

Five Days with Jesus in Our Pain

Day 1: The Tears of Jesus - God's Heart Breaks with Ours

Primary Scripture Reading: John 11:32-35 *"When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept."*

Additional Supporting Passages:

- Psalm 56:8: *"You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?"*
- 2 Samuel 18:33: *"The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said, 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you – O Absalom, my son, my son!'"*

Reflection: The shortest verse in Scripture carries perhaps the deepest truth about God's character. Jesus possessed complete knowledge and absolute power to remedy the situation, yet He still wept. This teaches us that perfect love refuses to close its heart, even for a moment.

Consider how Jesus entered fully into the grief of Mary and Martha. He didn't stand aloof, analyzing their pain from a distance. Instead, He allowed His heart to be broken by what broke theirs. Whether death results from a sudden accident or a long illness, it catches us unprepared. Death is so deeply emotional and stunningly final that there is nothing you can do ahead of time to sail through your moment of loss.

There is nothing spiritually immature about weeping in the face of loss. The most mature person who ever lived, Jesus Christ, fell into grief when confronted with the pain of those He loved. We must remember that "sorrow in and of itself is not sinful. Jesus grieved, and He was described as the man of sorrows (Isaiah 53:3)."

Even King David, a man after God's own heart, wept bitterly over the loss of his son Absalom, despite their fractured relationship. God doesn't call us to suppress our tears but to bring them to Him, knowing that He collects every one.

Reflection Question: How does knowing that Jesus weeps with you in your suffering change your understanding of God's character and your freedom to grieve? What would it mean for you to believe that God actually collects your tears in His bottle?

Application Challenge: Today, instead of rushing past your pain or trying to "fix" it immediately, allow yourself to sit with Jesus in your grief. Practice the B.L.E.S.S. principle from your materials: **Be** physically present with Jesus (like He came to Bethany), and if you're not currently suffering, reach out to someone who is and simply offer the ministry of presence rather than solutions.

Memory Verse: John 11:35 - "Jesus wept."

Day 2: The Anger of Jesus - Holy Rage Against Death and Darkness

Primary Scripture Reading: John 11:33, 38 *"When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled... Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb."*

Additional Supporting Passages:

- Ephesians 4:26-27: *"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."*
- 1 Corinthians 15:25-26: *"For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

Reflection: The Greek text reveals that Jesus wasn't just sad—He was furious, "quaking with rage" and "bellowing with anger like a lion." But notice carefully: His anger wasn't misdirected at the grieving, at God, or at people. Instead, His rage was laser-focused on death itself, on the entire system of suffering and separation that plagues our fallen world.

Paul's insight is crucial here: "The apostle Paul could think of no better word for death than 'enemy' (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Death is the enemy of everything good and beautiful about life as God planned it. Death should make you morally sad and righteously angry."

When we face tragedy, we often misdirect our anger. We become angry at God, at victims, at entire groups of people. Jesus shows us a better way. He channels His anger against the true enemy: death, suffering, and the brokenness that mars God's good creation. This kind of anger doesn't destroy; it motivates. It doesn't divide; it focuses our energy on fighting the real battle against the last enemy that will be destroyed.

Jesus's holy anger teaches us that righteous indignation against evil, injustice, and the curse of sin is not only appropriate but necessary. The question is: where are we directing our rage?

Reflection Question: Where have you been misdirecting your anger in times of suffering? How can you learn to channel righteous anger against the true enemies of sin, death, and brokenness rather than at people made in God's image?

Application Challenge: Identify one area where you've been angry at people rather than the problem. Pray for those people today and ask God to help you direct your anger toward fighting injustice, death, and suffering rather than individuals or groups. Practice Listening to their pain (like Jesus asking "Where have you laid him?") rather than immediately expressing your anger.

Memory Verse: Ephesians 4:26 - "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."

Day 3: The Truth of Jesus - The Promise of Resurrection

Primary Scripture Reading: John 11:25-26 *"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"*

Additional Supporting Passages:

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: *"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."*
- Acts 2:23: *"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."*

Reflection: Jesus doesn't offer us mere consolation; He offers us resurrection. What's the difference? Consolation says, "I'll help you forget the pain." Resurrection says, "I'll make the pain come untrue." This isn't wishful thinking; it's the fundamental promise of the Christian faith, rooted in God's sovereign plan from eternity.

The resurrection promise means that every tear shed, every injustice suffered, every life cut short will not just be compensated for in eternity, it will be transformed. The scars will become glorious, the broken places will shine brighter, and what the enemy meant for evil will be woven into a tapestry of grace more beautiful than we can imagine.

God often brings the most lasting and wonderful things out of the darkest moments in our lives. Sometimes the death of one of God's children preaches the gospel more powerfully than his life ever could. This is the mystery of God's sovereignty working all things together for good, even in our deepest pain.

But Jesus asks the crucial question: "Do you believe this?" This isn't mere intellectual assent to a doctrine. He's asking whether we trust Him enough to stake our lives on this promise, whether we believe He has the authority and power to make good on such an audacious claim.

Reflection Question: What would it look like for you to live today as someone who truly believes in the resurrection power of Jesus? How would this belief change your perspective on current struggles and losses? What specific area of loss needs to be viewed through resurrection eyes?

Application Challenge: Write down one area of loss or brokenness in your life. Pray over it, asking God to help you see it through resurrection eyes...not just as something to be endured, but as something God can transform into beauty. Practice Empathizing with others' grief (like Jesus weeping) while also Sharing Scripture promises (like Jesus declaring "I am the resurrection").

Memory Verse: John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

Day 4: The Patience of Jesus - Wisdom in Delayed Response

Primary Scripture Reading: John 11:6-7 *"So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'"*

Additional Supporting Passages:

- Isaiah 55:8-9: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*
- Matthew 26:38-39a: *"Then he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me. And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed...'"*

Reflection: When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He didn't respond immediately. He stayed where He was for two more days. In our age of instant communication and immediate reactions, this divine delay seems almost incomprehensible. When we face painful events, we want immediate responses, quick solutions, and instant outrage on social media.

Yet Jesus demonstrates the wisdom of delayed response. This delay should not be mistaken for a lack of concern; we see His tears and anger. As Rebekah Hannah points out: "As Jesus drew closer to the grief of his own crucifixion and humiliation, he withdrew to commune in prayer with his Father... Jesus knew that he must seek to be alone with God. If Jesus, who was one with the Father, needed to find solitude for prayer with God, how much more then do we?"

There is profound wisdom in learning to delay our responses and instead spend dedicated time in prayer as our first response. God's timing is perfect, even when it doesn't align with our urgency. Sometimes God's delays are actually His grace, giving us time to process, pray, and respond with wisdom rather than react from emotion.

Jesus models for us that even in crisis, the priority is communion with the Father. If the Son of God needed to withdraw for prayer, how much more do we need to pause before responding to life's painful circumstances?

Reflection Question: Think of a recent situation where you reacted immediately rather than responding with patience and prayer. How might things have been different if you had practiced the patience of Jesus? What would a "prayer first" response look like in your current circumstances?

Application Challenge: Before responding to any difficult situation today, whether a text message, social media post, or personal conflict...pause and pray first. Ask God for wisdom and the right timing for your response. Practice Saying a prayer with those who are hurting (modeling Jesus' patient dependence on the Father).

Memory Verse: Isaiah 55:9 - "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Day 5: The Grace of Jesus - Love That Costs Everything

Primary Scripture Reading: John 11:45-53 *"So from that day on they made plans to put him to death."*

Additional Supporting Passages:

- Romans 5:6-8: *"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*
- Luke 22:42-44: *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

Reflection: After raising Lazarus, Jesus' enemies decided He had to die. Jesus knew this would happen. He knew that the only way to interrupt Lazarus' funeral was to guarantee His own. The only way to bring Lazarus out of the grave was to take his place there. Jesus made a deliberate choice to trade His life for His friend's.

This is grace in its purest form...love that costs everything. It's the ultimate proof that God understands our suffering because He has entered into it completely. We have a God who lost His Son in the ultimate unjust attack. When we wonder whether God truly cares about our pain, we need only look at the cross.

Hannah's insight about Jesus' relational faith is crucial: "Our Father makes room in our suffering for honest pleas for help even as we trust His ultimate will in our lives. Here, we can see the deeply relational nature of faith that God desires from us in our suffering." Even Jesus, in His agony, cried out honestly to the Father while submitting to His will.

This doesn't answer every question about why suffering exists, but it settles the question of God's heart toward us in our suffering. The God who was willing to experience the ultimate loss, the deepest injustice, the most profound suffering can be trusted with our pain. He doesn't offer cheap comfort but costly love.

Reflection Question: How does the cross demonstrate that God's grace isn't cheap comfort but costly love? What does this mean for how you view God's care for you in your darkest moments? How does knowing that Jesus was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" change your understanding of His compassion?

Application Challenge: Consider someone in your life who needs to experience costly grace, perhaps someone who has wronged you or someone who feels unworthy of love. Take one concrete step today to demonstrate the kind of sacrificial love that Jesus showed. Practice costly presence rather than cheap comfort.

Memory Verse: Romans 5:8 - "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

B.L.E.S.S. Ministry Section: How to Minister to Others Using Jesus' Five Responses

When you encounter someone in their suffering, remember to B.L.E.S.S. them with Jesus' model:

- **B**e physically present (like Jesus coming to Bethany)
- **L**isten to their pain (like Jesus asking "Where have you laid him?")
- **E**mpathize with their grief (like Jesus weeping)
- **S**hare Scripture promises (like Jesus declaring "I am the resurrection")
- **S**ay a prayer with them (modeling Jesus' patient dependence on the Father)

Remember: Don't rush to fix or explain; sometimes the ministry of presence is more powerful than the ministry of words. Follow Jesus's example of perfect counseling... some people need truth, others need tears, and the wise counselor discerns which is needed and when.

From Sorrow to Hope: The Jeremiah Model

Like Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:19-23, we can learn to turn from our sorrow to look to the Lord: "By faith, Jeremiah turned from his sorrow to look to the Lord... He puts his despair aside to focus on four characteristics of God's love: It is unconditional, saving, endless, and faithful and fresh."

Memory Verse: Isaiah 26:3-4 - "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

Final Reflection: Over these five days, we've seen how Jesus responds to our deepest pain with tears that validate our grief, anger that opposes the true enemy, truth that offers ultimate hope, patience that waits for perfect timing, and grace that costs Him everything. In a world full of suffering, this is our hope: we are not alone in our pain, and our pain is not the end of the story. The God of tears, truth, anger, patience, and grace is writing a better ending than we can imagine.

We serve a God who doesn't stand apart from human suffering, analyzing it from a safe distance, but enters into it fully, transforming it from the inside out. He is the perfect counselor who will always give you exactly what you need, when you need it, in the measure you need it.