:29-32).

Paul describes society in the time of Christ's return in similar words (2 Timothy 3:1-5). For some or other reason, people choose a life of pain, suffering, misery, and hardship. It's inexplicable and foolish. People can only blame themselves.

People's selfish desires cause conflict between them (James 4:1-3). This leads to all kinds of evil and even war. People are tempted by their own desires and enticed to give in. People are simply too willing to be tempted (James 1:13-15).

Sin blinds people. We don't recognize our own sins (Matthew 7:1-6; Revelation 3:17). We don't even realise how much heartache and misery we cause.

People are often their own greatest enemy. But every person is quick to shift the blame for their sins and suffering onto someone else. They even blame God and/or Satan.

**Remember:** The Bible offers more than one perspective on pain and suffering. Behind our suffering there is ...

NOT God OR Satan OR people,

BUT, God AND Satan AND people.

**Each one is involved in accordance with his own nature and character.** A born-again Christian is a new creation. Therefore his involvement in suffering should be different to that of unbelievers. A Christian is born of God. God is his Father (John 1:12-13; Hebrews 2:11). Therefore, his involvement should be in accordance with his Father's

nature and character. The involvement of unbelievers will usually be in accordance with the nature and character of their father – the father of lies, the murderer of humankind, Satan. That is why people act differently during a pandemic like Covid-19. Some people do everything they can to meet people's needs. But others see the pandemic as an opportunity to exploit people and benefit financially.

**Prayer:** Lord, open my eyes to my own involvement in pain and suffering. Help me to accept responsibility for what I think, say, and do. **Amen.**

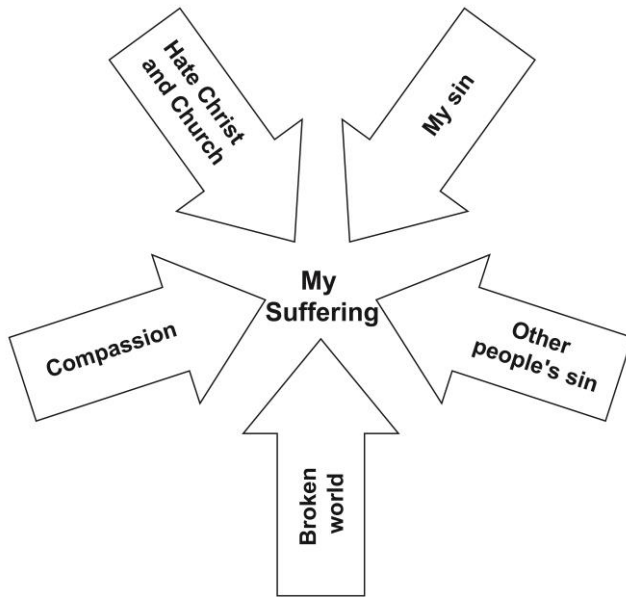
**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for all leaders. What they think, say, and do has a big influence on many people's lives. Pray that they will follow Jesus as Lord.*
- † *Pray for lazy farmers, lazy doctors, and lazy politicians. Their laziness has caused a lot of suffering for many people.*
- † *Pray for farmers and their families to repent and be born again.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in die **DRC**.

## PART 3

**Suffering enters our lives in at least one of five different ways.**

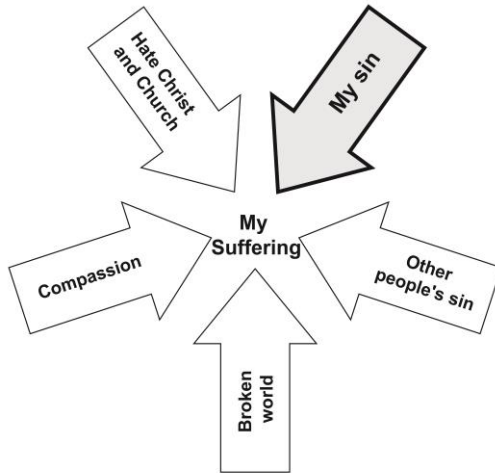


When someone is suffering, they always ask ***why?*** People often don't get direct, clear answers to questions of why. And yet it's important to look at a few perspectives found in the Word. The Bible doesn't have ***only one*** crystal clear ***answer***. There is ***more than one answer and more than one perspective***. Very often ***more than one*** answer and perspective are applicable at the same time.

## Day 14

### My sin and disobedience (1)

Read: Psalm 38:4



Why am I suffering? There is **more than one answer** to this question. The first, most obvious answer is usually: **Because of my sin!**

There are at least five possible reasons for your pain and suffering. Suffering **could** be the result of your **personal sin, foolishness, disobedience, and irresponsibility** but this **isn't always the case**. It's dangerous to only have one standpoint when speaking about suffering and personal sin.

It's dangerous to say to someone who is suffering: *Your suffering is **always** the result your own personal sin.* It's false and you're laying a heavy burden on that person's shoulders. It's also wrong to tell someone who is suffering: *Suffering is **never** the result of your own personal sin.* Don't make such statements. Christians are not without sin(1 John 1:8). Sin carries the germ of suffering (Acc. Jeremiah 7:16-20).

It's obvious: All suffering is related to sin. Only some suffering is the direct result of your own personal sin.

In the Bible there are examples where people's suffering is clearly the result of their own sin:

- **Greed / lies** and Gehazi's leprosy (2 Kings 5:19-27);
- **Adultery / murder** and the death of David and Bathsheba's child (2 Samuel 12:13-14);
- **Disobedience** and Lot's wife (Genesis 19:16-26);
- **Theft** and the death of Achan and his family (Joshua 7);
- **Disobedience / fear** and Saul's rejection as king (1 Samuel 15);
- **Unbelief** and Zechariah becoming mute (Luke 1);
- **Lies** and the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5);
- **Inappropriate use of communion** and the sickness and death of some partaking incorrectly in communion (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

In 1 Corinthians 5 we read about church discipline. Here sin and suffering are directly related. The discipline deals with a specific sin of a certain person. God, Satan, and people's involvement are made clear in 1 Corinthians 5. The purpose of discipline (suffering) is the salvation of the sinner and the glory of God (verse 5).

Practical examples from everyday life:

- **HIV/AIDS** can be transferred in many ways. But there is a direct relation between sexual debauchery and perversity, and this sickness.
- Many car accidents are the direct result of **alcohol abuse**. Alcohol abuse also leads to physical decay. Many marital and family problems are the result of drunkenness.
- **Smoking and poor eating / drinking habits**, are the direct cause of many blood, lung, heart, and other problems.

We know that suffering is linked to sin. We also know that it can be the result of personal sin. Therefore we must examine and humble ourselves when we are suffering. Speak to God about your suffering and its cause. If the Spirit of God convicts you of a specific sin, confess it. Remember how He revealed Himself to us in Exodus 34:6-7: ***"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and***

**fourth generation.”** He punished His Son in your place to forgive your sins and set you free (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 1:7-10). Accept His salvation. Turn from your sin. You will receive grace (Proverbs 28:13)! You don't have to worsen your suffering by blaming and punishing yourself or bringing all kinds of offerings. Christ's sacrifice dealt with everything (Hebrews 10:11-18). When darkness descended in the middle of the day for Jesus (around noon it became dark as night), He was terribly alone and abandoned by God. But when He died, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:45-51). Because of this we have access to the sanctuary, the throne of grace (Hebrews 10:19-22 and 4:16). Make use of this opportunity! It's a privilege!

God gives people over to themselves and/or Satan if they show no remorse about their sin, even though they are suffering because of it. Then they destroy their own lives (Romans 1:18-32). Woe to those who slander God in suffering (Acc. Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9, 11, 21).

There isn't always a **direct link** between sin and suffering.

- The blind man in John 9:2-3;
- The Galileans who Pilot had killed and the 18 who were crushed when the tower of Siloam fell on them (Luke 13:1-5);
- Job's bitter suffering (Job 1 to 42);
- Asaph who struggles in Psalm 73 with the prosperity of proud and Godless people;
- Droughts in the Northern Cape don't mean that the people of the Northern Cape are worse sinners than the people who live in areas with high rainfall.

Therefore we must look further and delve deeper for more answers.

**Prayer:** Father, thank you for Jesus' sacrifice, the forgiveness of sins, and the unhindered path to Your throne of grace. I want to speak to You about my sin and its results. Please show me everything that I must confess and leave behind. **Amen**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for people who keep sinning even though they are suffering. Ask the Holy Spirit to open their eyes and ears. Ask that they will hear His invitation and accept it.*
- † *Pray for a farmer, his family, and all his workers.*
- † *Bless all doctors and medical personnel you know.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in the Congo.

## **Day 15**

### **My sin and disobedience (2):**

### **Please take away my sin!**

**Read:** Psalm 51

Psalm 52 is a song! David wrote it after his affair with Bathsheba. His life was filled with darkness. His sin had overtaken him. The song was inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16). I can't think of more sincere words with which to come to God in our brokenness. Make the words from this Psalm the sincere prayer of your heart.

*1 Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.*

*2 Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*3 For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.*

*4 Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.*

*5 Surely I was sinful at birth,  
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

*6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.*

*7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

*8 Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

*9 Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.*

*10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*11 Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

*13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,  
so that sinners will turn back to you.*

*14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
you who are God my Saviour,  
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*

*15 Open my lips, Lord,  
and my mouth will declare your praise.*

*16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;  
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*

*17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart  
you, God, will not despise.*

*18 May it please you to prosper Zion,  
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.*

*19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,  
in burnt offerings offered whole;  
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

**Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, that You listen to my Psalm 51 prayer. You know my heart. You hear my prayer! You restore our relationship! Your judgements are righteous when you forgive me because I believe in Jesus. (The last part of Romans 3:26!) **Amen**



**Intercession:**

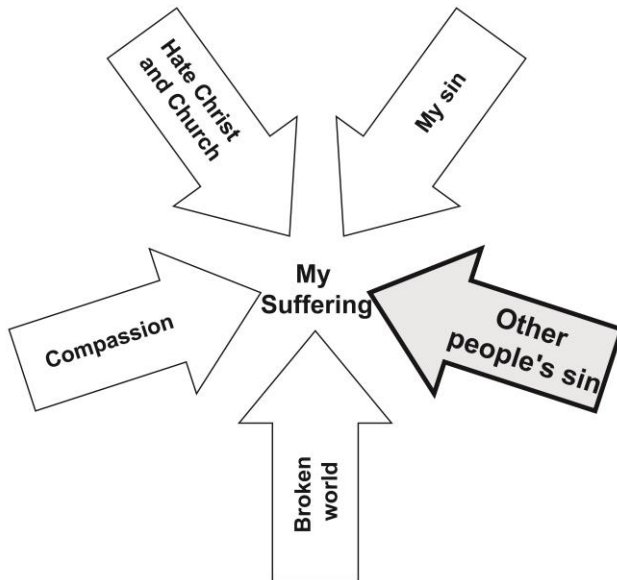
- † *Pray Psalm 51 over someone you love, but who isn't yet ready to pray it himself.*
- † *Pray for the salvation of your parents if they are not yet saved.*
- † *Bless all teachers and leaders in education who you know.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in *Rwanda*.

## Day 16

### Other people's sin

**Read:** 2 Timothy 3:1-5



**Other people's sin** (of a specific person, group of people, even ancestors, and/or all of creation and humankind), disobedience, and irresponsibility can also cause you pain and suffering.

We live in a Godless world. Everyone, Christians and non-Christians alike, are bound by social, economic, historical, and cultural ties. Thus we influence each other in every regard – positively and negatively. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 Paul calls the negative influences “terrible times”. This

term implies suffering (acc. Romans 1:29-31 as well). These “terrible times” are not the result of natural disasters or the incredible events that will precede Christ’s return. They are the result of the character and actions of people. Paul describes the lives of the people of these “terrible times” negatively: They are **inhuman**: disobedient to their parents; without natural love; unholy; irreconcilable; and irreligious. Their actions are **inhuman**. They are boastful, lawless, and cruel. The word “cruel” means “untamed”, like wild animals. They are barbaric! These people only love themselves, money, and pleasure. They believe the world revolves around them. They just want to eat and drink and enjoy life. They aren’t interested in the resurrection of the dead or eternal judgement.

The word “**tittitainment**” was coined by a former advisor to former president of the USA, Jimmy Carter. *“This word is a combination between “entertainment” and “tits” – the American slang word for female breasts. It describes the need for plenty of entertainment and enough food to keep the world’s frustrated 80 percent in a good mood! What a world to live in!”*<sup>1</sup>

In a society like this everyone suffers – Christians and non-Christians alike. Just think about it: How do the inhuman actions of parents hurt their children? How many tears do the inhuman actions of children cause their parents? How much suffering do the inhuman actions of politicians and governments cause their citizens? How do the inhuman actions of farmers affect the people who they are supposed to provide with sufficient quality, healthy food? How do church congregants suffer under the inhuman actions of religious leaders? What happens to patients when doctors act inhumanly? How difficult do patients make things for doctors and other health care workers when they treat them inhumanly? How are you and I affected by the inhuman actions of large companies who produce seed for farmers or vaccines for pandemics? Inhuman researchers and scientists make biological and chemical warfare more than just a terrible possibility. It could become a shocking reality overnight. What can you expect from an inhuman policeman and an inhuman teacher? What happens to the poor under the inhuman actions of the wealthy? How safe are the wealthy when the poor act inhumanly? In an inhuman society, pain and suffering are shocking realities for all of us!

---

<sup>1</sup> (Business Unlimited by J. Gunnar Olson, page 207)

When these things hit close to home, we must retain perspective. No matter how madly the world rebels against God and no matter how much they believe they have all the power and the final say: God laughs at them. He mocks them (Psalm 2:4 and 37:13)!

But remember: Christians are called to be the salt of the earth and a light in the darkness of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Darkness has never and will never overcome the light (John 1:4-5)! Make a difference. Be the salt and the light!

Don't become bitter. Bitterness cannot lessen your suffering or lighten your burdens. It destroys your life. *Bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.* **"Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the Lord, and he will avenge you."** (Proverbs 20:22). Let God choose who and when to punish (Romans 12:17-21). Remember: We can also cause pain and suffering in the lives of others. My terrible attitude and irresponsible actions can cause suffering. That's why I, while suffering because of someone else's actions, also choose to examine my own heart and actions. I must confess my sins before God and others (James 5:16).

**Prayer:** Lord, we live in a dark world full of inhuman people. Help me not to become bitter. Help me to be salt and light to the world. Your light can never be extinguished. May Your light shine through me. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

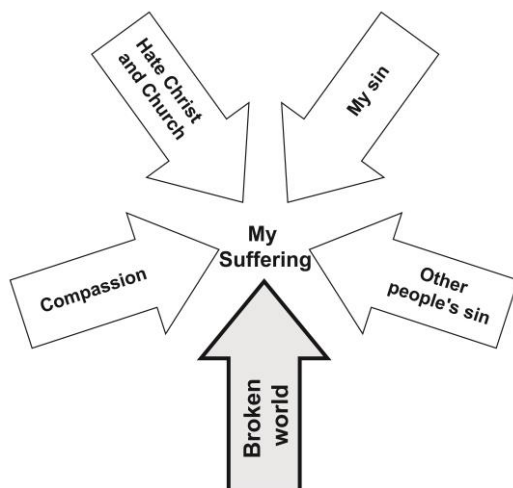
- † *Confess all bitterness and vengefulness.*
- † *Pray for everyone who has made your life hell through their inhuman mindsets and actions. Obey Jesus' command in Luke 6:27-31 and bless them.*
- † *Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you are doing to cause others pain and suffering. Confess and stop doing it.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Burundi.**

## Day 17

# The general brokenness of life and creation

**Read:** Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 8:20-22



The world has been broken and imperfect since the Fall. People have been suffering since then. We don't always know why we see problems everywhere. Pain and suffering are often impossible to understand and explain.

God cursed the earth after Adam and Eve's disobedience (Genesis 3:17-19). But then in Christ He reconciled everything to Himself (Colossians 1:19-20). However, until Christ returns all of creation will remain in a state of brokenness and decay. There is always something that will go wrong; something that won't work properly; something that will break; something that will decay. All of creation is full of pain and frustration. All of creation is still under the curse of the Fall and its consequences. God will only make the earth completely new when Christ returns (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-5). The New Earth will correspond with the glory of God's children.

Eventually your bicycle will get old and break, no matter how well you look after it. It won't necessarily be because of something you did wrong. Nothing in this world lasts forever. Nothing is perfect. Everything must constantly be maintained otherwise it will naturally waste away. The same applies to houses and buildings; roads and vehicles; furniture and clothes. It even applies to relationships between people.

Weeds will grow on your land even though you serve the Lord. It will cause you problems if you don't plough (Genesis 3:18). Fires, floods, storms, droughts, earthquakes, and the effects of global warming affect everyone, including Christians. Suffering and problems are a reality because the world is broken. We do not understand and cannot explain everything. It's part of living a broken life in an imperfect world! Only on the New Earth will creation be free from the scars of the curse of the Fall (Revelation 22:3a).

The brokenness of creation doesn't only affect us physically. Everything in creation is broken. Consequently, we don't always have a choice between good and bad. Sometimes we have to choose between bad and bad. Think about the difficult decisions that governments, businesses, and individuals need to make during the worldwide outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. If they prioritise the physical health and safety of people there are many negative economic consequences. It leads to another completely different series of miseries. If they prioritise economic health which creates jobs then it has massive implications for people's physical health and safety. There simply isn't a correct choice. This is why people (e.g. economists, doctors, and politicians) differ so fiercely in their points of view. When this happens, we need a lot of wisdom. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to know which choice is the better of two bad options.

Conflicting interests is a common occurrence in life. One group wants to mine minerals in the same place another group wants to farm. Think about all the difficult decisions farmers must make during and after a grueling drought, large flood, or devastating hailstorm. To go into more debt to survive in the short-term carries greater long-term risks. To avoid going into debt can also mean your downfall. It's a difficult choice between two unfavourable options.

To retrench workers in tough economic times causes many struggles for the workers and their families. However, avoiding retrenchments could

lead to the downfall of the entire business. The owner is forced to choose between two unfavourable options.

God hates divorce (Malachi 2:15-16 and Matthew 19:6). It's always wrong. But it's also wrong to stay in a marriage where domestic violence and abuse is taking place. There is no "good choice". You must choose between two bad options. You must consider your responsibility towards God and then choose the lesser of two evils. Confess your sin, receive God's forgiveness and carry on with your life.

A lot of suffering is the result of the general brokenness of creation because of sin. All of humankind over all the thousands of generations since Adam (Romans 5:12-21) are just as responsible and guilty for this suffering. Therefore everyone who is suffering must search their own heart and humble themselves before God.

**Prayer:** Lord, please give me Your wisdom to make the best decision when I have two bad options to choose from. Help me especially in such situations to spend a lot of time in conversation with You. Keep me from making impulsive, unloving, selfish, and dangerous decisions. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for doctors. They often have to make extremely difficult "life and death" decisions.*
- † *Pray for governments to govern justly over everyone: rich and poor; educated and uneducated; young and old; urban and rural communities.*
- † *Pray for farmers who must produce food on a daily basis in a broken world.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Uganda.**

## Day 18

### Compassion for people who are suffering (1)

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 12:26 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-5



You could also experience suffering because you choose to have compassion for people who are in need – especially other believers. *If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.* (1 Corinthians 12:26). Parents suffer with their children and children with their parents. It's heartbreaking to see the suffering of hungry people; to see the fate of those affected by HIV/AIDS; to hear the story of a woman who has been raped; to stand on the ashes of a fire that has burnt down your neighbour's land; to attend the funeral of a murdered friend; to hear the cry of a neglected child; or to cross the path of someone who is desperate for work.

There is a cost to helping someone in need. You have to give something of yourself! Your time! Your attention! Your physical effort! You might have to give of your finances (Lukas 10:33-35), empty your savings account, or open up your home and offer up your resources. My parents-in-law told me about a man whose entire farm burnt to ashes. He lost a lot of livestock. Many people visited him and *said* how sorry they were. But one old farmer took him outside, pointed to his bakkie and said: *On the back of my bakkie you'll see my compassion. Where can I drop off these ewes to help you get back on your feet?* Somewhere in the scriptures of the early church I read that believers in the first century after Christ often fasted so that they would have food to share with those suffering from hunger. We must demonstrate the image and character of our Father: He is compassionate (Luke 6:36). What He does for us, we must do for others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 4:19). Compassion and mercy is part of being a Christian (Hebrews 10:32-34). Job 6:14 says:

***"Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty."***

We must have compassion for people who are suffering. We must help carry the weight of their burden. That's what Christ did for us (Isaiah 53:4-5 and John 10:10 and 18).

Compassion asks a lot of a person. Therefore, Paul commands Christians not to grow weary of doing good (Galatians 6:9-10 and 2 Thessalonians 3:13). The challenge to keep on doing good also contains a promise: At the proper time we will reap a harvest! Keep on doing good! Remember to always show compassion with a grateful heart. If you have feelings of guilt or obligation when doing good then you will quickly grow tired and give up.

To truly have compassion for others we must look to how God in Christ had and still has compassion for us.



**Prayer:** Lord, help me through the Holy Spirit to not grow tired of doing good. Help me to do good wisely so that my good deeds won't lead to others becoming lazy, bad, and irresponsible. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with compassion so that doing good won't become a burden for you. It must be an enjoyable desire.*
- † *Pray for everyone for whom you have compassion.*
- † *Pray for everyone for whom you don't have or don't want to have compassion. Speak to God about the reasons for your lack of compassion. Do what He says.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Kenya**.

## **Day 19**

### **Compassion for people who are suffering (2)**

**Read:** Hebrews 4:14-16 and Isaiah 53:4-5

Sometimes compassion arises spontaneously, like becoming teary-eyed when you see someone suffering. This emotional reactions is an invitation to practical acts of compassion. Practical compassion is a choice. It's a continuous choice. Especially when it's not an easy choice.

When we found ourselves in the greatest misery of all because of our sins and disobedience, God pitied us. But He didn't just feel sorry about our situation (Jeremiah 13:17). He had practical compassion for us: Jesus came down from His heavenly dwelling place to our broken world full of broken people. He came and identified with us. It cost Him dearly. He took our suffering upon Himself. In this way He eased our suffering and eventually removed it completely. He chose to suffer with us, for us, and in our place. His compassion caused Him to sweat blood (Luke 22:44). It brought Him to a terrible place – The Place of a Skull – Golgotha. He died as one accursed, hanging on a wooden cross (Galatians 3:13; Philippians 2:6-8). The cross is a symbol of practical compassion! But even

there He didn't say '*enough is enough*'. It wasn't the end of His compassion!

Now, at the right hand of His Father in heaven, He, our High Priest, still has *compassion* for us in our weakness. He still demonstrates His mercy to us (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Compassion links John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16-18! From this we can see what compassion does: it creates jobs; provides; runs an orphanage; visits convicts (Hebrews 10:33-34); plants a vegetable garden; pays off someone's debt or pays for someone's studies. Compassion jumps out of the car and pays an embarrassed driver's toll fee while others hoot and shout. Compassion keeps you up at night making plans to help the unemployed. It makes you pray when others are sleeping soundly. It makes you visit yet another person who drains your spirit, soul, and body. Compassion sometimes becomes as intense as birth pains – it's no joke (Galatians 4:19)! To save a business and prevent job losses is very hard work. You can only continue solving people's problems and making their lives better if the Supreme Leader is leading you. Everyone who is responsible for a *ministry of compassion* struggles and grows tired. They feel like they are continuously swimming upstream! The temptation to give up is real!

Don't become discouraged even though the price is high. Allow the love of God to compel you and the example of Christ to inspire you! John Maxwell says that when he saw what happens to people who "**quit**" he took a pair of scissors and cut the word "**quit**" out of his dictionary – and thus out of his thoughts too! "**Quitting**" is not an option!

Do what Christ did for you! **Demonstrate compassion!** Keep on serving. Keep on leading. Keep on solving problems. Lighten people's burdens.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you so much for Your compassion for me. Help me to have compassion for others, even if it asks a lot of me. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

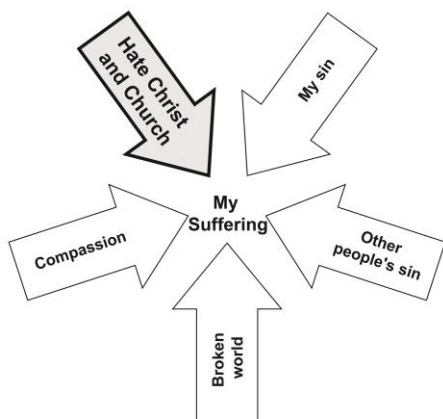
- † *Pray for organisations, groups, and individuals who show mercy to people in need and help by demonstrating practical compassion.*
- † *Pray for churches and church leaders.*
- † *Pray that believers will carry each other's burdens and in this way carry out the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in *Somalia*.

## Day 20

### People suffer because Satan and his evil forces hate Christ and His church. (1)

Read: John 15:18 tot 16:4



In the Old testament, David writes:

***"I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children; for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me. When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn"*** (Psalm 69:8-10).

The world hates Christ and His church. Therefore, you suffer because you love and obey Him. Paul writes to Timothy:

***"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted"*** (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul experienced it himself (2 Corinthians 11:22-29).

Millions of Christians throughout the ages have had to make this decision: Deny Christ and save your life or confess Christ and be killed! Many were killed! ***"... they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."*** (Revelation 12:11. Also acc. to Acts 20:23-24; Hebrews 11:35-40).

As a Christian you must be prepared to share Jesus's fate (Matthew 16:24-28). Whoever tries to avoid suffering by becoming a friend of the world is an enemy of God (James 4:4-5).

Honest Christians pay more in tax because there are godless people who evade tax. Honest people often don't get contracts because they can only be obtained through bribery (which a Christian may not and does not want to do – Psalm 15:5 and Exodus 23:8). I was mocked and provoked a lot at university and in the army. I was *"tormented in my righteous soul"* (acc. to 2 Peter 2:7-8). Far right farmers in the early '90s refused to greet me. They and even tried to chase me out of Memel (our town which they declared a so-called "homeland") with weapons. The "persecution" in and through the church in the year 1990 was so painful at a stage that I had to reread Gene Edward's book, *"Healing for those who have been Crucified by Christians"*, many times in order to receive healing.

Many Christians are treated terribly and even cruelly. Many are persecuted by their own family for breaking from their traditional religions and accepting Jesus as their only Saviour and King. It happens to Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists who come to salvation. It happens to people who no longer want to consult the spirits of the dead (acc. to Deuteronomy 18:9-14). It happens to people who break away from a friendship circle where everyone is used to debauchery, lust, and parties where everyone eats and drinks too much (1 Peter 4:3-4).

Although some people treat Christians badly we know that they aren't the real enemy. The real enemy is the devil and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The Bible clearly says that Christians are always locked in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:1-10).

Suffering is a privilege when you are faithful to God. Peter says that it is a confirmation that the Holy Spirit rests upon you (1 Peter 4:12-16). Jesus says that we should feel blessed when people hate us and treat us badly because of Him (Luke 6:22-23).

**Prayer:** Lord, I am scared of suffering and persecution. Help me to not give in to peer pressure in an attempt to avoid being insulted, mocked, and rejected. Help me to never deny You. Help me to remain faithful and stand secure in this spiritual struggle. Please fill me with Your Word and Spirit. **Amen.**

### **Intercession:**

- † *Pray for Christians who are persecuted because they confess Jesus as their only Saviour.*
- † *Pray especially for the youth who are scared to break away from religious traditions that are in opposition to God's Word. Teach them to meet regularly in small groups to strengthen each other (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).*
- † *Pray that spiritual leaders won't preach half-truths in an attempt to gain popularity or to build large churches and obtain lots of money.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Ethiopia**

## **Day 21**

### **People suffer because Satan and his forces hate Christ and His church. (2)**

**Read:** John 10:10 and 1 Peter 5:8-9

***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; ..." (John 10:10a). "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:8).**

The attack of the Enemy against the church of Christ is not just a theory. It's a real, strategically planned war! One example of this is the *"The Great Invocation"* of Alice Ann Bailey<sup>2</sup>. This plan details how the influence of the Christian religion in the world can and must be destroyed. Bailey's plan and books are financed through Lucius Trust. The name of this trust was formerly Lucifer Publishing Company. It's clear where the inspiration for this plan comes from.

You can find **Alice Ann Bailey's** (1880-1949) *Ten-point plan* to destroy Christianity on the internet:

1. Take God and prayer out of the education system;

---

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Arno van Niekerk gives a complete discussion of The Great Invocation in chapter 1 of his book, Enough! What is the plan? The book was published in 2015 by Hope 2 Overcome (info@hope2overcome.org) ISBN – 978-0-620-68339-5

2. Reduce parental authority over the children:
  - a) promote excessive child rights;
  - b) abolish corporal punishment;
  - c) teachers are the agents of implementation;
3. Destroy the Judeo-Christian family structure or the traditional Christian family structure:
  - a) promote sexual promiscuity;
  - b) use advertising industry, media - TV, magazines, film industry to promote sexual enjoyment as the highest pleasure in humanity;
4. If sex is free, then make abortion legal and make it easy;
5. Make divorce easy and legal, free people from the concept of marriage for life;
6. Make homosexuality an alternative lifestyle;
7. Debase art, make it run mad;
8. Use media to promote and change mindsets;
9. Create an interfaith movement;
10. Get governments to make all these law and get the church to endorse these changes.

This is exactly what is happening today. Everyone who is opposed to Bailey's Ten-point plan is "*persecuted*" in one way or another. When you take a stand against homosexual relationships, you are called out as unloving. Parents are threatened by the law when they discipline their children in a responsible, Biblical manner. Doctors get flak when they refuse to perform abortions on demand in state hospitals. Even though marriage officers may be convinced based on the Word of God that marriage is a *lifelong commitment between one man and one woman*, they are not allowed to refuse to marry two people of the same sex because they have been appointed by the state. Countries are increasingly being forced to accept Bailey's point of view if they want to be eligible for international aid and/or trade agreements. The United Nations already embrace many of Bailey's principles. But Bailey's plan is definitely not the only plan. There are other similar evil plans (e.g. the plan behind the one world economy).

Satan fights his battle using fear, intimidation, manipulation, and overt persecution. Christians must remain awake and alert, but not fall into a panic. Take note of Psalm 2 and 37!

***"The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them."*** (Psalm 2:2-4).

***"The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming."*** (Psalm 37:12-13).

In the meantime, Jesus came and won the final victory (Colossians 2:15). He is sits on the throne. He is the Ruler. He is King over the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). We can sing a song in the night because He laughs at Satan and his cronies' arrogant and vain attempts to destroy the Church of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 16:18 and Revelation 1:17-18).

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, You are the King who rules over all the kings and leaders of the world. You are the Victor! Help me to remember that You are not threatened by Satan and his army. You laugh at their *stupid* arrogance. Help me not to be afraid. Help me not to allow myself to be intimidated or manipulated by them. I love Your Word! Your Word is the Truth! **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray that Christian presidents, politicians, and leaders will have the courage and conviction to take a stand against the evil plans that godless people and countries want to force on them.*
- † *Pray for the Christians who are being persecuted.*
- † *Pray that the Church of Christ will never compromise the truth of the Word.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Sudan and South-Sudan.**

**Summary:**

1. You can't solve all suffering and problems with only one text in the Bible. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible to examine suffering from different angles and thus give different perspectives on it.
2. Problems usually enter your life in one of the five abovementioned



ways. Often they even come in two or three (or even four or all five!) of these ways at the same time. When you are suffering, speak to God about all five of these possibilities. Ask Him to make everything clear to you.

## Day 22

### A song in the night

**Read:** Isaiah 40:25-31

It's just after midnight on the morning of 10 June 2020. I feel overwhelmed. We are going through the most difficult time of our life. Not the worst time, but definitely the most difficult. I don't have the strength to go on, but neither do I have the conviction to give up. Challenges surround us like mountains – mountains that I am convinced the Lord said we must move. But we won't move them with picks and shovels and earthmoving machinery. There is only one way to do it: Believe and accept the **authority** that Christ has given us. ***Speak to the mountains and declare*** (proclaim) what must happen in the current situation based on the crucifixion, resurrection, and victory of Jesus Christ (Mark 11:23-25).

Worn out, tired, weary, overburdened with tasks and responsibilities, fragile and afraid, surrounded by mountains, I begin praying and making notes in my devotional journal. The Holy Spirit reminds me of Isaiah 41:8-20 and the note which I made there long ago: *Remember Who God is. Remember who you are. Remember what He can do through you. Think about the "impossibilities" that you can achieve together!* (I know I am now reasoning like the ant sitting on the elephant's back when they crossed the suspension bridge. He said: Just look at how we're making the bridge sway!) But that's when Isaiah 40:27 catches my eye. In my heart, this is how I feel: ***"My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God."*** I want to blame the Lord in the words of the disciples in Mark 4:38 during the storm at sea: ***"... , don't you care if we drown?"*** We are in a life-threatening storm and You're sleeping! What kind of Friend are You?

But then the Holy Spirit shows me who God is. My accusation immediately turns into a song of praise. A Song in the Night – my dark

night! Spontaneously I respond with praise and worship! Look at what it says in verse 28!

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

I realise that God has enough time to carry me through this crisis. I don't need to rush Him. His ability is great enough to help me. He created everything simply by speaking! I don't have to doubt. God has enough energy, wisdom, insight, and understanding to properly help me. You see, these abilities aren't just God's abilities: He pours His abilities out onto us. ***He gives the worn out "Hennies" power. He strengthens him when he can't go on. He takes him from lying flat on the ground to flying high in the sky again.*** Read verses 29-31!

He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.  
Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;  
but those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

Lord, I'm no longer afraid that time will catch up with me,

***BECAUSE YOU*** are eternal!

Lord, I'm no longer afraid of my inabilities,

***BECAUSE YOU*** are the Almighty Creator!

Lord, I'm no longer worried that my body won't make it,

***BECAUSE YOUR*** energy flows through my veins (Colossians 1:29)!

Lord, I'm no longer afraid of despair,

***BECAUSE YOUR*** insight is unlimited!

Lord, I will sing about You! I won't sing about my circumstances. I will sing about Who You are and what You are doing! I will sing about my

cause that You won't disregard. I will sing about the cross and what it means. There You righteously redeemed me through judging Jesus as cursed in my place (Galatians 3:13). There You justified me by making me one with Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). You demonstrated Your righteousness to me by acquitting me of the eternal judgement that awaits everyone who doesn't believe in Christ (Romans 3:25-26). Oh, my cause was never disregarded by my God! How foolish was I to think that of You! Please forgive me!

**Prayer:** Hallelujah, I praise You, Lord my God! You are who You say You are! You do what You say You do! You give what You promise! You are in me and I am in You (John 15:4-8). Therefore the mountains will and must give way! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Ask the Lord to reveal Himself anew to His children so that their accusations against Him will turn to songs of praise.*
- † *Pray for people who still believe that God doesn't care about what happens to them. Ask that they will realise how incredibly much God cares when they consider the crucifixion of Jesus.*
- † *Ask that the Holy Spirit will remind you of God's characteristics every day. Ask that He will drive all fear out of your life!*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in the **Central African Republic.**

## PART 4

### You have options when you are suffering.

You already know that the Bible doesn't look at pain and suffering from only one angle. A single text won't give every perspective. It won't answer all of our questions.

Who plays a role in your suffering? The answer: God *and* Satan *and* people. It's not a case of "either ... or". But remember: They are involved according to their nature and character.

How does suffering come to you? In one or more of the following ways simultaneously:

1. Your personal sin and disobedience and/or ...
2. Other people's sin and disobedience and/or ...
3. The brokenness of creation and/or ...
4. Compassion for others who are suffering and/or ...
5. Because Satan and the world hate Christ and His church.

What must our reaction to suffering be? Once again, the Bible gives more than one answer. We must always react to suffering in more than one manner. The following sketch is discussed in more detail in this part of the Prayer Guide.



# Day 23

## Two donkeys teach us a lesson: Your reaction to suffering is important!

**Read:** Proverbs 25:28; 2 Timothy 1:7

God created everyone in His image. Therefore we have the ability to make decisions. God respects your freedom to choose how to respond to your suffering. Choosing is a big responsibility. Think carefully before you act.

Stephan Covey says: ***Between stimulus and response is our greatest power – the freedom to choose.***<sup>3</sup> You give up your freedom when you react impulsively to a situation (suffering). You lose your power. You don't stop and think. You don't make a good decision. Your emotions and desires get the better of you. You become defenceless and vulnerable (Proverbs 25:28).

I once read a story that, even though it isn't true, is a good example of how important your reaction to suffering is. It's a matter of life and death.

One day there was an old donkey that accidentally fell into a pit and was injured. He was stuck in the pit for two days before the farmer came to get him out. The farmer couldn't think of a way to get the donkey out of the pit.

*"Oh well, the donkey is quite old," said the farmer. "I might as well turn this pit into his grave and bury him here." The farmer took his shovel and began filling the pit with dirt. When the dirt and stones fell on the donkey, it began to moan and bray in pain: "Ouch! Oh! Poor me! Now I really have a problem – I am powerless in this pit. I cannot run away. Life isn't fair. What have I done to deserve this? As if it weren't enough that I fell in the pit, I'm now being covered in stones and earth! This farmer is cruel and evil! He should treat me better after all the years that I've worked for him. He should have filled in this pit ages ago, then I wouldn't have fallen into it."*

And so the **donkey lay down** and wished that he could die to escape its pain and problems. It let the dirt that fell on him become his burial shroud. It lay at the bottom of the pit and waited to die.

The same thing happened to another donkey. But there was a big difference between the first donkey and the second. **The second**

---

<sup>3</sup> Page 70 Stephan Covey: The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

**donkey looked differently at his problems. It remembered that it could choose how to react to its suffering. So it made a decision.**

*"Self-pity won't solve this problem. Criticising the farmer won't help. I won't let my problems keep me down. I won't give in and accept this pit as my grave. I have to make a plan," said the second donkey.*

Instead of feeling sorry for himself and criticising the farmer, the donkey used the little strength he had left to try and dodge every shovelful of dirt. When the dirt and stones fell on his sore body, he shook it off. **And then he climbed on top of the dirt and stones.**

*"I must not give up. This pit will eventually fill up. If I can keep climbing on top of the stones and dirt I will eventually be able to climb out. Every shovelful of dirt can help me to get closer to my freedom. Perseverance will get me out!"* said the donkey. When the farmer saw the donkey's ears sticking out of the pit he decided to stop trying to bury it and rather help it out.

Both donkeys suffered the same tragedy. But their responses differed. **Suffering is not what makes or breaks you. It's your response to suffering that can make or break you.** The first donkey had a victim mentality. He responded with accusations, bitterness, and self-pity. That didn't help to solve his problems or ease his suffering. It only led to his death. The dirt became his burial shroud.

The second donkey responded differently. He looked for an opportunity in his distress. He wanted to get better, not bitter. He wanted to live, not die. Instead of lying down in his suffering and waiting for death, he made steps out of the dirt. And so he was rescued.

When we suffer, we are always tempted to respond like the first donkey. But self-pity, accusations, insults, curses (acc. Revelation 16:11 and 21) and bitterness have never eased anyone's suffering.

You can seldom choose what happens to you. But you can **always** choose how you respond to what happens to you! Choose correctly!

**Prayer:** Thank You, Lord, that I can choose how I respond to my suffering. Help me to never forget this. Help me not to give up my freedom of choice. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

† *Pray for people who have fallen into self-pity and no longer want to solve their problems.*

† Ask for God's help, advice, and wisdom to make the right decisions when you are suffering.

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Gabon**.

## Day 24

### Which way will you choose? (1)

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Acts 26:9-15; Psalm 119:71

In order to respond like God wants you to, you must live under the control of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Without self-control it's impossible to respond correctly to pain and suffering. You must control your thoughts; keep your emotions in check; count your words; plan your actions. I recently heard the testimony of a man who was wrongfully imprisoned for 38 years. The observation that hit me was: *"Even though I was in prison, I made sure that my thoughts weren't 'imprisoned' as well."* He showed self-control over his thought life.

Your first reaction should always be: **Stop!** Get control over your thoughts, emotions, words, and actions. Think and decide what you are going to do. You have a choice! Your **reaction** to suffering has a greater influence on your life than your suffering does. Be careful of impulsive decisions. Control your eating habits – if you start eating impulsively to get rid of your frustration, it makes the situation worse. Control how you spend money – if you start buying impulsively to quench your spiritual thirst, it will only land you in debt. Control your tongue – your words can hurt others deeply or start a fire that can't easily be put out.

Self-control gives you the necessary time to think and remember that God, Satan, and people are all involved in your suffering. All of them are involved in accordance with their character and nature. God is involved. Therefore I must ask: *What does God want to achieve through my suffering? How does He want me to handle it?* You must remain obedient to God while you respond to your suffering. You must respond the way He wants you to! Then you will honour Him in your suffering. How you respond to your suffering is important. Your response can give your suffering meaning and purpose.

You have three choices in your suffering:

You can choose the path of **temptation** and sin against God in your suffering (acc. Day 10 and 11);

1. Either you can try to escape your suffering through a **false repentance**
2. Or you can respond **like God wants you to**.

I believe God wants you to always respond in the following three ways:

- ✓ **Use your suffering** as an opportunity because God wants to work it for your good;
- ✓ **Fight your suffering** because Satan wants to destroy your life through suffering;
- ✓ **Remain hopeful in your suffering and accept** that all suffering will only end when Jesus returns.

God created you in His image. Therefore He respects your freedom to choose how you will respond to your suffering. But because He loves you, He tells you which path is the best. He gives you good advice, but it's your decision to follow it or not. In Deuteronomy 30:19 Moses says: ***"This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live."***

**Prayer:** Spirit of God, please give me the self-control to first stop and think before I respond to my suffering. Help me to bring my thoughts, emotions, words, and actions under your control. Keep me from impulsive reactions. It only puts my life in greater danger. **Amen!**

**Intercession:**

- † Ask the Lord to protect you and your people from the temptations of suffering.
- † Pray for the sincere repentance and salvation of someone who is suffering.
- † Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to respond to your suffering in obedience to God's will.

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in ***Equatorial Guinea.***



## Day 25

### Which way will you choose? (2)

**Read:** Job 33:14-21

You have three choices in your suffering:

1. You can choose the way of **temptation** and sin against God in your suffering (acc. Day 10-11);
2. Or you can try to escape your suffering through a **false-repentance**;
3. Or you can respond **like God wants you to**.

The following is an example of what the three choices mean practically: Three farmers suffering because of a terrible drought.

Farmer A ***doesn't stop and think***. He steps right into Satan's trap. He gives in to the temptations that come with suffering. He wants to keep his luxurious lifestyle at any cost. He doesn't think about the will of God so he becomes dishonest. He cheats on his taxes (Mark 12:17). He fiddles with figures, weights, and numbers (Leviticus 19:36; Proverbs 11:1 and 20:23). He lies and makes promises he doesn't plan on keeping (Exodus 20:16 and Psalm 15:4). He bribes people (Exodus 23:8). He cheats others and withholds the wages of labourers (James 5: 1-6). Farmer A sins against the Lord and worse suffering awaits him. ***"Food gained by fraud tastes sweet,***

***but one ends up with a mouth full of gravel"*** (Proverbs 20:17). ***"An inheritance claimed too soon will not be blessed at the end"*** (Proverbs 20:21). ***"A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare"*** (Proverbs 21:6).

Farmer B ***looks like he repents and gets saved***. He confesses his sins and it sounds sincere. He starts going to church regularly, testifies, and ***"works for the Lord"***. He becomes generous and gives away more than he can afford to. At first glance his response looks good. But a wrong motive is hidden in his heart: Selfishness! If he can escape his miseries by pretending to serve the Lord, why not? For Farmer B, it's not about honouring God. All he wants is for God to meet his needs. He ***"believes"*** in God only as far as it benefits him. But his love for God ***"...is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears"*** (Hosea 6:4). After the Lord brings the desired outcome (e.g. rain after the drought), Farmer B doesn't need Him any more. He forgets about God

until the next crisis. The only reason why Farmer B turns to God is to escape his suffering. This is the same accusation that Satan levelled against Job: *Job serves You because You bless him* (acc. Job 1:9-11).

Farmer C ***stops and thinks carefully*** about what is happening. Even in his suffering he wants to remain obedient to God. He wants to honour God with his response! Therefore he ***uses his suffering*** as an opportunity to think about what God might want to tell him through his suffering (Job 33:14 and 19). He wants to find out what opportunities there are in his distress. He ***battles and limits*** his suffering by changing his farming methods and practices. He starts farming smarter. He focuses on the effective and sustainable utilization of his land and water. He thoroughly plans his finances and keeps to his budget to prevent losing everything. Despite the night around him, ***he keeps hoping*** in his Heavenly Father who knows what he needs and promises to provide for him (Matthew 6:25-30). Without becoming bitter, he ***accepts*** that all pain and suffering, including droughts, will only come to an end when Christ returns. Only then will God make everything 100% new (Romans 8:18-21; Revelation 21 and 22). But now he stays faithful to God even if his night of suffering doesn't immediately change. (The words of Daniel's three friends in Daniel 3:16-18 inspire him.) Because he responds to his suffering like God wants him to, he discovers that his suffering makes sense. He learns to sing a song in the night with Habakkuk:

***Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior***

(Habakkuk 3:17-18).

What is your response to your suffering? Do you sing a song in your night?

**Prayer:** Lord, please help me to stop and listen in my suffering. Help me to not just run faster. Help me to keep having devotions and spending time with You. Speak to me through Your Word and Spirit. Teach me what to do. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Plead with your family and friends to stop and speak to God.*
- † *Pray for people who don't spot the temptations in their suffering and subsequently step into Satan's trap.*
- † *Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a song, even though its night all around you.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Cameroon.**

## Day 26

### My one-verse song in the night

**Read:** Psalm 102:3, 7-8 and 18

The Psalms are songs! Many of them were written and sung when life was as dark as night for the psalmists. These songs, inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16), were sung by people who brought their pain, frustration, fight for survival, faith, and praise to the Lord. The worst thing we can do when suffering is to cut our conversations with God short; to neglect our quiet time; to stop speaking and listening. Don't let this happen, no matter how you feel.

When it felt as though God had turned His back on me; when I felt as abandoned a sail boat lost at sea; a lone fish in the open ocean; a sailor stranded on a deserted island; when I had lost everything (or so it felt), the Lord led me in His faithful love to Psalm 102. There I found the words to express my emotions. And there I also found my one-verse song in the night!

Keep singing, even if it's just Psalm 102:17!

***"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."***

The word "destitute" means "extremely poor and lacking the means to provide for oneself". I don't know what the "everything" is that you have lost, but it's the things that leave you powerless; out of ideas, without plans and the ability to change your situation. It could be that you lost your health to cancer, a stroke, or something else. It could be

that you lost your farm because of a drought or poor harvest. Perhaps you lost your husband, wife, a child, or a parent to Covid-19. Or maybe you lost your income because you were retrenched. You may have lost your virginity because of rape. You could have lost your freedom to imprisonment or your independence to old age. Perhaps you lost your intimate relationship with your mother because of Alzheimer's. It could be anything – because suffering makes losing anything feel like losing everything! But if you have lost everything ...

Keep singing, even if it's just Psalm 102:17!

***"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."***

If you find yourself in that place – powerless, out of ideas, without plans and the ability to change your situation – you can still choose to sing. You don't have to sing about what you've lost. Sing about the **"He"** in verse 17. **He is still** the One who hears our prayers! **He is still** the One who won't condemn someone who prays.

Keep singing, even if it's just Psalm 102:17!

***"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."***

Once again the Lord was true to His Word! He heard the one-verse song I was singing over and over again! The song I kept singing, not because He is deaf, but because He must be constantly praised as the One who hears our prayers! The One who hears my prayers!

He is who He says He is! He changed my situation! In the middle of the night He brought deliverance! But not like I thought He would or through whom I thought He would bring it, because He is God. He isn't powerless like me.

Therefore I will keep singing, even if it's just Psalm 102:17!

***"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."***

Please start singing along! Let's form a choir! He is worthy to be praised. He has never changed – even if we have lost everything!

**Prayer:** Lord, I praise You today because You are who You say You are. Because You do what You say You will do! Because

You hear the prayers of everyone who has lost everything!  
May I keep on singing this one-verse song even though it  
feels like night around me. Thank You that You have always  
changed my night into brightest day. Hallelujah – I praise  
You, Lord! **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for people who have lost everything. People who are powerless to change their situation. Pray for countries in Africa who have lost everything because of civil war. Countries that lost their freedom because they became dependent on foreign aid and food imports.*
- † *Speak with the Lord about how you, through compassion, can change or help to change someone else's situation.*
- † *Pray that people who are suffering won't neglect their quiet time and cut short their conversations with God. Ask that people will spend more time with the Word and in prayer during their suffering.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Nigeria.**

## **Day 27**

### **Respond like a winner. You are one!**

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 and 15:23-28

In sport we often speak about the advantage of playing on your home ground. It's just so much easier to win playing at home. The same applies to war. It's easier to fight after the decisive battle has already been won. It's easier to win when you fight on ground that has already been conquered. Therefore it's important to know where you are in your battle against pain and suffering. You must know on whose territory you've established your base. The answer is short and powerful: The decisive battle has already been won. Jesus Christ has already conquered the territory. **We are victors with a home ground advantage!** We can enter the battle with confidence!

The CROSS and the RESURRECTION changed everything for us and all creation. An unstoppable process of victory upon victory was put into motion. God raised Jesus from the dead. He gave Jesus, the Victor, the highest position of honour in all creation. This confirms that God

accepted His sacrifice (Acts 3:15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 1:18-23; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11).

**This means:** We are free! We are forgiven! We are reconciled with God (Romans 4:25 – 5:11)! We are included in Jesus' death and resurrection (Romans 5:12 – 6:14). In Him we have been given a new identity. He has made us His children (John 1:12-13; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18a; 1 John 3:1-3). Christ is victorious. Because we are in Him and He is in us, we are also victors. We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). Listen to what the Word says:

1 John 2:12-14

***"I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one."***

1 John 4:4

***"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."***

1 John 5:4-5

***"... for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."***

It's clear. We are victors. God works in us with the same power by which He raised Jesus from the grave and placed Him at the Father's right hand in heaven (Ephesians 1:19-21). We are more than conquerors. Even death cannot hold us (John 11:25-26). We will also be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15)! In Christ you are a victor. Therefore you can respond with full self-confidence to the onslaught of suffering.

Christ's death and resurrection also has far-reaching implications for all of creation. ***"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."*** (Colossians 1:19-20). All of creation sighs with pain in expectation. But God will also free it and make it new to fit with His children's holiness (Romans 8:18-25). Through Christ's death and resurrection the territory and the enemy has been conquered. We have the home ground advantage!

This is what is going to happen:

1. He is going to return (1 Corinthians 15:23);
2. He is going to destroy all evil powers once and for all (1 Corinthians 15:24);
3. He is going to destroy death forever (1 Corinthians 15:26);
4. He is going to hand the kingship to God the Father and subject Himself to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28);
5. Then God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28b).

Christ's death and resurrection is significant for everything and everyone. It changes the way in which we respond to suffering. We no longer try to survive in our own strength. We respond as victors because we are in Christ, the Victor.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank You that we are victors with a home ground advantage in our battle against suffering. Teach us to respond like victors because we are victors in Christ. We look forward to the day where You will be all in all. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray that God's children will remember who they are in Christ.*
- † *Pray that young people especially will live a life of victory in Christ Jesus. The average age of Africa's population is currently 19.7 years! Africa is a continent full of young people!*
- † *Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your thoughts about pain and suffering so that God will be honoured by the change in your response* (acc. Romans 12:1-2).

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Ghana**.

## Day 28

### Use your suffering. It's an opportunity. (1)

**Read:** Romans 8:28; Galatians 4:13

We know **how** important our response to problems and suffering is. Now we must learn **what** the right response should be. How does God want us to respond to pain, suffering, and problems?

You already know that the Bible looks at suffering from many different perspectives. Therefore the Bible also has more than one answer to suffering. The Bible's answers can be summarised in three words:



You cannot choose only one of the three. **All three must always be done at the same time.** Ask the Lord for guidance. He will show you what to do through the Holy Spirit and the Word.

Using suffering doesn't mean that suffering is good. Suffering remains terrible. It wasn't initially part of God's good plan and wonderful creation. Suffering has to do with sin. It shouldn't be seen as something wonderful. It's not true that suffering always makes someone into a better person. Instead, suffering often brings out the worst in people. Suffering is not positive. However, suffering can have a positive effect on the lives of God's children. This is only possible because God gives meaning and significance to His children's suffering. Think about the cross. God gave meaning and significance to Jesus' suffering despite the hate of Jewish leaders and the barbaric actions of Roman soldiers.



God turned the cross into a message of good news. He turned it into the power unto salvation for all who believe (Romans 1:16 and 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

It is possible to use your suffering as a Christian to honour God. It's possible because God is involved in your suffering. He gives it meaning and significance. He promises that He will work suffering for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). Think about Joseph. His brothers were jealous of him. They hated him, threw him in a pit, and then sold him into slavery. Listen to what Joseph says in Genesis 50:20: ***"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."***

When we ask God to work our suffering for our good (Romans 8:28), we must choose to become His co-workers. We must use the **shame of our pain** as an **opportunity for growth**: an opportunity to be a blessing to others; to develop character; to improve skills instead of becoming bitter.

***"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them."*** (Acts 19:11-12). But Paul fell ill when he travelled through Galatia. His sickness could have been something he was ashamed of. How was he supposed to preach the good news of the Kingdom (Matthew 10:1 and 7-8; Luke 9:1-2) to strangers while he was suffering from sickness? But in Galatians 4:13 we read that Paul turned his shame into an opportunity. He writes to the Galatians: ***"As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you ... "*** In Philippians 1:12 onwards we read how Paul used his time in prison to preach the Word of God. Have you ever used the waiting room at the doctor's office to preach the gospel?

Although suffering isn't meaningful, you can work with God **and make it meaningful**. You can **use suffering to your advantage because that's what God wants to achieve with it – something that will benefit you and others!**

**Prayer:** Thank you, Lord, that even though life is very difficult and painful for me right now I can hold on to your promises. I know that You will work what is happening to me now for my

good. I believe it, even though I don't know how You are going to do it. Help me to work with You. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray that people will understand how important their reaction to suffering is.*
- † *Pray for someone specific who is suffering and struggling a lot. Ask that the Lord will teach him/her through His Word and Spirit and your testimony to turn the shame of their pain into an opportunity for growth.*
- † *Pray for farmers who are suffering because of droughts, fires, floods, hailstorms, black frost, theft, and so on.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in the **Ivory Coast.**

## **Day 29**

### **Use your suffering. It's an opportunity. (2)**

**Read:** 1 Samuel 22:2, as well as 30:6 and 22

In 1 Samuel 16-31 we read about David. He was a young shepherd when Samuel anointed Him as king at the Lord's command (1 Samuel 16:13a). But David couldn't immediately assume the throne. He had to first learn many new things and the Lord had to develop his character. He only became king in Hebron about 10 years later. It took another seven years for him to be crowned king in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:4-5). David learned a lot in those 10 years in the "school" of suffering, pain, and problems. The Lord strengthened his faith and built his character. He taught him new skills and had him gain valuable experience. David also had to learn to be a good leader. Therefore the Lord first made him the leader of a small group of difficult, bitter people. We read that they were emotionally wounded (bitter); impoverished (they owed people money) and socially problematic (bad, worthless, and constantly in trouble). They were short-tempered and vengeful (quick to throw the first stone)! It was difficult to lead people like this while David had to constantly flee for his life. But he used the painful experiences as an opportunity to develop his leadership. That's why he could later reign successfully as king over God's people for 40 years.

There is an expression that applies here: ***As the builder builds the house, the house builds the builder!*** With the liquidation of Coniglio Rabbit Meat Farm (Pty) Ltd in 2019, the rabbit industry took a substantial knock. I believe the Lord has called me to take the lead and help rebuild the industry on Biblical foundations. It was and is a mountain that must be moved – but not with shovels and picks and ground-moving machines. It will only be possible to say what must happen based on the authority that Christ has given us (Mark 11:23-24). I went through the most difficult yet best time in my whole life because of this challenge. I grew in my faith. I learned that when everything seems as dark as night around me, I can trust my Instruments (the Word and the Holy Spirit) like a pilot trust his instruments in thick clouds. I learned to listen more carefully to the Lord's voice. I learned the value of rediscovering every *God's-Way* characteristic anew. I became more dependent on God and thus also more blessed (Matthew 5:3). I came to a deeper realisation of my own sin. I learned once again how to weep before the Lord in brokenness. The Word came alive. Every story of suffering in the Bible took on significance: Abraham's 25-year wait; Joseph's wrongful imprisonment; Moses stuck between the sea and the Egyptian army; Gideon and his 300 men battling 135 000 Moabites (Judges 7:7 and 8:10); and so on. I learned patience and persistence. My leadership was developed. I had to master new knowledge and skills and dare to speak more English. I must confess, the rabbit industry built me more than I built it. I learned how to work with God in order to work this crisis for the good of His children. I still don't know what's going to happen, but I'm holding in faith to God's promises: "... ***for the good ...***" (Romans 8:28); ***"[I] will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope."*** (Hosea 2:15 in reference to Joshua 7:26). I now also understand why I had to go through such painful experiences earlier in my life. God used them to prepare and equip me for the next, more difficult challenge. Don't respond impulsively to a crisis or to suffering. Respond with the self-control of a victor and in prayerful dependence on God. Then difficulties don't have to be to your disadvantage. They can work for your good. God says so!

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to not whine and moan when You're busy readying me for the next challenge. Make me teachable and mouldable. I want to get better, not bitter. Thank You for every challenge. Please give me the conviction in my heart that I am able to do all things through Christ who gives me strength. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for someone who is busy getting bitter instead of getting better.*
- † *Ask the Lord to make you an inspirational role model for young people and to help them get stronger and better through their suffering.*
- † *Pray for a new generation of young Christian leaders to be raised up and developed in Africa: spiritual leaders and leaders in farming, business, teaching, politics, and so on.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Liberia**.

## Day 30

### Use your suffering. It's an opportunity. (3)

**Read:** 2 Chronicles 7:14

Most people only dare to do something new when a crisis or problem has forced them outside of their comfort zone. Crises like World War I and World War II brought about significant technological advances. In the same way, the Covid-19-pandemic is forcing us to think about things in new ways.

We are called to use problems to find new solutions. We are called to identify and address needs. Suffering shouldn't just teach us to work harder but to work smarter and better as well. We are called to bring justice where this is injustice; hope where there is hopelessness. The way in which we respond to suffering should help the Kingdom come to this world.

**Reflection turns experience into insight** (John Maxwell). This is exactly how we should respond to suffering. Stop. Think. Ask the right questions to gain new insight and thus change your life. Speak to God about your life, character, calling, and situation.

- Is there something in my life You don't like?
- What are You trying to say to me?
- What should I stop doing?
- What should I keep on doing?
- What should I do better and differently?
- What should I start doing now?
- What skills should I learn?

- What habits should I break?
- What am I actually putting my trust in? (Jeremiah 9:23-24 and Proverbs 12:12)?  
My strength? My money / possessions? My wisdom / education? Wrong deeds?
- Do I only believe *in* You, or do I believe You?
- Is my hope found in You? (Romans 4:18 and 2 Corinthians 1:8-11)?
- Do I look to You because I love You or just because I need something from You?
- Am I living in intimate relationship with You or am I just religious?

Pray the following when you are suffering:

***Lord, open my eyes to what I must see;  
Teach me what I must know;  
Tell me what I must do, and  
Make me into what I must be, Your image.  
Amen***

Your pain and suffering doesn't have to work to your disadvantage. Use it to your advantage. Don't respond impulsively. Speak to God about it. Listen to what He says to you.

In Psalm 119 David sings about the benefit of his suffering: ***"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word."*** (vers 67). ***"It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."*** (vers 71). God is good and He does good (Psalm 119:68). Therefore there are good opportunities in suffering.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. Paul says that he used what he learned in his own suffering to teach and encourage others. In verses 8 and 9 he testifies about another valuable lesson he learned: ***"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead."***

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to ask the right questions in my suffering so that the answers will be to be eternal advantage. Help me to learn what I must learn now in these difficult circumstances. May the lessons I learn help and inspire others. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

† *Pray for the disabled.*

† *Pray for children who are suffering.*

† *Pray the following prayer for your family and friends who are suffering:*

Lord, open their eyes to what they must see;

Teach them what they must know;

Tell them what they must do;

Make them into what they must be, Your image.

Amen.

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Sierra Leone.**

## Day 31

### Use your suffering. It's an opportunity. (4)

**Read:** Ezekiel 33:11 and 1 John 5:11-13

The most extreme form of suffering is hell. Because God is love, He wants all people to be saved (Matthew 18:14; Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9)! God is involved in our suffering. He is always involved in accordance with His nature and character. He uses suffering like a loudspeaker to call us back to him. We usually only call out to God when we are in trouble (Psalm 107:6, 13, 19 and 28). But some people still refuse to repent (Amos 4:6-13; Revelation 9:20-21 and 16:9). They choose to get bitter rather than better. It's such a shame! Why do people choose death instead of life?

Suffering can lead to death! What then? Then there are no more chances, there is only judgement (Hebrews 9:27). Are you ready to stand before the judgement seat of God (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10)? Suffering God's voice calling out to us! It's the ideal opportunity to get your life right with Him. It's not difficult! He has already done everything to put you in right-standing with Him. Just believe!

***"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

God wouldn't call you if He didn't want you to come! And if You draw near to Him, He won't push you away (John 6:37; Psalm 50:15). He won't disappoint you because the Word says: ***"Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."*** And ***"... [the Lord] richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*** (Romans 10:11-13).

Through your faith in Christ you can be justified and there can be peace between you and God (Romans 5:1). You can live even though you die (John 11:25-26). You can receive eternal life! You can be sure about your eternal destiny (1 John 5:11-13).

You can receive the Lord in prayer by yourself. Just tell Him that you receive what He has done for you. Ask Him to come live in You through His Spirit and His Word. Ask Him to make Your life new (2 Corinthians 5:17-18a). Surrender Your life to Him so that He can reign as King over your whole life (Lukas 6:46). You can order the ***Wordless Book*** and ***Good News*** through Amos Agrimin (secretary@amosafrica.net) or download it from the website for free (www.amosafrica.net). Both of the books will help you take your first steps in your journey of faith.

***Prayer:*** Lord God, I confess all my sins. I want to live and not die. Jesus, I need You because You are the Resurrection and the Life. You are Life and You give Life (1 John 5:20). I receive the reconciliation with God that you bring me. I appreciate it! Thank You so much. Please come live in me through Your Holy Spirit. Come be my King and make my whole life new. Teach me to live a life of thankfulness, only for You. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

† ***Ask the Lord to give you strength through the Holy Spirit to always be a testimony for Him everywhere you go.***

- † *Pray for the salvation of your family, friends, neighbours, leaders, employers, and employees who haven't yet received Jesus as Lord and Saviour.*
- † *Pray that children will receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour at a young age (Matthew 18:14).*

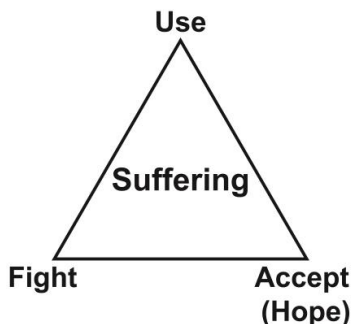
**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Togo** and **Benin**.

## Day 32

### Fight suffering.

### It threatens your life. (1)

**Read:** Matthew 4:23-24 and John 10:10



It's necessary to respond correctly to suffering. Remember that God and Satan are also involved in your suffering, each according to his nature and character. God works your suffering for your good. But Satan wants to break and destroy you. It's the same as in chess: ***Think before you make a move. Your opponent wants to put you in checkmate.*** Just one wrong move can make life very difficult for you.

There are many reasons to not only **use** suffering, but **fight** it too:

1. Satan is involved (Ephesians 6:10-12);
2. There is a link between suffering and sin even though there isn't always a direct link between people's personal suffering and their sin (John 9:1-3);
3. Christ has already won the war by His death and resurrection and has emerged victorious from the battle (Colossians 2:15);



4. He has empowered us. He has also given us the task of driving out the darkness and establishing His Kingdom (Matthew 10:1 and 8-9; Luke 9:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12);
5. It's clear that people and creation are not meant to be like us and suffer as we do (Romans 8:18-30). God is going to make everything new. Let's get started with it so long!

We fight suffering on these grounds. But in the spirit realm we also fight Satan and his evil forces. The Bible speaks about spiritual warfare. But remember, in this warfare the outcome isn't decided by **who is the strongest**. It's decided by **what the truth is**. Instead of a **power-struggle**, it's a **truth-struggle**. Satan and his evil forces have already been defeated. They have been disarmed and made a public spectacle (Colossians 2:15). The **power-struggle** is over! According to Matthew 28:18, Ephesians 1:18-22, and Colossians 2:9-10, **ALL** power and authority belongs to Christ. Satan has **NO CLAIM** on any power or authority. Jesus is the Victor. In Him we are more than conquerors. The only way Satan can influence us is by deceiving us. He is the father of lies. He does everything he can to deceive people with his lies.<sup>4</sup>

We can conquer suffering because Christ has already won the BIG victory. His victory changes everything. We are fighting from a position of power. We walk into battle as victors. The victory is ours because He has already won (John 16:33)!

Because death **couldn't hold Jesus down**, our suffering **can't hold us down**. Because Jesus was **raised** from the grave, we can **rise up** against our suffering. Let's take courage and go into battle! We can already start singing victory songs – even in the midst of the battle!

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you that we can enter the battle as victors! Thank You that pain and suffering will never have the last say! Thank You that Your Kingdom is coming. Thank You that nothing and no one can stop it (Isaiah 9:6 and Mark 4:30-32). I praise You for victory upon victory! **Amen.**

#### **Intercession:**

† *Pray that people will know the Truth and that the Truth will set them free.*

---

<sup>4</sup> Set free to stand up: 40 Day Prayer Focus on Agriculture 2014 – Day 7

- † *Pray for protection from the Enemy the way Christ taught us to pray* (Matthew 6:13 and John 17:11 and 15).
- † *Pray for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that the church will hold onto the truth of the Word.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Burkina Faso**.

## **Day 33**

### **Fight suffering.**

### **It threatens your life. (2)**

**Read:** 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Pain and suffering has permeated **all** of creation, **everywhere**. Therefore suffering has to be fought on **all** terrains in **many different ways**:

#### **1. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!**

Make sure that you are in the winning team! The worst form of suffering is hell. It's an eternal fire that will never be extinguished. It's pointless to overcome your daily pain and suffering but still be on your way to hell. The first and most important thing that must happen is: Believe in Jesus and accept what is written in Colossians 1:13-14: ***"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*** Are you saved?

#### **2. Live in obedience to God.**

There are painful consequences to turning your back on God and ignoring Him. ***"Consider then and realise how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of me," declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.*** (Jeremiah 2:19b). In God's Kingdom the victory is always won by faith and obedience, not might and power (acc. Zechariah 4:6). Jesus won the greatest victory by obeying even unto death. Thus He freed us from much suffering (Philippians 2:8-11). Live in obedience to God under the control of the Holy

Spirit. In this way you avoid misery and much suffering. Are you obedient?

### 3. Pray!

People pray about everything, but few pray that the Lord will keep them from temptation and the Enemy – even though it's something He specifically taught us to pray (Matthew 6:13 and John 15:11 and 15). Pray that you won't be tempted. Pray that the Lord will keep you from specific sins (eg. Alcohol abuse, pornography, fits of anger, adultery, dishonesty, etc.). Pray for protection from sickness, farm attacks, rape, and other dangers. Prayer is the most powerful weapon we have to combat the work of the Enemy (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Prayerfully put on the entire armour of God. (Ephesians 6:18)!

***"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— <sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."*** (1 Timothy 2:1-2). What an effective way to fight suffering! Pray for leaders! Pray for the fire brigade, the traffic police, paramedics, social workers, and community developers. Are you someone who prays?

### 4. Live in your identity as salt and light!

The Lord once told me that only a few believers in a countryside community often prevent the whole community from falling into darkness, sin, and misery. Our identity and our task is to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). If we live like this, we prevent the decay of an entire community and drive out the darkness. Are you salt and light?

### 5. Accept your authority. Continue Jesus' ministry!

Jesus fought our suffering by healing sickness; driving out demons; feeding the hungry; raising the dead; and preaching about the Kingdom. He has given us the task and authority to continue doing what He started (John 17:18). ***"As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."*** (Matthew 10:7-8). ***"Therefore go and***

***make disciples of all nations, ...*** " (Matthew 28:19). Jesus has equipped us through His Spirit with all the gifts and abilities He used in His ministry (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-8). In His Name we can move mountains (Mark 11:23-24). Suffering is one of those mountains. Are you fighting suffering by continuing Jesus' ministry in His name with His authority (acc. Acts 3:6, 11-12, 16)?

## **6. Be responsible in your work and do it well!**

Daniel did his usual work exceptionally well (Daniel 6:5). David led the Israelites with integrity and skill (Psalm 78:72). No sacrifice was too great for Paul – he just wanted to do his work in such a way that no one could complain about it (Acts 20:24-27). Remember, others and not just you, must benefit from your work (1 Timothy 6:2).

A teacher, doctor, policeman, technician, car mechanic, farmer, builder, engineer, or civil servant who does a half job and provides poor service causes a lot of misery. Laziness is sin and must be punished (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). On the other hand, pain and suffering is prevented through everyone who does quality work and provides good service. Faithfulness in the workplace combats suffering (Proverbs 27:18 and 23-27). Are you faithful and responsible in your usual day-job?

**Prayer:** Lord, I want to be light and salt. I want to use the authority and gifts You have given me to further Your ministry. Help me to work in a way that will lessen people's suffering and not increase it. **Amen**

### **Intercession:**

- † *Pray that Christians will live the Gospel in the workplace – in offices and factories and on farms.*
- † *Pray that all farmers will strive towards **Living and Farming God's Way.***
- † *Pray that Christians will be characterized by: **On Time; High Standard; No Wastage and With Joy.***<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> 40 Day Prayer Focus on Agriculture 2018: Living and Farming God's Way – Day 31-37.  
[www.amosafrica.co.za](http://www.amosafrica.co.za)

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Gambia** and **Senegal** in West-Africa.

## **Day 34**

### **Fight suffering.**

### **It threatens your life. (3)**

**Read:** Proverbs 22:3

Here are a few more ways to fight suffering.

#### **7. Think ahead! Be proactive!**

The ant already starts storing food for the winter during the summer (Proverbs 6:8). The homeowner had to put a railing around the edge of his roof so that no one would fall off it and die (Deuteronomy 22:8). Joseph had to store up food during the seven plentiful years for the seven years of drought that followed (Genesis 41). His foresight prevented many deaths (Genesis 50:20). ***"The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty."*** (Proverbs 22:3 and 27:12).

Many illnesses can be prevented by living right:

- Sexual purity can prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Healthy eating habits prevent many health problems.
- Gluttony (eating or drinking too much) is a sin and causes suffering (Romans 13:13 and Galatians 5:21). You can literally eat yourself to death.
- Smoking and drinking can make you extremely sick or even kill you!

Stop! What is the point of asking God to keep you healthy (Exodus 15:26) if you are doing things that make you sick? Exercise and regular rest can relieve stress and improve your health.

Protect your health by learning a few good habits. Live clean and hygienically:

- Wash your hands regularly;
- Don't cough or sneeze on other people;
- Keep away from people if you have a infectious disease;
- Purify dirty water by boiling it to prevent Cholera;
- Etc.

Good communication prevents conflict. A clear, written agreement prevents a quarrel later on.

Prevent accidents by not driving under the influence of alcohol; make sure your car is in a roadworthy condition; don't speed; and don't drive if you're tired or sleepy.

Good training and faithfulness in your job can prevent you from losing your job. Do you think and plan ahead?

## **8. Make use of science and technology!**

There is unlimited potential in God's creation! By using the right technology correctly, we can make life much easier for ourselves with, for example: cell phones, cars, pesticides, electronic equipment, computers, farming machinery, etc. A lot of sickness and pain is combatted with the help of medical science and technology. Do you make use of the advantages of science and technology?

But be careful. As with most things in life, science and technology can also be misused. There are things you are allowed to do with a knife or firearm and other things which you're not allowed to do – the same applies to science and technology. There are Godly boundaries. We are not allowed to do everything we have the ability to do.

## **9. Forgive everyone who has wronged you!**

Bitterness is infectious. It causes endless misery (Hebrews 12:15). It's like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die. To return evil for evil quickly spirals into a chain of violence. The best way to fight the misery that bitterness causes is to forgive! ***"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."*** (Proverbs 19:11). When you forgive someone, you destroy Satan's attempt to destroy relationships (Proverbs 17:9). Have you forgiven everyone who has wronged you?

## **10. Use social systems.**

In the Old Testament we find different systems to limit pain and suffering. For example:

- A man had to marry his brother's childless widow to ensure that she would be provided for and his brother's name wouldn't die out (Deuteronomy 25:5-7).
- To prevent people falling into permanent poverty, a Sabbath year and Jubilee years were announced. Then all debts had to be cleared and all land given back. Slaves also had to be freed. (Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15).

These rules were there to fight suffering.

Today there are other systems with the same aim: medical aids, pension funds, group life insurance, harvest insurance, etc. The original aim was to save together and invest together to everyone's benefit. The idea was to share each other's financial burdens and thus contribute to the fight against suffering.

However, be warned: these financial schemes can also be used selfishly. And selfishness is sin. It increases suffering instead of fighting it. For example: When medical aids are irresponsibly "tapped" for selfish reasons for the personal gain of the member, the hospital, or the doctor, the fight against suffering is undermined. It causes premiums and excesses to rise. Then these financial schemes become unaffordable for most people. The high premiums are just as painful as the financial burden that the medical aids tried to combat in the first place.

There are other dangers as well. You could retire because you have enough money and don't want to work anymore even though the task that the Lord has given you isn't finished. Your car insurance could cause you to drive less responsibly. Fear and uncertainty could cause you to spend so much money on insurance and investments that you can't afford your daily financial responsibilities. Use the systems available to you, but be aware of selfishness. Be responsible. Don't misuse the systems. It disadvantages others and causes suffering.

**Prayer:** Lord, teach me to think ahead and plan my work properly. Help me to always act responsibly so that my actions don't disadvantage others. Please bless the work of my hands so that what I do will also bless others. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray that people in your community will learn to think and plan ahead.*
- † *Forgive people and ask the Lord to restore those relationships.*
- † *Pray for reconciliation between individuals, ethnic groups, political parties, and Christian churches. Conflict causes suffering.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors and politicians in **Mauritania, West-Sahara** and **Morocco**. These countries are in West Africa.

## **Day 35**

### **Fight suffering.**

### **It threatens your life. (4)**

**Read:** 2 Chronicles 26:3-5 and 15b-16; Psalm 78:72

There are two more ways to fight suffering.

#### **11. Choose the right people to govern your country.**

Governments have a lot of power but not always a lot of integrity or skill. Power is dangerous. It easily leads to conceit. Conceited people like King Uzziah think they have the right to do whatever they want. When a political party stops serving the country's people and rather focusses on holding onto power, things quickly go wrong. Friends are appointed instead of skilled experts. Voters are bribed with empty promises. Corruption is covered up. Selfishness, self-interest, and party interests determine how decisions are made. Political interests are placed above the interests of the country. Laws that discriminate against minorities are created. Immediate benefits are placed above long term sustainability. Laws are made to obtain greater state control in every area. The state, like King Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-21), starts meddling in areas that aren't its responsibility. We see it happening everywhere. When there is an obsession with power and a lack of integrity and skills in governments it causes indescribable misery for all citizens. Everything starts to deteriorate: roads, education, the economy, medical care, safety, etc.

To fight this suffering, every Christian should do the following:



1. Pray constantly, using every opportunity, for all leaders – especially political leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3);<sup>6</sup>
2. Vote for leaders and political parties who have integrity and skill (Psalm 78:72; Exodus 18:21); leaders who cannot be bribed (Exodus 23 and 6-8; 2 Chronicles 19:6-7); leaders through whom the Lord can reign over the country (1 Chronicle 28:5).

Teach and motivate others to pray and vote responsibly.

## **12. Don't be lazy, but rest sufficiently.**

These days many people are unemployed. Others are overworked. Both unemployment and overwork causes misery.

Lazy people have many excuses as to why they cannot work (Proverbs 26:13 and 16), and therefore they go hungry (Proverbs 12:27; 13:4; 20:4). On the other hand, there are people who burn themselves out pursuing more money – but they never have enough (Proverbs 23:4 and Ecclesiastes 5:9).

Work hard (Proverbs 31:10-31; Ephesians 4:28), but rest sufficiently as well. Burnout is a disease of our time. It takes a long time (sometimes years) to get better. Don't ignore God's command to rest (Exodus 20:8-11). Regular rest is necessary.

To rest is an act of faith. It's a confession that everything in life doesn't depend on my toil, but rather on God's blessing (Proverbs 10:22). It's a confession that my provision comes from God and not from my own effort. When we rest, we confess that God provides for us (Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4). Not resting is an act of unbelief. God has said He will provide for me even while I am resting and sleeping (Psalm 127:2), but I don't believe Him. I am convinced that can better provide for myself by toiling day and night. Not resting is also idolatry. It's totally overestimating myself and my own ability. He says that I must rest, but I say that it's not necessary.

Many of us just do "*something else*" instead of resting. We don't work, but we don't rest either. We tire ourselves out further with an overfull program of sport and leisure; late-night TV and movies; wasting time on

---

<sup>6</sup> Learn more about how and what to pray for government in Dwell before the Throne, 40 Day Prayer Focus on Agriculture – Manual - Chapter 11, pages 43-46

the internet and reading senseless information and frightening bad news. That's not rest.

Adam Mabry wrote a book: ***The Art of Rest = faith to hit pause in a world that never stops.***<sup>7</sup> It's a sin not to rest. And the fruit of sin is suffering. To fight suffering, we must rest regularly: daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. Find a rhythm of rest. Your spirit, soul, and body need to be refreshed. Create rest periods where you can reflect and remember:

- Who the Creator of the heavens and the earth is (Exodus 20:8-11);
- Who the God that saved you is (Deuteronomy 5:12-15);
- What your identity in Christ is;
- What your new relationship with God, in and through Christ, is;
- Why you were created and what your calling is. Ask yourself: Why am I here?<sup>8</sup>

Regular rest fights suffering in a way that glorifies God.

**Prayer:** Lord, I weep over politicians and governments that cause suffering more than they fight it due to their lack of integrity and skill. Help me to pray for them. Lord, teach me how to rest in this rushed world in which we live. I want to rest. You know that I need it. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for political leaders and parties. Pray for the next election in your country.*
- † *Ask the Lord to give you the faith and discipline to rest regularly.*
- † *Ask the Lord to make your daily devotion and weekly rest day a time where you can think about what's been mentioned above. In this way you can avoid a life of vanity and disappointment (acc. Psalm 119:31 and 37).*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Niger and Chad.**

---

<sup>7</sup> Distributed by The Good Book Company 2018. ISBN 9781784983208

<sup>8</sup> 40 Day Prayer Focus on Agriculture 2019: God sees a king in you – Day 37-40

# Day 36

## Wrong and dangerous ways to fight suffering

**Read:** Proverbs 11:4 and 12:12

Pain and suffering has permeated **all** of creation. Therefore they must be fought **everywhere** and in **many ways**. Beware of the following:

### 1. Unilateral action

Suffering isn't only fought through medical aid or insurance policies. Remember to do everything that has already been discussed.

Don't play Godly healing **with** the help of medical science off against Godly healing **without** the help of medical science. Those who refuse medical help as if it does not also come from God limit His active involvement in all of creation. He is also the God of science and technology. But those who do not believe that God often directly intervenes and heals people supernaturally limit His almighty power and reject the truth of His Word. God is who He says He is. He does what He says He will do. Jesus healed people supernaturally. God gives believers a variety of gifts through the Spirit of Christ. These gifts enable them to continue Christ's ministry and build each other up (1 Corinthians 12). The gifts of healing are included among these gifts. Pay attention to the plural – **gifts** of healing (1 Corinthians 12:9 and 28). We have a clear command to pray for the sick; to lay hands on them and anoint them with oil (James 5:13-16); to preach the Kingdom and heal the sick as a sign of its coming (Luke 9:1-2). Therefore, fight suffering by using medical science *and* prayer *and* the gifts of healing!

### 2. Contradictory actions

To take out car insurance and then drive recklessly doesn't make sense. To pay a lot for a medical aid **and** for an unhealthy lifestyle is a waste of money. To take vitamin supplements **and** keep bitterness in your heart is useless – they will just work against each other. Don't undermine your attempts to fight suffering through contradictory actions.

### 3. Acts of desperation

When people become desperate, they struggle to differentiate between God's provision and Satan's snares. Be careful. Stop and think!

Don't become involved in occultic practices in an attempt to escape your suffering. Remember that Satan does false signs and wonders to mislead (2 Thessalonians 2:9. But also take note of verse 8!).

Don't hang objects with so-called magical powers on your doors or in your car or bury them around your house. Don't wear them around your neck, arms, waist, or ankles. They cannot protect you from sickness, danger, and evil spirits! Don't look for help and protection in the wrong places. Don't go to sangomas or fortune tellers to get your stolen livestock back; to solve your relationship problems; or to make you financially prosperous. Your misery will only increase! Listen to what the Word says in Leviticus 19:31; 20:6 and 27; Deuteronomy 14:1; 18:9-14; 32:17; 2 Chronicles 33:5-6; Psalm 106:37; Isaiah 8:19-20; 47:12 onwards; 57:8-13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 9:20-21. The list is long! Remember: You can't fight the devil while using the devil's methods and abilities! You can't fight suffering by asking Satan for help. He is the father of lies, the first murderer, the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (Luke 11:17-18; John 8:44 and 10:10). Call on the Victor for help! Jesus Christ is Lord!

Do not behave like the godless. ***"The wicked desire the stronghold of evildoers, but the righteous endures."*** (Proverbs 12:12).

#### **4. False security**

Many people live with a false sense of security. They think that they are so safe that even God won't reach them.

***"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.***" (Jeremiah 9:23-24). The context of this verse is: God pronounces a judgement on His people in an attempt to call them back to Him. He says that His people won't be able to protect themselves from this judgement! This means that no one can be protected from God's judgement by: scientific knowledge and education; physical strength

and military weapons; or wealth and economic prosperity. Don't allow gold, property, insurance, investments, and medical aids to give you false sense of security. The Word is clear: **"Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death."** (Proverbs 11:4).

According to the Bible, we must **use, fight, and accept** our suffering. By **using** and **accepting** your suffering, you prevent your fight against suffering turning into bitterness. By using and fighting your suffering, you ensure that your acceptance of suffering does not deteriorate into passivity. Remember, you must simultaneously **use, accept, and fight** your suffering. Then you will not become bitter or passive.

**Prayer:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, please keep and protect me from wrong and dangerous ways of fighting suffering. Help me not to get bitter in my fight against suffering. Help me to not even think about getting involved in occultic practices. Help me to believe that You are the victor and that Your help is sufficient. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for doctors, nurses, hospital staff, paramedics, home carers, and medical researchers.*
- † *Pray that the Holy Spirit will give the gift of healing to more Christians. Pray that more competent doctors will be trained in Africa to help address the great need for them.*
- † *Pray for people who are living with false reassurance. People who think their education, wealth, or physical strength can protect them from God's judgement.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Mali** and **Algeria**.

# Day 37

## Accept your suffering. (1)

### Acceptance is being patient in your suffering.

**Read:** James 5:7-11; Daniel 12:12



According to the Bible you must accept your suffering while using it and fighting it. There are two important reasons why we must accept suffering:

#### **Firstly: God is involved in our suffering for our good!**

God is involved in our suffering. He works all things for our good (Romans 8:28). He worked Christ's suffering for our good! He worked Joseph's suffering for good (Genesis 50:20). *God doesn't allow suffering in His children's lives that He is not able and willing to work for good.* I'll say it again: *God doesn't allow suffering in His children's lives that He is not able and willing to work for their good.* Because I believe this, I experience the peace of God that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:6). It is an illogical peace. A peace that doesn't make sense to the world. This peace keeps me from becoming bitter in my fight against suffering. It's a peace that calms me. It helps me to accept my suffering. It reminds me I am worth more than a small sparrow; that even the hairs on my head are counted and that I am safe and cared for in the hands of my Father (Matthew 6:25-34 and 10:29-31).

## **Secondly: Jesus fought suffering effectively!**

God is going to make all things new *because*:

- ✓ Jesus has reconciled all things to God;
- ✓ God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice (He raised Him from the dead);
- ✓ Jesus has defeated the enemy;
- ✓ Jesus now has a place of honour in heaven - as King at the right hand of God!

The Almighty God is definitely going to bring all His children's suffering to an end when Christ returns. Believe it because it's a trustworthy word! It's true (Revelation 21:3-5)! We cannot end all suffering here and now. However, we know that one day the Lord will do so. Suffering's days are numbered. Suffering is temporary. A new heaven and a new earth are coming where the will of God will reign completely and nothing will be cursed anymore (Acc. 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1 and 22:3)! Even though we currently don't win every battle against suffering; even though we sometimes get injured in a skirmish, the war has been won. Therefore we can accept our suffering while using it and fighting it.

This brings us to the question: What does acceptance mean? Acceptance does not mean being passive and simply shrugging your shoulders. It is not doing nothing when you are suffering.

Acceptance is being patient in your suffering. Patience means not giving up and not losing hope. It is looking past the immediate situation and expecting something better. Therefore, parents should be patient while raising their children. It takes time. It's a process! But those who don't give up eventually get a better child. Patience is also being tolerant towards someone who wants to hurt you or do you wrong. Paul writes that he exercised a lot of ***patience in hardships, deprivation, and need*** (2 Corinthians 6:4b). Patience is acting differently to what would be expected.

Being patient is being tolerant. We often read in the Bible that God tolerated people's actions with great patience in the hope that they would one day come to repentance (Jeremiah 31:3; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9 and 15). ***"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"*** (Romans 2:4).

The fulfilment of God's promises follow patience and persistence. ***"We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."*** (Hebrews 6:12; 10:33-36; James 5:10-11). Give up too quickly and you may never receive what God meant for you: a happy marriage (Proverbs 18:23); a new job with better working conditions; a mother or father's freedom from alcohol addiction; the skill of learning to speak and walk again after a stroke; or owning a successful business.

Accepting suffering is doing something meaningful while you patiently wait for the answer, the solution, the outcome, the healing, the breakthrough that you keep hoping for based on God's Word and promises. Joseph was meaningfully busy in jail while he, based on the two dreams God gave him (Genesis 37:1-11), patiently waited for his freedom (Genesis 39:20-23). What are you doing while you wait for the Covid-19 restrictions to be lifted? What do you do while you wait in a long queue? What do you do while the drought continues? Are you going to waste all your time and energy by complaining all day? Or are you going to accept your circumstances and start doing something meaningful? For example, during the Covid-19 restrictions I studied Gunnar Olson's book, *"Business Unlimited – Memories of the Coming Kingdom"* to better equip myself for my calling and task after lockdown. Gunnar is the founder of the ICCC (International Christian Chamber of Commerce). I also accepted Covid-19, the terrible drought here in the Northern Cape, the flooding of our vegetables at my son's (Jaco) property in the Free State, and the crisis in the rabbit industry in South Africa as the right opportunity to write this Prayer Focus, ***A Song in the Night***.

Hold on tightly to God's Word and promises. Be patient. Accept that God works in processes.<sup>9</sup> Everything does not happen all at once.

**Prayer:** Thank You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that You are involved in my suffering for good. Thank You, Jesus, that You have already won the battle against the Evil One, pain, and suffering. Please give me the grace to be patient in my suffering. Teach me to be meaningfully busy while I wait patiently. **Amen.**

---

<sup>9</sup> 40 Day Prayer Focus on Farming 2018: Living and Farming God's Way – Day 27-28



**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for family and friends who need a lot of patience, faith, and persistence to receive what God has promised them.*
- † *Ask for wisdom about how to be meaningfully busy while waiting patiently for the fulfilment of God's promises. Ask for wisdom about how to use and fight your suffering in a balanced manner while accepting it.*
- † *Pray for patience. It's part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Djibouti** and **Eritrea**.

## Day 38

### Accept your suffering.

### Being at peace is putting your hope in God.

**Read:** Romans 4:18; 5:4; 15:13; 1 Corinthians 13:11; Hebrews 11:1

When the Bible speaks about hope it doesn't refer to something that is uncertain. Hope is not a "*maybe-thing*". Hope is a deep-rooted conviction of faith to which Christians hold. But we don't only hold to a conviction. We cling to the Origin, the Source, the Giver of the conviction. God is the source of hope (Romans 4:17-21 and 15:13)! To hope is to be convinced that God cannot lie (Numb 23:19). He does what He says He will do. He fulfils all His promises (Joshua 21:45 and 23:14; 2 Corinthians 1:18-20). It is to be convinced that God is faithful in my suffering (Psalm 119:75). All the verses that you read at the beginning of this chapter link faith and hope together. To hope is to believe and to believe is to hope. We believe God! Therefore we hope in Him and everything that He promises. Some of His promises are for later and some of them are for now!

The Bible is God's Word. It is written for the first people that would read it, in their time and circumstances! But it is also written to give hope to all believers through the ages (Romans 15:4). It is full of timeless truths. But the Holy Spirit who lives in the children of God sometimes changes the **logos**-word (the general, timeless word for everyone) to a **rhēma**-word. He turns it into a specific word within a specific situation for a specific person – for you. That's what happened to Mary in Luke 1:37-38. It's a general truth: nothing is impossible for God (Jeremiah 32:17 and 27). This general word, on a specific day in a specific situation, became a word for her. *She* had to believe and accept it! *She* had to put *her* hope in it and act accordingly.

What a privilege it is to be a child of God: to have the Holy Spirit living in you; to experience how the Holy Spirit gives you a specific **rhēma**-word in your difficult circumstances. A word on which you can build your hope. A promise which you can hold on to during this time. The Holy Spirit usually does this when God calls someone for a specific task. He also does it when He wants to encourage His children in difficult circumstances and give them hope; when He wants to strengthen someone's faith. This is why religion without an intimate relationship

with God is so senseless. There is absolutely no personal and intimate communication. No conversation with God during suffering.

This is how the Lord specifically said to me that the GF4GF-Centres (GF4GF = Good Foundations for Good Fruit – [www.gf4gfc centres.co.za](http://www.gf4gfc centres.co.za)) must be **a source and a symbol**. He said that He will provide for the centres through farming (Zechariah 8:9-13). During the crisis in the rabbit industry in 2019, the Lord specifically said to me that He **will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope** and that I must stand up and take the lead (Hosea 2:13-22 and 1 Chronicles 28). My personal experience is that when it comes to important issues the Lord does not only speak to someone once through one passage of scripture. We are only human and we easily hear incorrectly. Therefore you must speak to God about it over a long period of time. He will confirm His word. Hold onto these rhēma-words. Proclaim them out loud when the Enemy wants to paralyze you with doubt and fear – especially when something does not happen as quickly as you expected (Habakkuk 2:2-3). Keep on reminding the Lord of His promises (Isaiah 62:6-7). Even when darkness surrounds you, no matter how dark the situation, put your hope completely in God! Daniel's friends are a good example to us. Listen to what they say to the king who threatens them with being burned to death: **"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."** (Daniel 3:17-18).

Jesus is the best example of peace. Throughout his entire life on earth He was carried by the expectation (hope that is certain) that everything will end in joy for Him (Hebrews 12:2-3). Near the end, He was so stressed that He literally started sweating blood (Hematidrosis). He wrestled with His Father in prayer three times. His firm conviction that He could trust the Father even in this moment of sweating blood brought him peace. **"... yet not my will, but yours be done."** (Luke 22:42-45). He was then able to get up and undergo the most painful part of His task. He had peace during what was busy happening because He could look past the cross and see Himself once again glorified at His Father's side. We can also look past death and see our resurrection in the spirit (acc. 1 Corinthians 15).

Acceptance and peace is to surrender yourself to God. It is to be convinced that you can trust Him *in* your suffering and *with* your suffering. It is to be sure that no matter what happens you will celebrate with Him for all eternity. At this feast, no one will talk about the old days of pain and suffering. Everyone will praise God forever.

**Prayer:** Father, I surrender! I place everything in Your hands. You know best. Glorify Your name! Do what is best for me in the long term. Do what will hurt the Enemy the most in this struggle. To be in Your hands is safer than following my own plans. **Amen.**

**Intercession:**

- † *Pray for family and friends to come to a place of complete surrender, acceptance, and peace.*
- † *Pray that every Christian will have an intimate relationship with God. Pray that each one will have intimate conversations with Him and hear through the Spirit when God gives him or her a **rhēma**-word.*
- † *Pray that people (say their names) will continue serving the Lord, even He were to not save them from a specific situation.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Tunisia** and **Libya**.

## Day 39

### Accept you suffering. (3)

### Acceptance is singing a song in the night.

**Read:** Psalm 40 (especially verse 4) and Psalm 69 (especially verses 31-33)

People can sing and dance in all circumstances. Some sing and dance in anger while they are protesting against something – they toi-toi. Others sing war songs born out of hate and bitterness. But a **song in the night** is born only of hope. It is sung in an atmosphere of acceptance. A Song in the Night is a gift from God. It's a song that glorifies God and encourages people. The song **Father into thy hands**<sup>10</sup> is a beautiful example of a **song in the night**. It's a song about

---

<sup>10</sup> Geskryf deur Jandny Hewer. Dis opgandeem in verskeie Anglikaanse and ander gesangeboeke.

intimacy with the Father and complete peace in His presence. This song inspires and motivates me to persevere with hope and patience. I can totally trust my Father!

### **Father into thy Hands**

Father, I place into Your hands the things I cannot do.  
Father, I place into Your hands the things that I've been through.  
Father, I place into Your hands the way that I should go,  
For I know – I always can trust You!

Father, I place into Your hands my friends and family.  
Father, I place into Your hands the things that trouble me.  
Father, I place into Your hands the person I would be,  
For I know, I always can trust You!

Father, we love to see Your face, we love to hear Your voice.  
Father, we love to sing Your praise and in Your name, rejoice.  
Father, we love to walk with You and in Your presence rest,  
For we know – we always can trust You!

Father I want to be with You and do the things You do.  
Father I want to speak the words that You are speaking too.  
Father, I want to love the ones that You will draw to You,  
For I know – that I am one with You!  
For I know – that I am one with You!

Read Romans 8! To sing a ***song in the night***, you have to think back and remember what God has already done. He has already sent the Spirit of Christ to live in you and guide you. He has already brought you into a Father-child relationship with Him. He has made you a coheir with Christ.

To sing a ***song in the night***, you also have to be firmly convinced that the suffering you are now enduring is nothing compared to the glory awaiting you in the future (vers 18). We will be like Jesus and share in His glory. This promise for the future is so sure that it is described and something that has already happened (vers 29-30).

To sing a ***song in the night***, you have to think about all these things. You must realise and know: *God is for us! He has ... and He will ...* (Romans 8:31-32). This conviction brings peace! This conviction makes you sing ***a song in the night***.

*God is for us!*

*He has ..... and He will .....*

*God sets us free!*

*He has ..... and He will .....*

*Christ intercedes for us!*

*He has ..... and He will .....*

*Say it with me – no suffering can separate us from Christ's love!*

*It was, is, and always will be impossible!*

*Say it with me - no suffering can separate us from Christ's love!*

*It was, is, and always will be impossible!*

*His love makes us victors, and victors we shall remain!*

*His love makes us victors, and victors we shall remain!*

We can finally have peace, even if we are suffering. We can accept our suffering. This still does not mean that suffering has got the upper hand. Suffering's days are numbered. God makes everything new! Victors we shall remain!

**Prayer:** *Father into thy hands ... pray this song! Amen.*

**Intercession:**

† *Speak to the Lord about everything that He has already done for you.*

† *Speak to the Lord about everything He has promised to all His children.*

† *Speak to the Lord about the fulfilment of all the promises that He has give you personally.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in the **Seychelles** and **Madagascar**.

## **Day 40**

### **The conversation with God continues!**

It's impossible to everything that the Word says about pain and suffering in 40 daily devotions. I have tried, by looking at the big picture, to show that the Bible looks at suffering from more than one perspective. Therefore the Bible also gives more than one answer to our questions about pain and suffering. When you read something about suffering in the Bible, you have to understand it within the bigger context of the

whole Bible. Don't try to answer all questions with one text. You will hurt people more than you help and comfort them.

The main goal of this 40 Day Prayer Focus is to help you step into meaningful conversation with God about pain and suffering. The world does not have the answers your spirit is looking for. Only when you keep speaking and listening to God in your suffering will you get better instead of bitter; walk out of the battle as a victor; and be able to sing ***a song in the night***. Don't cut your conversation with Him short! The following scriptures will help you to continue the conversation.

May you also sing ***a song in the night!***

**1. Hebrews 12:4-12**

Punishment has to do with what has happened in the past. Christ has taken the punishment in our place (Galatians 3:13). Discipline is preparation for what must happen in the future. Walk with God in conversation about your preparation. Ask Him what He wants you to learn and why.

**2. Isaiah 58 and Psalm 41:1-4**

In three-legged races, one person's left leg is tied to another's right leg. Then they only have three legs. They must hold tightly onto one another and run together like one person. If one falls out of step, the other has no choice but to stop, kneel down, and help his teammate up before they can run any further. That's what compassion is: Stop, kneel down, and help. Our scripture passages say that God will also stop, kneel down, and help you when you have mercy on someone in need.

**3. 1 Peter 1:3-9 and Job 1:8-11**

The authenticity of a light is tested in the darkest night. A mirror's "light" fades when there is no external light shining on it. Similarly, the moon's light fades when the sun's light isn't shining on it. In the same way, many people's faith fades when God doesn't flood their lives with health and success. Suffering is the test that shows you if you truly believe or not. Welcome the test. If you fail, you still have time to make it right. If your faith does not get tested, you could fall under the impression that your faith is sincere. You do not want to find out too late that your faith was merely a reflection of your success and happiness.

**4. Lamentations 3:1-33**

This is another example of a **song in the night**. It puts into words deep feelings of bitter suffering, but also the firm hope, the absolute certainty that God is good. *He does not enjoy it when people are hurt or heartbroken*. Quite the opposite. It's against His will that He brings miseries and affliction. Our suffering grieves God. Read Jeremiah 13:17 as well.

#### 5. **Matthew 24:3-14 and Lukas 21:25-28**

In response to all the terrible things that are happening in the world, many people say: *The end is near*. But Jesus gives another perspective. He says we must see it as labour pains. Labour pains don't announce the end of life, but rather the coming of a long-awaited child. The more severe and frequent the pains are, the sooner it is until the arrival of the child. Frightening natural phenomena and world events shouldn't make us so senseless and anxious that we die of fear and stress. We can stand tall and lift our heads. Labour pains are the beginning of a new start. The coming of a long-awaited Child is near.

**Prayer:** Lord, may the Holy Spirit powerful use this Prayer Focus to help Africa speak and listen to You in suffering. May it lead to greater intimacy between You and the people of Africa – and between You and me as well. Teach us how to simultaneously **use**, **fight**, and **accept** our suffering. May everyone's response to suffering glorify You! May everyone sing a song of praise to You. May our **Song in the Night** encourage and inspire Africa to sing along. **Amen**.

#### **Intercession:**

- † *Speak to the Lord about Africa's sorrow, need, pain, and misery.*
- † *Speak to the Lord about Africa's reaction to its pain and suffering.*
- † *Speak to the Lord about His purpose and plan for Africa.*

**Pray for Africa:** Focus on farmers, doctors, and politicians in **Egypt**.