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The Hard Road to Glory

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On November 13, 2013, I accepted an invitation to speak at a psychology conference on the topic of growth through suffering. On December 11, less than one month later, I went for a routine mammogram and was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer. The topic of growth through suffering quickly took on more than academic interest! During my long year of treatment, as I spent time in God’s word and researched my topic in the psychological literature, a picture emerged – a picture of

a long, hard road with a glorious ending. I learned a great deal about myself and about suffering that year.

How to face suffering well, in a way that causes us to flourish, is my topic here. It may strike you as odd to put “suffering” and “flourishing” in the same sentence. Aren’t suffering and flourishing, by definition, opposites? A key distinction when discussing flourishing, dating back to Aristotle, is the difference between what we might call *hedonic happiness*, which is simply feeling happy, and *flourishing*, living a life filled with purpose and meaning. Psychologist Roy Baumeister conducted a study to differentiate the two, and found that hedonic happiness and flourishing are highly correlated with each other.¹ In other words, living a life of purpose and meaning tends to result in experiencing happy, pleasant feelings. However, he also found that there are some key ways in which they differ. One of these is suffering. He found that reporting many bad events happening in life was associated with higher flourishing, but with lower hedonic happiness. And it turns out that a wealth of research suggests a strong connection between suffering and flourishing, a connection that is so strong that it led prominent positive psychologist Laura King to refer to suffering as “the hard road to the good life.”²

Perhaps this idea that suffering might lead to good things shouldn’t be such a surprise. After all, it’s also an idea that is found in the Bible. Our faith offers a promise from God to work all things (including, one might assume, painful and traumatic experiences) “together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, New Revised Standard Version). In contemporary Christian discussions of suffering, however, this theme of growth through suffering tends to be overshadowed by a discussion of theodicy: how suffering and evil can exist in a world created by a loving and all-powerful God. This article is not about theodicy. I am less interested in the “why” of suffering than in the “how” of suffering. Ironically, the “how” question seems of more concern to biblical writers than the “why” question which has received so much interest in Christian circles. The books of I Peter, 2 Corinthians, and the eighth chapter of Romans all extensively address the issue of how to suffer.

In attempting to explore how to suffer well, in a way that leads to positive changes, I will look to the resources of our faith, as well as to the ever-growing body of psychological research on growth following suffering. So what does psychology tell us about this topic?

Psychological Perspectives

Several decades of psychological research have documented that people going through a wide variety of difficult circumstances emerge reporting they have changed for the better in some way. But not all people report growth resulting from suffering. Percentages vary, depending on the study, but it is clear that growth is not an automatic, effortless result of suffering. In other words, suffering itself is not the cause of growth. When growth occurs, it tends to be in three interrelated areas: changes in one's general philosophy of life, changes in the one's perception of self, and changes in the one's experience of relationships with others.

and distressed. While painful, this can leave us open to the adjusting or rebuilding of our assumptions in a way that is more accurate, and, consequently, more helpful for living life.

Research suggests that processing the suffering cognitively and emotionally is necessary for growth to occur. In the early days after a traumatic event, this may take the form of intrusive thoughts and rumination. This seems to occur because we are trying hard to grasp the reality of the situation, to understand it. Later, we can process the suffering more intentionally. We may try to figure out ways to cope with the situation, and we may wrestle with the meaning of the suffering. Why did God allow it? What are the implications for my life? For my goals? What about my family? This wrestling is crucial for growth to occur; some studies suggest that the amount of growth is directly related to the amount of intentional engagement with the life crisis.

The implications of this should be noted. Attempts to avoid the suffering or to distract oneself from dealing with the suffering are counter-productive. In fact, it can result in an increase in intrusive processing, a process known as the "rebound effect." Unfortunately, our societal bent, and perhaps our Christian subculture more specifically, is to move quickly away from pain, sometimes through well-intentioned efforts to "look on the bright side." While avoidance may help people psychologically survive immediately after the traumatic event, and periodic distractions can be helpful to cope with the effects of suffering as part of an ongoing process of working through the suffering, processing needs to occur. Friends and family who are willing to listen can be very helpful in facilitating this.

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View of Self

As an outcome of suffering, the most common changes in the view of self have to do with seeing the self as stronger, wiser, and more resilient. People may also report character changes and greater acceptance of their vulnerabilities and limitations. One study found that greater numbers of traumatic events were linked to significantly higher scores on a number of character strengths, including bravery, creativity, kindness, curiosity, and appreciation of beauty.⁵ These character strengths then affect other areas of life.

Relating to Others

Suffering often brings about a greater sense of connection and closeness to other people and valuing others more, as well as a greater sense of compassion for the suffering of others. However, this is not automatically the case. When we allow ourselves to process and accept our own suffering, we are better able to tolerate the suffering of others. When we resist our own suffering, building defenses to keep it away from us, we also build up walls against the suffering of others, since it may bring too close to home our own suffering.

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Philosophy of Life or Worldview

Researchers have concluded that in order for growth to occur in response to a stressful event, the suffering must present a challenge to the person's assumptions about the world, to his or her worldview.³ Worldviews are deep-seated, often unconscious beliefs about the world and our place in the world that give us a sense of order and stability to our lives, structuring the way we interpret our experiences, and providing guidance for our choices in daily life and overall goals. For stressors to produce change, they must shake or shatter these beliefs. For example, my cancer challenged my unrecognized assumption that nothing bad will ever happen to me, that things like cancer "happen to other people, not to me." My diagnosis brought close the reality of death, of mortality, and caused me to face the possibility of a shortened lifespan. The shattering of this assumption allowed me to reexamine and rebuild my assumptions. In fact, several studies have reported that the greater the threat to one's worldview, the greater the reported growth.

Social psychologist Ronnie Janoff-Bulmann describes three deep-seated beliefs prevalent in Western culture that she sees as the primary components of a worldview.⁴ The first is the belief that the world is benevolent. While we know in our heads that bad things happen all the time, we don't expect them to happen to us. We lead our lives as if the world is benevolent. The second belief is that the world is meaningful, controllable, predictable, and just. We get what we deserve. The third is the belief that we are worthy, decent people. These beliefs often exist at a gut level, even when we know differently at an intellectual level. Tragic events in our lives challenge, and sometimes shatter, these assumptions, leaving us disoriented

Theological Perspectives

Does Christianity offer a particular path for enduring suffering? I think the answer is a resounding “yes”! Our faith offers a host of resources for meaning-making that can be appropriated by those who are suffering, and lead clearly to the outcomes found in the positive psychology literature, as well as additional goals outside the domain of psychology.

Our faith addresses the assumption of benevolence and justice by reminding us that we live as fallen creatures in a fallen world, groaning as we wait for our ultimate salvation to be accomplished. It addresses the assumption of control by reminding us of our fragile creatureliness and our utter dependence on God who is in control. And it addresses the assumption that we are good, deserving people by reminding us of God’s holiness and our need for His mercy and forgiveness. In this way, our worldview receives a radical reorientation toward reality.

Fortunately, our faith doesn’t stop there. It also offers us a Savior who shared in our suffering. Suffering is a distinguishing mark of Jesus in Scripture. Long before his birth, he is called “a man of suffering, and familiar with pain” (Isaiah 53:3, New International Version). Though we are not given a glimpse of his internal sufferings pre-Calvary, we know that the circumstances of his life held plenty of occasions for suffering: born in poverty, living as a refugee in another country, growing up in the context of Roman domination, losing his earthly father at a young age, experiencing homelessness, associating with the outcasts in society, being misunderstood by his brothers and mother. Furthermore, as God the Son, he had a choice regarding the circumstances of his birth; he chose to be born into these circumstances. He chose to be the suffering servant; he “took up our pain and bore our suffering” (Isaiah 53:4), casting his lot with ours long before the cross.

of “abiding” in Christ. Christ endured suffering, as he did everything else, through the power of the Spirit. And because of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to follow that example. So how did Christ suffer, empowered by the Spirit?

First, Jesus did not allow suffering to distance him from the Father: On the contrary, he brought his suffering to God. Hebrews 5:7-9 says, “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (New Revised Standard Version). Sometimes people who suffer turn away from God in anger; Christ’s example encourages us instead to struggle in God’s presence. Peter notes a specific way in which Jesus turned to the Father in his suffering: he “entrusted himself” to God (I Peter 2:23). The verb tense used can be translated “kept entrusting” and indicates that this was a deliberate choice on Jesus’ part.⁶ Jesus kept “handing over” his sufferings to God.

As we follow Christ’s example in our suffering, we become more like him and draw closer to him – a life of “abiding” in Christ.

Second, in response to his suffering Jesus did not sin, but instead displayed the fruit of the Spirit in his responses. He didn’t give in to temptation, but resisted, choosing dependence on the Spirit (Luke 4:1). “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats” (I Peter 2:23, NIV). When attacked, he turned the other cheek. When homeless, he trusted in God to provide for his needs. And the New Testament suggests that Jesus even grew in character through his experiences: the book of Hebrews tells us that he learned obedience through his suffering (Hebrews 5:8), and gained empathy and compassion for us through his suffering (Hebrews 2:18).

Much New Testament teaching calls us to similar responses: forgiving those who injure us, loving and praying for our enemies, responding to violence with non-violence, etc. Suffering offers ample opportunity to cultivate virtues, resulting in the character changes documented in the literature reviewed above.

Third, throughout his life and in all circumstances, Jesus kept a future orientation. He kept his eyes on the goal. And the goal, for him, is summarized most succinctly in that distinctively Christian word, *glory*. There is a pervasive connection in Scripture between suffering and glory. Jesus summarized his own life, as prophesied in the Old Testament, with the words, “Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory” (Luke 24:26)? Summarizing these same prophets, Peter spoke of “the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow” (I Peter 1:11).



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Because of Christ’s sufferings, we have a model to follow in the “how” of our suffering. In fact, we are called to suffer as Christ suffered. I Peter 2:21 clearly calls us to this, “This suffering is all part of the work God has given you. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps” (Living Bible). As we follow Christ’s example in our suffering, we become more like him and draw closer to him – a life

The suffering-glory connection is not limited to Jesus. The biblical connection is also made with respect to his followers. Later in the same book, Peter says to “rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (I Peter 4:13). Paul picks up on this theme in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, where we are told “our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” And in Romans 8:17-18 he similarly says, “We share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” It is clear from what Paul says later in the chapter (8:23-27) that included in this suffering is the pain of being human, including the sufferings of the body, and living in the world – not just suffering for being a Christian.

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But what does this actually mean? In spite of having grown up in the church, my first association to the word *glory* is something like a light glowing out from someone, like a light bulb. I find that I’m in good company here. C. S. Lewis wrote, “There is no getting away from the fact that [the idea of glory] is very prominent in the New Testament and in early Christian writings . . . Glory suggests two ideas to me, of which one seems wicked and the other ridiculous. Either glory means to me fame, or it means luminosity . . . as for [luminosity], who wishes to become a kind of living electric light bulb?”⁷

I will try to be brief in describing this important word, which occurs 96 times in the writings of Paul, and 227 times in the New Testament overall.⁸ It turns out that my initial impression of the word is not so far off base, as its primary meaning has to do with brightness, splendor, or radiance. It also has the association of magnificence and fame. In the Old Testament, *glory* was used as a symbol of divine presence, and was usually attached to special physical places where God was visibly present, like the temple, or to special people who served as mediators of God’s presence, like Moses. In the Psalms and the prophets, we are also given a vision of end times in which God’s glory, his radiant, magnificent presence, will fill the earth (Psalms 24, 29; Isaiah 6, 40; Ezekiel 1; p. 73). God’s glorious presence takes form in the person of Jesus, and these eschatological prophecies become intertwined with Christ’s second coming.

In Paul’s writings, *glory* is applied to the believer’s salvation, and more specifically to the sanctification process of transformation and eventual participation in Jesus’ self-manifestation at his second coming. The believer’s process

of glorification, then, is the process of identification with Christ. According to the book of Philippians, this identification with Christ includes participation in his sufferings (Philippians 3:10) and in his resurrection (Philippians 3:21). So in presenting suffering as linked to glory, Paul is pointing out the role that suffering can play as we increasingly know and identify with Christ – including, significantly, with his suffering – and become conformed to Christ’s image and anticipate our ultimate transformation into glorious Christ likeness. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

A key aspect of the transformation into Christlikeness seems to be reaching the end of our resources, recognizing our limitations, our mortality, our helplessness. This paves the way for turning to God’s Spirit, learning to depend on him.

Christ depended on the Spirit; we become like Christ when we do likewise. This emphasis on the helplessness of suffering as an essential element of growth is exemplified in Paul, whose struggles with God regarding his “thorn in the flesh” led to God’s own clarification that “my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Our weakness leads us to increased recognition of our dependence on God, indwelling us in the Holy Spirit.

What is Suffering Well?

How do these psychological and theological pieces come together? The psychological literature notes the importance of meaning-making in suffering; our faith gives us the resources for meaning-making, highlighting the link between suffering and glory. The psychological literature notes changes in relationships; the Bible encourages us to bring our suffering to God, cultivating a relationship of dependence on our *Abba* Father.

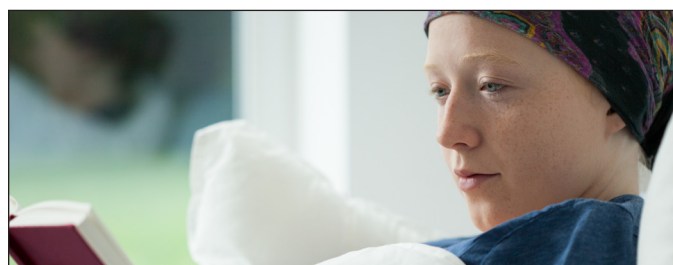


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The psychological literature highlights the possibility of character change; we are instructed by Scripture to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to pursue conformity to Christ’s image. As we grow in our dependence on the Holy Spirit, we show the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. And the resulting life of dependency on the Holy Spirit, “abiding in Christ,” walking in his footsteps through hard places, grows us in the day-to-day closeness of

Our faith gives us the resources for meaning-making, highlighting the link between suffering and glory.

intimacy with Christ. The result is a closer approximation to what we will become when Christ makes all things new—a glorious reality of union with Christ by the power of the Spirit.

The psychological literature also gives some clues as to why suffering can lead to glory.⁴ Significant suffering offers an accelerated learning opportunity in the sanctification process, in (at least) two ways. Our assumptions of control are shattered so that in our helplessness we learn, like Christ, to be completely dependent on God's Spirit. It is noteworthy that with the shattering of assumptions, the acute sense of helplessness is linked with the greatest growth in the post-traumatic stress literature. Only in this state do we fully recognize ourselves as creatures before a powerful God – but a God who is also merciful and loving. In the second place, our assumptions that the world is benevolent are shattered. We learn that bad things happen – not just to other people, but also to us. We learn more deeply that the world is broken; we hear its “groaning,” to use Romans 8 language. Our false hope of heaven on earth is destroyed. This may help us to cling less tightly to our present lives, freeing our hearts to hope for what is to come. In this way, the possibility emerges of following the example of Christ in keeping his eyes on the glory to come. While still living gratefully in the present moment, the full weight of our happiness no longer rests on our current circumstances.

But the biblical story of suffering doesn't end here. There is one result of following Christ in his suffering that goes significantly beyond anything described in the psychological literature. Because of Christ, we can actually not just endure, but rejoice in our suffering.

Let me be careful here to clarify that this is not a masochistic kind of getting pleasure out of the pain of suffering. Instead, the rejoicing is tied in closely with the goal of suffering as identification with Christ. For example, in 1 Peter 4:13, Peter says, “But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ...” Paul talks about delighting “in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.” And the reason is “so that Christ's power may rest on me . . . for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Elsewhere he actually talks about suffering as a privilege. In Philippians 1:29 Paul says, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.”

Why is suffering such a gift? Only because of its link with Christ! Because of Christ, our suffering can be made holy, full of meaning and purpose. Suffering is a gift in which we can rejoice because it moves us toward the goal of knowing Christ, depending on Christ, identifying with Christ, and participating in his glory. Paul expresses this passionately in Philippians 3:10-11, “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

I return here to C. S. Lewis, who after exploring the notion of glory, teases out its implications: “There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal . . . it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors . . . your

neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses, for in him also Christ *vere latitat* [lies hidden] – the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.” At the end of the day, I, for one, can say that the hard road is worth it.

Suffering is a gift in which we can rejoice because it moves us toward the goal of knowing Christ, depending on Christ, identifying with Christ, and participating in his glory.

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Blessings in Disguise: Lessons Learned Facing Breast Cancer

Dr. Ruth C. Chang

On January 29, 2016, while on the road from the Grand Canyon back to Southern California, I got the results of a breast biopsy from my primary physician. She said the dreaded words: “Breast CANCER”! The first question I asked her was how long treatment would be. I had already planned to be with my son and daughter-in-law when our first grandchild came. The doctor told me to cancel all activities for at least three to four months. Her orders were to get well first, then see my grandchild. Because my cancer was in a very early stage, lumpectomy followed by radiation was scheduled.

At the time of that startling phone call, cancer was only detected in the right breast. I assumed I just needed a simple surgery, then six weeks of radiation. But it was not that simple. Upon further testing, a suspicious area was found in the left breast. A biopsy confirmed the same type of cancer as in the right breast. Now the treatment length would be doubled since radiation cannot be done simultaneously on both breasts.

I experienced many ups and downs after this diagnosis, but through it all, I learned that God orchestrates and plans our lives and we can trust him. It was a time to reflect on what I really believed in. As I write this, I have learned so much already, and I am just in the early stages of my treatment. Let me share some of the wonderful ways God has orchestrated things and the spiritual lessons I’ve learned so far.

1. I Wanted to Be an Angel; Instead, I Became Surrounded by Angels

Earlier in January, my husband, Jeff, and I were in Maryland visiting our children after a trip to South America. While there, I kept thinking of my three sisters in California, two of whom were battling breast cancer. The Lord impressed upon my heart to reach out to them and tell them that I wanted to support them through their breast cancer journeys. So, when Cindy, my youngest sister, picked us up from the airport in California, I told her what the Lord had impressed upon me. Very quickly, within a day, she was able to schedule a time for us all to meet together. Meanwhile, I had contacted the breast care center and

scheduled a long postponed mammogram for two days after the first meeting with my sisters. So, after praying with them and for them, they all prayed for me as I went for my mammogram.

When the mammogram showed questionable calcifications and need for a follow up biopsy, they were the first ones I called. After the biopsy results came, they were the first ones to know.



Ruth (top center) with her “angels”

As I went through that first week after receiving the diagnosis, I felt so lost. I was trying to figure out what steps to take and doctors to see. Adding to my confusion, my primary physician was on vacation and I had no direction as to what to do. Then we ladies met again. Laura and Tracey, the two with cancer, came with bags of books and materials for me to read. Tracey, who was still undergoing treatment, told me that there is such a person as a Breast Care Navigator who would help me find doctors, get insurance authorizations, and figure out the next steps of treatment! Talk about how they became my angels! When I felt so lost, the Lord used these lovely sisters to point the way. I was supposed to be their “Auntie Ruth, the counselor and mentor,” but now they were the ones who ministered to me and gave me directions!

When pain interrupted my sleep, praying for others became a way to focus my attention onto something more important. The Lord showed me that as long as I am willing, his strength is sufficient and he can still use me to be his hands and feet.

Since then, we've met again to just laugh, cry, and share the spiritual lessons learned on our journeys. And we pray for each other regularly. I was hoping to be an angel to my sisters. Instead, they became my three very special angels during the tough early days after the cancer diagnosis, and they continue to be.

2. God's Word is a Comforting Companion

Some of my most interesting experiences have been meditations on the constant, timely reminders from God's Word that have given me strength to face the challenges. The following are just two of them:

Exodus 14:14: *"The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still"* (New International Version). This was the verse texted to me by one of my angels and by a cousin just before surgery. Jeff kept repeating it to me as I waited to enter the operating room.

Isaiah 43:1b-3a: *"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...."*

This is probably the most comforting Scripture I know in my life's journey so far. The promise that God will be there always has been good enough for me to take through many difficulties, including this one.

During one of his sermons, Pastor Rick Warren also shared Isaiah 43 as a passage that pulled him through the darkest moment of his life. God used Pastor Rick to again help me focus on these verses—the same verses that helped keep me sane during my first year of adjusting to life in the United States 40 plus years ago!

3. Reminders for Others Provide Perspective

Time is one of the things I have a lot of now as I undergo treatment. So, I have more time to read. In addition to reading Scripture, I am reading other materials. I've learned a lot. The sermons and lessons learned at church have also become more personal and more deeply meaningful during this period.

Am I Just God's Fair Weather Friend?

On Palm Sunday, March 20, just a few days after my surgery, I listened to an online worship service. With Jesus' triumphal entry as the basis of his sermon, Pastor Buddy Owens described how the people put down clothes and palm branches for Jesus to walk on as a sign of surrender. Yet, when things got tough, these same people actually turned their backs on Jesus. They expected him to come and be a ruler. When he did not meet their expectations, they left him. Pastor Buddy then asked the question, "Are you just a fair weather friend of God's?" This timely question was a chance for me to affirm emphatically that regardless of the outcome of my cancer, I want to cling to the Lord and believe that he has his purposes for what is happening.

This was an opportunity for me to check my faith condition. I had no "why" questions, only prayers that God's will be done. My prayer is that I can hold on tightly to him; I only need to let him do what he wants to do. I will not be a fair weather friend, but I will need his strength to get through this trial!

Now several portions of Scriptures became more personal and real.

Habakkuk 3:17-19: *"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, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights."*

Daniel 3:17-18 (the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego): *"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."*

2 Corinthians 12:9: *"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"*

God is in Charge of Our Steps and Stops

While reading a book on missionary care, I came across a phrase that triggered many thoughts: "God orders your steps and stops."¹ First, it reminded me of the song I love to sing, taken from Psalm 37:23-24: *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord"* (New King James Version). The assurance of God's mercy and love came through.

What struck me most was that God was in charge of my "stops". I was reassured again that nothing escapes God's attention. He knows. He somehow has his reasons for allowing this cancer to interrupt my life. He tells me to stop whatever I am doing.

In my mind, I had understood this truth; I claimed Jesus' promise to be with me. But somehow, actually trusting that

God knows what he is doing with what was going on now, at *this* time, did not really sink deep into my heart at first. I felt unwilling to stop and just rest. I struggled with letting others serve me. I struggled with feelings of total helplessness, with needing to depend on others to meet my needs. It revealed a lot about my tendency to want to be in control of my life.

Interruptions are not easy to process. I spent one night crying out to God. I told him I did not like it that I had to ask someone to give me things, to prepare food, and to wait for them to be available! I struggled to figure out when my need was truly a need, when it was okay to ask, and when it was too demanding and not appropriate to ask. The desire to just get things done myself was so strong! After the doctor reminded me that I needed to be a “queen” for a while in order to heal, I tried to obey her advice and truly surrender to God’s decision to stop me at this time.

My poor husband could not understand my emotionality. He thought he was not doing a good job in taking care of me. This created a lot of tension in our relationship. The poor man tried his best, but I was giving unclear and double messages due to my internal struggles. I wanted him to treat me like a “queen”, but I did not know how to be a “queen”! So, this “stop” in my life was not only or really about physical rest. I was not a very busy person. I had learned the practice of resting and taking Sabbaths a long time ago. It was not even about spiritual and emotional rest. It was all about straightening up my belief in God’s sovereignty and deepening my faith that he orchestrates my steps and stops. I needed to trust him.

4. This Journey has Deepened My Faith

When I first got the news that I had breast cancer, my mind very quickly concluded that my life has been very rich. I was content enough with what the Lord had let me experience already. So, it was not difficult for me to say, “Lord, if you want to take my life soon, I really think it is okay with me.” (Of course, I added, “Just let me at least see my grandchild!”) There was no fear of death. Certainly, it helped me to know that most breast cancers are not terminal and can be treated successfully. But I really had no fear of death, only a sense of gratitude for the life I’ve had and the exciting experiences these past few years. I kept asking myself whether I was in denial. I think I was, partly. But I also believe that God had prepared me well to face circumstances like this and it was time for him to test me to see if the preparation was successful. Not for his sake, but for mine.

One of the courses God had taken me through was my father’s liver cancer – his treatment that almost became fatal due to a doctor’s error, then three more years of life, and finally, his death. To me, his was a beautiful life and death. The experience of being with papa during those times actually erased a lot of my fear of death. Somehow, my own cancer diagnosis affirmed that lessons I learned then have remained with me. I can honestly say that there is no fear of death. Hallelujah!

God’s ways are not my ways

In the same vein as knowing God orders my steps and stops, one of the lessons I think God wants me to see is that his ways

are not my ways. I have not been that good of a student in this area. My need to be in control and to plan everything has always gotten in the way. Exodus 14:14 just does not seem to stick in my mind. So, I still can panic and worry about many things when I think they are either going too slow or too fast. I still hate uncertainties and ambiguities. I do not easily let go of thinking of what *could* happen!

During this season of living with breast cancer, the Lord has shown me over and over again that he knows what he is doing. He has ordered my steps and stops. He knows what the next thing will be and needs to be. All I need to do is let him work. My job is to trust the captain of my ship. God provided a strong support system – my “angels”, medical insurance, and a breast care navigator – at the precise moment when I needed to know the next step. Even the birth of our grandson two weeks early, enabling us to spend a week with him before my breast surgery, was God’s gift to my husband and me. I have seen over and over again that God knows what he is doing and we can trust him completely.

Now, one may say, you’re a person in ministry and your faith is supposed to be strong! Why would you have this kind of struggle? Well, it is the “wanting to be in control” part of me that truly struggles when things are not clear to me. I want to make plans. I am a “to do list” person. This cancer experience has given me a chance to reflect and be reminded of the very important lesson that God is in control, not me. Praise the Lord! Now, hopefully, I have grown in this area and will relax more. I hope to have fewer sleepless nights!



Ruth speaking at NCF Member Care Seminar in Manila, Philippines, June 2016. She was halfway through radiation treatment

God Can Still Use Me

Meeting with my angels gave me an opportunity to share some insights that I gathered during my devotional times. Through emails, texts, WeChat, and Skype, the Lord still allows me to encourage friends who need encouragement. Most of all, the ministry of prayer became more important and special. When pain interrupted my sleep, praying for others became

a way to focus my attention onto something more important. The Lord showed me that as long as I am willing, his strength is sufficient and he can still use me to be his hands and feet. Jeff also encouraged me to go with him to visit patients in the hospital for our church's hospital ministry. When the folks we visited found out that I was in treatment for cancer, it became easier for them to share their own struggles.

Pastor Buddy then asked the question, "Are you just a fair weather friend of God's?" This timely question was a chance for me to affirm emphatically that regardless of the outcome of my cancer, I want to cling to the Lord and believe that he has his purposes for what is happening.

The journey continues. I am halfway through radiation therapy that will last for several months. I anticipate there will be more God sightings and spiritual lessons to be learned. My prayer is that I can be sensitive and responsive. My breast cancer diagnosis has become a blessing in disguise, an instrument used by God to continue his work of molding me to be more like him. It has also brought many unexpected blessings. God has shown me that his promise in Romans 8:28 is true: ***"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"*** (New International Version)! To God be the glory!

Ruth Chang, Psy.D. is the author of How to Win Your Child's Heart and serves in a variety of ministries in Asia for NCF.



Photo by D. Carter, serving in Chad

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The original mobile office Chad, Africa

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NCF Says Goodbye to Faithful Board Members

Bruce Narramore, Ph.D.



This year the Narramore Christian Foundation lost two giants who served in ministry with us. Lieutenant Colonel Lee R. Bendell (U.S. Marine Corps) and Mr. Richard Hill both went home to be with the Lord.

Lee served our country in military service for 30 years. According to U.S. government records, he was given, among other awards, the Silver Star Medal “for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines, 3d Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on January 24, 1968. By his courage, aggressive fighting spirit, and steadfast devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Lieutenant Colonel Bendell upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.”¹

Shortly after retiring from the Marines, Lee met Dr. Clyde Narramore, who almost immediately offered him a position as his assistant, a role in which Lee capably served for approximately eight years. Lee also completed a doctoral degree in theology.

Lee helped to begin NCF’s Personal Enrichment Clubs, or “PECs,” which were monthly meetings of ten to twenty people who gathered to listen to audiotapes of Dr. Clyde. After listening to a tape on a particular topic such as “Coping with Depression,” “Managing Your Anger,” or “Rekindling Love in Your Marriage,” group members spent time, guided by a PEC leader, discussing the material and how to apply it to their lives in practical, often life-changing, ways.

Lee and his wife Gloria, who also served faithfully on the staff of NCF, trained all of the Personal Enrichment Club leaders. In time, those trained individuals and couples led more than one hundred PECs throughout the United States. This practical, biblically and psychologically based material impacted thousands of lives. The material was so down to earth, beneficial, and cross-culturally sensitive that many lessons were recently translated into Tagalog for small group ministries in the Philippines.

Whether it was assisting Dr. Clyde in administering the foundation, making radio broadcasts with him, leading the Personal Enrichment Ministry, serving on the Board of Directors, or assisting with MK ReEntry Seminars, Lee was always extremely helpful and competent. He carried out his

responsibilities in a gracious, godly, and highly efficient manner. We are extremely grateful for the deep spiritual and emotional impact he made. Our prayers remain with Gloria, Lee’s wife of nearly 50 years.



In March 2016, NCF lost another wonderful member of our Board of Directors – Richard Hill. Dick was an outstanding Certified Public Accountant who chaired NCF’s Audit Committee and served on the Investment Committee. The Board could always count on Dick to understand the financial statements, interpret them to those who didn’t

have expertise in financial areas, and offer wise financial counsel. His eagle eye insured that NCF’s financial resources were carefully managed and all state and federal regulations governing nonprofit, charitable organizations were met.

But these were not Dick’s only contributions to the Narramore Christian Foundation. Like Lee Bendell, Dick understood NCF’s primary mission of offering personal, Christian counseling and training seminars to those in ministry. He especially valued NCF ministries to pastors, missionaries, and MKs who came to the annual ReEntry Seminar. Since Dick travelled extensively in the U.S. and internationally in his job as a CPA, he had the opportunity to personally meet with U.S. pastors and many overseas missionaries, become acquainted with their ministries, and appreciate their emotional and relational needs.

Dick was a dedicated family man who loved his wife and two children dearly. He had a deep love for the Lord and Scripture, often leading Bible studies for other Christian businessmen. Our NCF staff and board members loved and appreciated Dick and will miss him deeply. He is now enjoying life in heaven, reunited with his first wife, Alice, and dearly missed by his second wife, Darlene.

We praise God for these two incredible men and the many years they invested in the Narramore Christian Foundation. We trust the Lord of comfort to bless all those who grieve. Their contributions to NCF will continue for years.

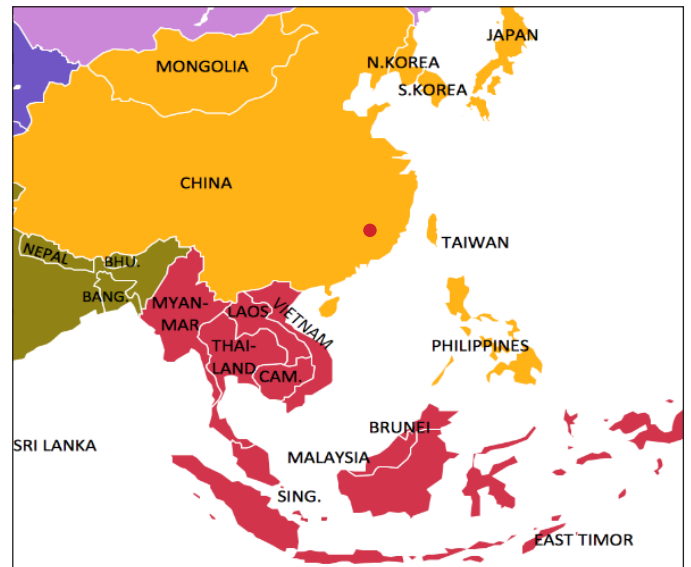
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NEW NCF MINISTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Tim & Cindy Hibma

Fifteen years ago, a doctoral training program integrating Scripture and psychology did not exist in the Philippines, then a country of nearly 83 million people. In 2001, the Narramore Christian Foundation partnered with a group of Christian seminaries in the Philippines to begin a unique doctoral program in Christian counseling in Manila.

Plans are underway for a fourth cohort of students to begin their studies in January 2017. To watch a video about this impressive program, go to http://ncfliving.org/what_we_do/manila-doctoral-program.html. Past graduates are serving throughout the country, now with a population of over 100,000 million people, and throughout Asia. Being in the “10/40 window,” that area known to have the highest level of socioeconomic challenges and least access to the Christian message, means that our students are working where up to 90% may have never heard the Gospel!



Education in Member Care



An Intensive Seminar for Cross-Cultural Workers

19-24 June 2016

Sponsored by the
Narramore Christian Foundation

In June, NCF again offered something unique and new in Manila — a one week Missionary Member Care Seminar. We hosted 31 missionaries, mission organization leaders, and pastors from nine passport countries: Germany, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and U.S. Most are serving in the Philippines; others serve in Pakistan, Singapore, and China. Three of our advanced doctoral students helped by offering presentations, personal testimonies, and private counseling sessions. They also served as counselor facilitators in the daily process groups. These students along with several faculty members

from the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines, where we held the seminar, enjoyed a first-hand experience of this proven model of member care training. Praise God for this outreach!

The Philippines is open to the gospel. Churches and organizations are sending missionaries to work among tribal groups and Muslims, to “squatters” and those living on the dumps, and to other countries. But the missionaries’ work is not easy, and they often live on very low financial support. Sadly, churches and organizations frequently do not provide adequate, strategic, or supportive care for their precious Kingdom workers either on the field or when they return home. Through this seminar, NCF offered support, encouragement, and training that integrated Biblical truth with psychological understanding. Participants were challenged to consider the impact of shame and how childhood experiences shape emotional reactions to the world. Topics such as “Biblical and Theological Foundations of Member Care and Counseling,” “The Emotional Life of Jesus and Implications for the Christian Life,” “Member Care and Sexuality,” “Cross-Cultural Competence in Missions,” and “Community and Conflict Resolution on Teams” were presented. Each afternoon small groups of 3 - 4 persons met for two hours to practice the basic counseling and empathic listening skills they were learning.



Sharing experiences in class

With tears in her eyes, one missionary came to us and said, *“This is the best seminar I have ever attended. No one has ever brought this kind of seminar to the Philippines before. Your staff is excellent! You just don’t know what this means to us! Thank you so much!!!”*

Two participants expressed interest in applying to NCF’s doctoral program. Written evaluations for this first Member Care Seminar were very encouraging:

“It was a great time to learn, to be with people from all over the world. To have such remarkably qualified people speaking to us was an honor. [They] put their hearts and minds into their presentations...[It was] great to see their cooperation and mutual respect...”

Another participant wrote, *“I am so glad that I was able to attend the seminar. There was so much to take in, that I want to do it again! We were taught by people with both experience in mission and counseling. I appreciate the time they spent sharing their lives with us through testimony and also getting to know us.”*

A third person appreciated the *“practical way of teaching, because the participants would practice counseling with each other and it helped a lot. The facilitator coached the participants on what to do and what kind of approach and questions we can use to counsel each other.”*

A country mission director shared, *“This seminar is very helpful for leaders. I wish many more leaders of churches and organizations would participate in this seminar in the future. This seminar helps me understand the grace of God through the death of Jesus in absorbing my shame and guilt.”*

Please pray for those who attended the seminar. They receive many more requests for assistance than they are able to handle. May God help them to care well for themselves and for those whom they serve.

Continuing Education in Counseling and Member Care



An Intensive Seminar for Cross – Cultural Workers

October 9-21, 2016
Antalya, Turkey

Sponsored by the
Narramore Christian Foundation

***Thank you for your
support of last year’s
seminar!***

Childhood Transitions Can Impact Adult Relationships

Kristy Fujiura, Psy.D.

My personal biography would never be complete without numerous uses of the phrase, "...and then we moved." Growing up as a missionary kid, my childhood was full of transition. Whether for home assignment, a new geographical area of ministry, or professional development needs, my family was constantly on the move. Before college, the longest time I had attended one school was three years. I wondered if such frequent "goodbyes" and "hellos" would have an impact on me.



how one email to Barnabas International, an organization that supports individuals and families in ministry, quickly resulted in an incredible 178 responses to my survey – a large number for this data-gathering method! So, maybe I am not the only MK or TCK who thinks about the impact of my childhood transitions?

My study compared the number of times moved in childhood with a measure of adult relationships, based on attachment theory. Attachment theory basically holds that the type of relationship children develop

with their primary caregivers is similar to the type of close relationships they develop in adulthood. There is also some evidence that significant life experiences in childhood can impact adult attachment bonds later in life.² I theorized that the experience of multiple transitions in the lives of young TCKs could be one of those significant life experiences impacting their future relationships.

Sure enough, as an adult, I notice some interesting relational patterns: my grief process is often delayed or even numbed. I often feel guilty or overly "dramatic" when I grieve a loss. I seem to struggle to give myself permission to grieve or sometimes have any negative feelings at all, especially in regards to relationships.

As a missionary kid (MK), I am a perfect example of a Third Culture Kid (TCK). Pollock and Van Reken (2009) identified a TCK as someone who "has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture" (p. 13).¹ Pollock and Van Reken also identified two main identity-shaping realities that most TCKs experience: 1) growing up in a "genuinely cross-cultural world," and 2) growing up in a "highly mobile world" (p. 17). "Highly mobile world?" Well, that sounds familiar!

When I began my doctoral studies in clinical psychology several years ago, I set out to explore the impact of childhood mobility on adult relationships later in life. I was amazed at

Assessments have been developed to measure the quality of attachment in adulthood, most simply delineated as "secure" and "insecure." Interestingly, 83% of my study's participants indicated having insecure attachment styles. In addition, I found a small relationship between childhood mobility and insecure attachment style. But of particular interest were the TCK participants' responses to several open-ended questions about transition. Almost half of the participants voluntarily mentioned struggling to create lasting relational attachments, feeling rootless, or having an ambivalent sense of home. It's not hard to see why TCKs feel this way. I moved 10 times before

the age of 18. It turns out, I am normal compared to the TCKs in my study – over half of the participants moved 7 to 12 times before their 18th birthday!

Despite the pain of so many goodbyes, I would not trade my international, mobile, MK childhood for anything. The participants in my study might agree. Thirty-four percent commented that because of their childhood, they are able to easily adapt and be flexible in new and different environments. Additionally, 31% mentioned their broader worldview.

So, how can TCK caregivers, families, and TCKs themselves preserve the benefits of a mobile lifestyle while also ameliorating the associated emotional and relational difficulties?

First, cultivating strong parent-child relationships throughout the many transitions is vital. As a TCK's relational world turns upside down around him or her, the family relationship is the most stable available. An emotionally responsive and available relational environment during childhood is extremely important, according to attachment theory and research.

Second, higher self-esteem and less cultural homelessness have been linked to facilitating a positive emotional attachment to a cross-cultural identity (Hoersting and Jenkins, 2010).³ In other words, why not find my sense of identity in who I am today *because* of my cross-cultural, mobile childhood? Learning about the TCK experience and interacting with other TCKs may facilitate this experience.

Third, despite the many benefits of being a TCK, focusing on only the positive experiences could actually be detrimental to a TCK's emotional development. MKs and TCKs need to be encouraged to acknowledge their repeated painful losses. They need to be allowed to grieve, and perhaps even be taught how to grieve. For myself, I find relief through telling and retelling my story, hearing empathic and validating responses from others, and reminding myself that grief is the flip side of ever having anything good in my life. I feel the pain of grief *because* I have had the privilege of living in many amazing places and knowing many wonderful people.

Kristy Fujiura, Psy.D., is a recent graduate of Rosemead School of Psychology and a member of the Board of Directors of Narramore Christian Foundation.

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MK ReEntry Seminar



What MKs have said:

I can honestly say that the MK reentry seminar was my saving grace during one of the hardest and darkest years I've experienced. I experienced God's grace through other MKs. – MK from Uruguay

I feel so grateful that God prepares people like you so that missionary kids who are confused and hurting like me are given the opportunity to experience a time of refreshment and clarification. – MK from China

I came to this program with a broken heart and deep wounds that have shaped my life. But through the sessions, staff, counseling, your prayers, and Jesus' grace, I am now on a path of healing. You have changed my life! – MK from Senegal

The MK seminar has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have learned so much, made great friendships, and grown closer to God through this seminar. – MK from China

MK ReEntry Seminar 2017 July 16 – 28

http://ncfliving.org/what_we_do/mk-reentry-seminar.html



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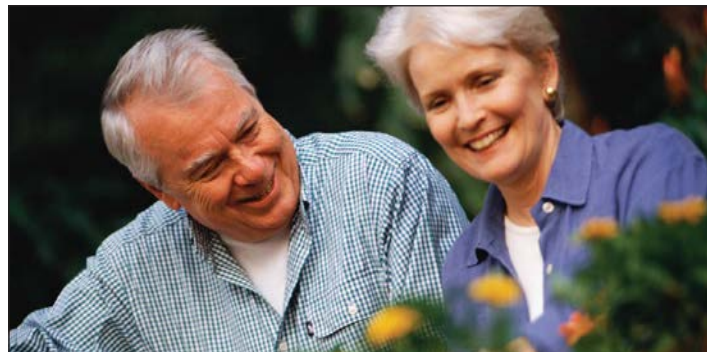
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Planned and Deferred Giving: Quite often individuals and couples who need most of their current financial resources for personal and family support are able to make sizable contributions to Christian ministries and the Lord's work through **deferred giving and careful estate planning**. You can designate resources for the Lord's work and reduce current taxes and future estate taxes. Prayerfully consider **deferred giving to NCF by means of a will or trust, annuities, gifts of real estate, stocks, or personal property, or an endowment**.

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