



STAYING STRONG

October 2023

WELCOME FALL

This Month's Topics:

"You Are Not Alone in Your Invisible Suffering"

"Clinging to Psalm 23"

Self-Care Corner

Laughter is the Best Medicine

The Importance of Staying Connected

Inspirational Bible Verse:

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN YOUR INVISIBLE SUFFERING

Maybe you're a college student or missionary, facing the loneliness of living far away from family – watching birthdays and adventures happen on Facebook . . . without you. Maybe you're a bridesmaid watching your best friend covenant herself to a new best friend, while you don't even have a date. Perhaps you're on the other side of that happy occasion signing papers you never thought you'd sign, alone in a bed you used to share. Or maybe you're smiling and hiding your way through waves of an aching, clawing grief . . . invisible to the people you know and every passerby.

I remember one morning, standing in front of the bathroom mirror. I looked into my own eyes in shock. My face looked . . . normal. My smile didn't seem fake. Yet my mind and body were screaming out in pain from the chronic illness ravaging my body. How on earth did I look so put together?

Invisible suffering hurts because God did not design us to be invisible. He designed us to be seen. And in the seeing, loved. That is in the fiber of our being. The fact that we all feel this core desire so acutely points to the reality of our design. Even in Scripture, we see this yearning.

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In Psalm 142, David cries out, “Look and see, there is no one at my right hand, no one is concerned for me. I have no refuse; no one cares for my life.” Feeling invisible, David begs God to see him. Does your heart cry out just like David’s?

I began whispering to my God. I tried to ask Him to come close to me. I tried to ask Him to be with me. But mostly all I could manage was, “Jesus, help.” Because when no one else sees, God does. Though everyone was asleep, this remained true for me: “He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber.” (Psalm 121:3)

Friend, He sees you. He sees the behind-the-scenes work you do. He sees the pain you hide. He sees the burdens you bear without complaint. He sees. And there are sisters and brothers who see, too.

God gave me such a sister. One day, while staying at a friend’s house, another panic attack hit. No one noticed my unobtrusive disappearance. In a tucked away corner I tried all the tools my counselor had given me to calm myself down. But Esther noticed – and Esther came looking for me. She walked in the bedroom. I heard her pause as she looked around. I thought she was going to turn around. But then she stepped further in. She saw me. She didn’t say anything. But she slid down the wall and sat next to me. She was there. And I was not alone.

Like God, she not only saw me, she saw me *and entered in* – when I let her.

You are not alone in your invisible suffering. I know that truth is so hard to hold onto sometimes. But today I’m wondering if you’ll do something with me. Will you take a deep breath, choose to believe this truth, and be brave with me? Will you vulnerably pray, “Jesus, help.” Or text your sister or brother in Christ, “I need a listening ear.”

I know it’s not easy. Before Esther, there were so many unseen, desperate days. Even when I prayed “Jesus, help” it didn’t magically mean I felt seen. But eventually, God met me in the quiet, and my sisters started to sit with me.

It might take time. But they are there and they want to be with you. And when there is no one, there is God. He is present in our invisible suffering. So let’s keep hoping and keep believing in the truth. Together.



CLINGING TO PSALM 23

The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack no good thing. In the morning, in the evening, in the middle of the night, and in the middle of the day, he is with me, even when I don’t feel his presence.

He makes me lie down in green pastures even when I don’t want to stop and rest. He knows what’s best when I think I know better. He invites me to embrace my limits and be sheltered by his tender care. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness, toward the way of the eternal kingdom – all for his name’s sake. Everything my Shepherd does is according to his name. He never contradicts himself, and he is always good. As I walk these paths, shadows come that threaten my peace and my joy. They are terrifying in the moment, but a shadow cannot hurt me when I’m covered by God’s grace.

I won’t fear evil because my Shepherd is with me. He comforts, corrects, and restores me with his rod and his staff. The truest feast is found in his presence. His Word nourishes my soul.

Surely His goodness and His mercy will accompany me on this journey, every day, every moment. One day I will dwell with Him in the new heaven and new earth forever, where there are no more dark shadows, no more pain no more fear.

Until then, I'll walk with my Shepherd, be led by my Shepherd, and call out to my Shepherd who became like me, a sheep, and is the Lamb who was slain for my redemption. There's no greater love than my Shepherd's love and no greater sacrifice than His.

Yes, the Lord is my Shepherd. I lack no good thing, because I have everything I need in Him.

Easter is a reminder that God is in the business of awakening hope in the hearts of people who feel hopeless.

He does this in ways that only he can do. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of the Gospel and the resurrection hope.



SELF-CARE CORNER

The goal of self-care is reducing stress and feeling recharged. You have to make that a priority so that you can be your best self. When you take care of yourself, you are more prepared to help others in your life and find joy doing it. St. Paul gives a great formula for reducing stress and recharging in Philippians 4:6-7. He writes: "Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Set a Positive Morning Intention

Would you like to start your days with more energy and purpose? Try setting the tone with a positive intention.

It's a phrase you repeat to yourself first thing in the morning. You can use the same one each day – or change it up.

It can be anything that matters to you. Close our eyes, breathe deeply and repeat a phrase like:

- ★ I am ready for today's challenges with God's help..
- ★ Praise God from whom all blessings flow!.
- ★ Thanks to God's love, my worries do not control me.
- ★ I am grateful for this beautiful God-given day.

Always remember:

Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.

Finding and affirming your true value, worth, and wealth is a matter of self-care which allows us to express compassion, loving kindness, and true generosity to others. And where does this love come from? "We love because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19. From this love that God has for us flows our love for God, our love for others, and our love for ourselves.

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE

Do not regret growing older. It is a privilege denied to many.

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

How does a squid go into battle?

Well armed!!



THE IMPORTANCE OF STAYING CONNECTED

Isolation and loneliness are not just sad situations. They have been shown to increase the likelihood of dementia, depression, and heart disease in older adults. Even early death. Below are some ideas to boost connection. Some require technology. Others do not. Here are some ways that we can help each other:

- **Video Calls.**
- **Old-fashioned snail mail.**
- **Telephone calls with an activity.**
- **Explore reminiscence activities.**
- **Consider a telephone check-in service.**
- **Communicate with neighbors, friends and relatives. Don't wait for calls to come to you, pick up that phone and call someone! Our phones *have* become one of our best friends!**