

Torrey 2001 Walking with Jesus Session 1

By John Hutchison

John Hutchison:

As you know, with this hand movement and working with Nate on the chapel board, you have a great representative there. You have a number of great student representatives on the chapel board. And and as that as that group seeks to make chapels even better, I hope that you will go to them and give your input to them. I also want to thank so much Charity Nicholson, who was playing piano for us as soon as you guys came in. You know, I don't know Charity at all, but I was setting up the computer equipment here and she was in here just practicing piano.

And I said, hey, could I recruit you? Would you come up here and play for us? And she was willing to do that. So I really thank her for that. You know, in in Ron Halford's words this morning, are we illegal here now? I think we may be reaching a point. So I'll just ask you to hang in there with us. And as we squeeze everybody in, I want to mention a couple of things about logistics before we get into actually looking into God's word together on this subject.

First of all, can everybody hear me? All right, everybody here maybe wave if you cannot hear. OK, I've got a thumbs up. Also, I am going to be using a lot of things on the screen today because I wanted you. We're going to be opening our Bibles in a couple of passages, but I wanted you to experience something with me, and I'm going to do something that I don't ever do. I use PowerPoint a lot, but I don't usually put as many things on PowerPoint as I did today.

And I'll tell you, the reason I wanted to do it is I wanted you to share an experience with me as we talk about this whole subject of why Christians go through trials and what it means to follow Jesus through the difficult times of life. And I've put a lot of the scriptures right there on the screen. So even though you don't have your Bible along, you'll be able to track with it. I also will have for you and my secretary is going to be running off hurriedly a few extras here during our time.

Everything that you see on the screen today is going to be in a one page handout with both things on the back. And the reason for that is I really don't want to. Some of you are kind of obsessive compulsive note takers, and that's good. And that has its place. But I really want you also to share with me I don't mind if you take a few notes, but I'm going to be putting some things rather rapid fire on the screen.

And I want you to share with me kind of mind to mind what we are talking about in the Bible when we talk about going through trials. Appreciate it needs prayer as we begin because we need to come to the Lord for a lot of wisdom in this area. You know, I six months ago, in discussing with Ron Hafer our Tory conference, six months ago, I chose the topics that I was going to be leading in the seminar groups.

And I had no idea, obviously, the sequence of events that would be happening in our country just over a month ago now, which I think has given us in our nation a heightened awareness like never before of what happens to a person, Christian or non Christian, when we go through the tough times of life without planning it this way. And, you know, I realized something. Be careful what you volunteer to speak on. I have heard others say this, and it's been true for me that when you venture out to say some things about trials, God just may bring a few of them into your life on the way.

And as I've gone through these last three or four months, there have been an amazing series of things. Of course, the largest for us as a group together has been what happened on September 11th. But even beyond that, a few months ago, some serious things began happening in our church and they've been a real concern to me. I love our church.

I love the leaders of our church. I love our pastoral staff. And they're going through some really tough times right now. And maybe you've gone through this in your church. And my heart has gone out as I've as I've been involved in that in an indirect kind of way. Both of my daughters are Biola graduates, also my son in law is a biology graduate. And some of you who are in your senior year may actually know. My daughter Kara used to be Kara Hutchison and now Kara Overcamp. Kara has been going.

She's she started, if you can imagine, this fall, started her first 8th grade English class. And she's been going through some tough times. There are two of the classes that she has to teach that are students with behavioral problems. And she has not ever she has not ever done anything like this before. And so I've been going through that with her, my other daughter, Kristen. Also, a teacher and teaches kindergarten in Wilmington, and Christine is has been going also through some rough times and and as I've gone through those experiences with my family members, I'm saying, Lord, what's all this going on?

A week ago, one of my best friends was flying with his wife to British Air to London and then ultimately on to Africa. She's a tour group leader and was going to lead a group in Africa. Don Shuzly died in his sleep on that plane. I just was a part of performing the the memorial service over the weekend. Really touched me. Don is my age. So it was an experience that really moved me deeply and especially someone that I know so well.

And and to go through that with him, as you can see, this isn't a woe is me kind of session here. But what a lot of the things I'm going to share today are are not just coming to us from God's word, but they're coming from a deep conviction within me. So one of the things I'm going to talk about have been experienced very recently for me. You know, one good thing out of all of this is it's caused me to see the little trials in life is not a big deal anymore.

This morning, Ron Hafer had asked us to be there to say a few words about our seminar sessions. And most of you were there to be there at that 830 chapel. And I commute from Redondo Beach. So I have about a forty five minute commute usually, and I kind of have a ritual I've had over the years. I stop at a certain coffee shop. When you get older, these kind of things happen. I start at a certain coffee shop.

I have a Dunkin Donuts vintage mug with the top on it that goes back to the 1980s and I'm very proud of this and others who have seen this. So this is a collector's item and this is amazing. Going to the same coffee shop and get my cup of coffee. I used to get about two or three donuts that started showing up after a while. So I'm a little more health conscious, a little better now and I usually get something and on my way on my commute over here, part of that is to have my my coffee and and eat something.

All this morning I'm getting on the 110 freeway and you know that the thought crosses my mind. I don't want to be late for this chapel. Heaven forbid that a wreck or something happens. So I'm really watching closely the cars in front of me and lonely. I still don't know how it happened, but my Dunkin Donuts top popped off a whole cup of coffee all over the front of me. White shirt. Not this white shirt, white shirt.

I was already on the onramp I got on. And just to let you know how I've been able to process trials lately, I was laughing. This was so funny because because here I was immediately got on the freeway. I'm stuck in traffic. I got a whole cup of coffee all over the front of me. And I'm

supposed to be at Biola at eight thirty for the first Chappell session. So I got off the next exit, made it back.

And some of you who were up there toward the front, know I walked in one minute before the Lord was gracious on that one.

But you know something? We go through times in life that are that are just there's just little things.

And what I've really learned, even though that's an inconvenience, that is not really a trial. Trials are going to come in various forms in our lives. And it really helps us to to begin to see and to put them into perspective. Let me let me think with you about a few principles as we look at this subject of trials today.

First of all, trials and suffering are inevitable in my Christian life. They will happen.

We live in a sinful world and a sinful world is going to produce things that are not pleasant. We've experienced some of those in a major way during this last few months. As we think about some of the scriptures that relate to this, we realize that God's word is really clear about this, James. And I'm going to put a rapid fire a few up here on the screen that remind us of this very truth, James says. Consider it pure joy, my brothers.

Whenever you face trials of many kinds.

You know, it's an interesting word there that he uses when he talks about facing trials. It actually is the same word. If you remember the parable, when Jesus is talking about the man who fell among thieves and the Good Samaritan helps him. This is the same word when it says the man fell among thieves. It was a total shock, a total surprise, you didn't expect that, and James uses that same word to give us some idea that trials often come totally unexpected for us.

Unscheduled trials of many kinds pulses to Timothy. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted, Peter says.

Dear friends, don't be surprised at the painful trial that you are suffering as though something strange were happening to you.

And finally, walking as Jesus walked, Jesus tells us, and he told his disciples, I've told you these things so that in me you may have peace because while you're in the world, you will have trouble.

Now, isn't that encouraging? We have on the authority of the word of God that we are going to face trials.

And the key is or the issue is what do we do with them? What do we do with them? How do you and I respond to them? You know, trials make some people bitter and they make other people better for some people.

Trials are an obstacle that they fall over and become so frustrated with.

And for other people, that same obstacle is an opportunity, an opportunity to see something and have to happen in life for others. A trial can be a stumbling block for months and even years, especially for a Christian.

It seems as though God has forgotten me. And yet, for some, rather than being that stumbling block, it can become a stepping stone to step up on it and say, Lord, I don't know what you're doing here, but I know it must be pretty significant because you allowed me to participate in this trial.

Attitude. Attitude is everything is as we think about trials.

And when I go to a second principal and we'll talk about some different dimensions of this trials and times of would you turn to a neighbor, not more than three people and talk about a positive thing that has happened in your life through a trial, through a difficult time. Would you do that right now and just spend a minute doing that name a few positive things that have happened to you as a result of trials, things that have that you have considered to be positive.

Don't be intimidated by the group here. What are some things that have happened by our positive nature? Yes. You came to Biola as a result of trials. I won't go into that story right now, but we're glad that you're here. What else? God's guidance, in other words, might be related to trials.

Taught me about thing right here on the basis for that. Whatever I'm going through now, huh?

Yeah, the the the experiencing the presence of God. We'll talk about that in a little bit. That, you know, our our desire sometimes is to get through the trial. Right. We pray, Lord, take me out of this. And actually, God's greatest interest may be the process of what is going on while I'm in the trial rather than getting me to the end of it. Suffering serves a unique, positive role in my Christian experience.

And this really in many ways has to do as I said earlier, has to do with attitude and how I think. Here's a paraphrase from Phillips. Some of you know this paraphrased well, it's been quoted often from Romans Twelve.

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold, but let God remold your minds from within. And let me add to that some of the things that Jesus has to say. Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted. Now, we're getting into some stuff here that, to be very honest with you, I've taught for many years a class here on campus on Life of Christ.

And it hasn't been at least until the last year or so that I've really felt. I've grappled with some of the things that Jesus talks about here. It has to do with attitude or the way we see life, you know, a few years ago. I'm a little bit older than Alistair, I am in my mid 50s. I won't say which and I about age thirty five had a tremendous change and that is my eyes for the first time, didn't allow me to read things that I would had had.

I always had perfect vision all the way through 20, 20, even a little better than 20, 20. And at age thirty five I found myself stretching and stretching and and in fact my arm got too short. And then I went to the ophthalmologist and he actually told me an inexpensive place to go buy some cheap reading glasses, you know, I think four or five bucks. And I went there and I put those reading glasses on and it was amazing.

It was like a new world. I had never seen this before for at least for a couple of years, the ability to be able to see something clearly. I really believe what we are talking about here today, especially in these points, that we will we will finish the rest of this hour with we're talking about putting on some spectacles that are not what we would naturally use.

They are ways of viewing things that are different from the way we logically think or the way we would commonly think. And that's what Jesus is doing. And when he talks in the Sermon on the Mount, I would like you to turn there. If you do have your Bible, I know it's up there on the screen. If you do have a Bible, turn to Matthew. Chapter five, Sermon on the Mount is an often misunderstood part of Jesus ministry.

In it, he is challenging the status quo of his Jewish world and his Greek Roman world.

And he is saying some things that very few people would have agreed with him about in his time, especially in the Beatitudes. He is challenging here a view of living for God that is different.

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit. A good definition of that is those who are humble before God. This word blessed throws us a little bit because we're not used to using that word. It's a powerful word. Jesus would have been speaking it in the Aramaic language and it's the word Ashara and it would have been a word of congratulations or excitement. You may remember in some of the songs, we have a very similar expression oh, the blessedness of the one who has this quality about his life.

And that's what this is about. It's an exclamation. It's a congratulation. It would be like I was saying to Nate, Nate, congratulations that you have this in your life.

You are a blessed man. The enthusiasm that comes from from this word. Now, that isn't as odd as what Jesus says. We should be excited or enthusiastic about things like being poor in spirit.

Even the rabbis who debated with Jesus and disagreed with Jesus, even the rabbis of his day had a saying something like this, poor in spirit, but they're saying meant that it's better to be as miserable as you can in this life. So maybe you can escape some of the misery of a life to come. It's nothing like Jesus meant. It was a quality that reversed everybody's way of thinking. The meek, certainly in the Greek Roman society to be meek was not an admirable, admirable quality at all.

It was not something that you would envy in someone or that you would want to be. But then we get to the ones that are, I think, the toughest. Blessed are those who mourn. I've thought about

this a lot. A number of Bible teachers try to soften this a little bit and they say, well, you know, mourning here being this is a Christian or a follower of Jesus, mourning probably means mourning for sin. So a common way of explaining this is blessed is the person who mourns for his sin, meaning repenting of his sin.

You know, it doesn't say that. And I'm not sure that that's what Jesus means. Blessed are those who mourn. Go on with me here to some of the later verses.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And then Jesus. Speaking this now would probably look have looked at his own disciples and he would have said to them, Blessed are you. He gets personal here. Blessed are you. When people insult you and persecute you. And falsely say all kinds of evil things about you because of me. What is this all about?

The word sorrow in the earlier passage, blessed are those who mourn, is the most extreme word that we have in the Greek language for sorrow. It is the kind of sorrow you would experience when when someone who is closest to you dies.

My wife and I went through an interesting experience during our our national tragedy of September 11. Leah had been away with her mother up in Vancouver, B.C., on a trip for a week. And guess what night she was supposed to fly home Tuesday night. And obviously, things changed quickly.

Everything changed quickly. Airports were shut down across the country. And so we were on the phone and trying to talk through it. What are you going to do? And she couldn't get out by plane. The trains immediately booked up, looked into cars, and by the next day she realized, I've got to rent a car. And she got one of the last cars in Vancouver, B.C., and drove down to my parents, which is in Portland, Oregon area, and made it that far.

And then she was going to see if she could get a flight out of Portland. But as you know, the story, what happened? Everything was so slow in getting started and moving again. Leah ended up driving fourteen hundred miles down, renting two cars to do it because it was so hard to get cars. But driving down here and I'll tell you, here was a moment to remember when she got out of the car, we embraced and kissed a kiss in an embrace like we never had before.

You know, it was. It was that. It was that going through the tragedy of those several days and being apart from the person in life who is closest to you, it was not even a long distance not being able to really talk about this and to share this.

And both of us were were mourning about the things, and yet we weren't together. And and then finally after she got home, we began and I think some of you did this to begin watching the TV reports of this and those stories of the families who had lost loved ones in the Twin Towers or in the Pentagon. I mean, I don't know how you are emotionally. I feel like I'm a pretty strong person emotionally, but I couldn't watch very many of those stories.

I'd watch them and and my wife and I one night after watching, just a couple of them were sitting there on the couch sobbing to hear the stories of the tragedies that people were going through. And this isn't even somebody who is close to us. When Jesus says you're blessed are those who mourn. He is talking about some inherent quality of going through the process of mourning that is good for us. That is the side of life we don't like to choose or experience.

But nevertheless, Jesus says you are to be congratulated when you are blessed like that. This kind of blessing that he's talking about here is an inner confidence. Sometimes, as some of you know, and in paraphrases of the Beatitudes, the word happy is put in the place of blessed. Happy are the poor in spirit happier than me? I don't like that. And the reason I don't is because the connotation in our English language of the word happy, it's a word that is a little more flippant and it is often dependent on circumstances and it can change from one day to another.

No, this is a word blessed, meaning that in the very depths of our souls there is something to be found here. There is something to be gained here. What are some of the things that caused this experience to be a good one for us? I just want I want to name a few here. If you look closely at the passages and I'm going to read some of them fairly quickly, my reason for putting all these on the screen, by the way, it violates all the things that I believe about teaching with PowerPoint.

But the reason I'm doing it is because I want to impress you with something. Nothing that I'm doing. I want to impress you with the amazing consistency through God's word about some of these statements and some of the things. First of all, when we go through these kinds of trials, especially those which have to do with our face, a difficult time because of taking a stand for.

For Jesus, a difficult time, not necessarily having said a word, because I live for Jesus, some of you have taken this kind of persecution in life. You've taken hits in this area. Some of you have not been included in groups and have been ostracized because of your moral views.

You made a decision about about the sexual relationship before marriage and your friends in high school made other kinds of decisions. And after they become aware of where you stand on that, all of a sudden you find yourself not included at times or you make a decision about what it is. To be honest, when you're taking a class and dealing with issues of cheating or reading other's papers of using someone else's work to hand in a paper, you you make those decisions and sometimes you'll feel the alienation of people around you.

Some of you work on jobs and everybody else stretches a 15 minute coffee break into a forty five minute one. What do you do if you believe that the right thing to do is this and you do it, you're going to be ostracized? There are a lot of subtleties in taking a stand for Christ. And what these passages say is, don't worry, there are some internal payoffs here. Let me read just a few. The first in Hebrews is how Jesus made it through tough times.

The writer to the Hebrews says, Let us run with perseverance. The race that is marked out before us, basically that's living life. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross scorning it shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. How did Jesus make it through difficult times.

Remember, in the garden he even prayed. Lord, if there be any possible way that the cross can be removed from me. You call it this cup. I'm asking for that. But nevertheless, I'm willing to submit to you the way Jesus made it through the cross was by looking ahead. As this passage says, fixing our eyes on Jesus is a picture of running a race here. We fix her eyes on the finish line and the finish line.

Here is the promises that come to us in eternal life. Let me show you some other examples. Blessed is the man and James who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him, Paul said.

I consider the present sufferings are not even worth comparing with the glory that will will be revealed in us.

I know that doesn't connect with many of us, perhaps as we mature as Christians and maybe even get a little bit older chronologically, we begin thinking about the rewards. You know, ultimately when we make decisions and especially decisions related to persecution, there are only two people that that really matter. And it's the person I'm going to look at in the mirror tonight and I'm going to look and say, was I consistent with what I believe? And as my father in heaven or Jesus Christ, who one day when I stand before him, I want to hear him say, well done, that good and faithful servant.

That's all that matters. Looking ahead, looking into Jesus, being able to see where all of this is heading in the future. But another great benefit of trials is that they really do refocus our lives. Did you notice and I'm speaking here on a on a national level. Did you notice how life changed in America after September 11?

I mean, to cancel all sporting events with a major repercussion of how are these going to all be made up? I know that sounds trivial to us, but that is almost unheard of, to cancel musical events, to cancel all entertainment kinds of events. I've heard statistics or read statistics since September 11th that husbands and wives who were estranged, we're thinking about going through a divorce, have gone back to marriage counselors and started working on their marriages. Why? Because it has caused them to think about what really matters in life, what's really most important in life.

Did you notice in the days right after the disaster that all of a sudden there aren't any Republicans and Democrats in Congress?

This was amazing because just the day before there had been a major blowout battle and a discussion over some issue and and people were were following party lines.

And then all of a sudden, all of this changes almost as if it's if it's trivial. I read an interesting account the other day about defense attorneys. You know, right now, defense attorneys are trying to reschedule their cases as far ahead in the future as they can. You know why they're doing that?

Because juries, people who sit on juries after September 11th are making different kinds of decisions. Somebody, for example, comes to a court case who spilled some coffee on themselves in McDonald's. What do you think a jury is going to say? Get a life?

You talk about people in New York dying the way they did, and and you're going to sue because you spilled coffee on yourself. Guess who, I guess who are the new heroes? You know, there are all kinds of personal cases in courts that are brought against policemen and firemen. Guess what you better not do right now? Isn't it amazing? Sports and rock singers and others were heroes. And all of a sudden, rightfully so, policemen and firemen are awesome heroes.

And and jurors who sit on juries will find almost always in their favor. Right now it tells us something about the dynamics that go on in life. When a trial comes in, it causes us to think about what is really trivial and what is really important and to sort out the values that are there. It takes us away from being self-centered and causes us to be others centered. You know, I told this is a story about giving my wife a hug when she came home.

I heard a number of those stories for the firemen and the policemen in New York who are out working endless hours, days. And they said they were in shock, they were in trauma.

But when they went home, all they wanted to do was to grab their wife and their kids and just hug just to hold on, just to know that this is what is most important in life. You see, when we go through trials, it takes us away from that self-centered ness. It also, as a Christian, helps us to deal with spiritual kinds of things. I've called it spiritual apathy or sin and moves us toward a stronger relationship with God.

I'll have a passage here in a minute that relates to that. And finally, it really does take the focus off materialism and begins to move it more toward people and relationships. Hebrews, 12, endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. God disciplines us for our good that we may share in His Holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful later on.

However, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. There's a quality about discipline that grabs our attention, that shapes us. I love C.S. Lewis is quote from a book, and this is an older book by him. But if you like C.S. Lewis, it's a classic called The Problem of Pain.

Lewis says God whispers to us in our pleasure, but he shouts to us in our pain.

It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world and to rouse us. They refocus our lives, the trials and suffering also represents some of the deepest soil in which faith can grow to maturity.

I ask you a question as I was introducing the seminar in this morning's session, and that is a question that kind of frames the seminars that I'll do and I'll be with you tomorrow night on Thursday evening kind of frames this whole idea. And that is looking back over your life, when are the times that you grew the most as a Christian?

When are the times that you grew the most, if we're honest?

For most of us, it isn't going to be when things are going well, but rather the tough times. I would like you to turn with me to James, chapter one, one of the greatest passages about trials. If you don't have your Bible, I have most of that passage here on the screen, James. One verse to consider it pure joy. My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops, perseverance and perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

A few other passages, this this one is so clearly represented in scriptures, Romans five, very similar to James's words, Paul says, We also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces. Here's this quality again. Perseverance. Perseverance is an interesting word. Sometimes people exchange the word patience for it. There are two very different things, at least the way we commonly used those words.

Patience is a word which implies kind of just passive, passively sitting back and waiting for something to happen. My wife really loves shopping.

I hate shopping. I don't know if I'm typical of a lot of men.

Maybe some new guys like shopping, but I know that my wife loves shopping. So sometimes in a weak moment, I will agree. All right, let's go shopping and we'll end up in a store. And, you know, my favorite stores are the ones where they put a chair in the men's the for the men in the women's departments, it's so wonderful to be able to sit down and share. What I'm usually doing is sitting in that chair patiently waiting for my wife.

I'm just passively passing time. I'm I'm not engaged at all. I'm not really interested at all. I'll I'll help her to pick something out and tell her.

Yeah. That looks really good and and genuine when I do that, but I'm really not actively involved in this at all. That's kind of the impression of the word patience. Perseverance is a very different kind of word that we even have the verb to persevere through something it gives us, doesn't it, the impression of being actively participating and engaged in something. And that's what I think is being implied here in this process. God is at work, but we are also at work.

And a part of it is the attitude that we have about it, that perseverance is going to ultimately change our character and character and changes are going to bring hope in our lives and hope will not disappoint us. There's a process that is going on here. Margaret Clarkson, another writer on this subject of trials, has a great quote, and it's simply this. It is not by miraculous deliverance that our faith grows, but by discovering God's faithfulness in the midst of our pain.

I love that statement because she has captured the idea that is the story of the Book of Job, that it isn't the deliverance which teaches us about God, but it is a process that we go through that is teaching us about God.

I mean, name you just a couple of other things. Trials and times of suffering increase my capacity to minister to others. Now, here's a long passage, but I've highlighted here, you know, I've always thought that the way the Holy Spirit uses a yellow highlighter is by repetition. When you read in the Bible a verse or several verses and a word or expression is repeated several times over, it's like the Holy Spirit using a yellow highlighter, just like I did here in this passage.

Listen to it. Praise be to the godfather of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us and all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God for just as the sufferings of Christ, sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives. So also through Christ, our comfort overflows. You know, I'm going to say this because.

This has been true for me and my life, but some of you have experiences in your lives that either you're bitter about or you think that God has no use or no purpose for those at all. In other words, they're kind of totally separated from anything that God might be doing. I want to challenge you on that. And I want you to think about this. Could God be taking you through a tough time in life to take you through this set of circumstances to meet your needs?

And you don't even know it yet. But somewhere down the road, God's going to bring you across the path of another person who needs you, needs you to be able to say, you know something? I can honestly say, I know how you feel. You know, those are words you learn in counseling. You don't say unless they're true. Don't ever say those words. I know how you feel unless you really know they're true. But if you know how they feel that you can be used by God to be able to minister to others after you've gone through that try, trials in times of sufferings often result in salvation of others.

I shared with you on another occasion earlier this year a story of a young man who was killed in our youth group at our church, not not killed in the youth group.

But it's not that not that bad a place. I told you we were having problems in our church, but no, not not that day.

Now, he was he was in our youth group and he was a discus thrower for our local high school and was out there during a track made even actually before a track meet and discuss without him ever knowing what hit him, fractured his skull. He was dead within a very short time. We knew his mom and dad and his mom, in fact, was a teacher at the high school. And obviously this was a and all school experience because one of their own track members, he was a senior and when one of their teachers was his mom, we're going through this.

And, you know, this whole family were Christians. And as a result of that young man's death, the parents were able to reach out to many students they never would have had contact for. And as a result of that, I think the last number that I heard through various meetings and extended events that happened, over 100 hundred high school people came to know Christ through the ministry of that family as a result of the tragedy they went through.

Now we look at the tragedy and we say, Lord, we don't want those things to happen in life. And yet the reality is when they do happen, God is at work.

I've given you a passage out of Philippians where Paul shares that God was at work in his imprisonment, doing amazing things through a very negative experience.

Trials in times of suffering as a Christian also give me the privilege of sharing something with Christ. Here's one that I'm not sure that I've experienced as much as I ought and as much as we

ought. And that is this is not this is not spilling coffee on yourself as you drive on to the 110 freeway.

This is being persecuted because of a stand that you take for Christ. And some of you have been some of you have been more than I have. Some of your families not only have no idea why you're here at Biola, but they're just barely tolerating it. Some of you come here. I've talked to a number of our students here at Biola. Some of you come from families. You're the only Christian in that family, maybe for some of you has been.

It's a stand that you've taken with your friends.

This is what Peter's talking about. He says, don't be surprised at this, but rather rejoice. And here's here's a word I'm not sure expression I'm not sure I understand fully because in going through this, you are participating Christ.

Maybe it's what Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room when he said to them, you know, they're going to hate you because they hated me first. It's an amazing privilege. Peter says he would have said it like this. I need no other reason to go through persecution than to know that I'm. Doing it for. Jesus, and if I know that I'm doing it for him, I don't have to figure out logically all the good things that are coming about it, I just know that that is worth it.

Peter says. The apostles in Acts 5 said that they were were rejoicing because they were counted worthy of suffering for the disgrace of Christ. Well, let me finish and I'm going to do this very quickly because it has to do more with attitudes than any other thing.

Here are some spectacles that we can put on and understand what what is it that God wants us to do as we face these trials?

Well, first of all, we can face them with confidence rather than doubt. One of my favorite passages. And if you happen to see the memorial service on the day after the great tragedy in New York, President Bush quoted this passage so thrilled to have a president who is a Christian who is thinking about these kinds of things. And he quoted this. He said, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

No.

In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Jesus himself left his disciples with these words after the great commission. Remember in Matthew twenty eight, it says he was teaching them or us to obey everything that he had commanded. And then he said these final words. Surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age. Confidence rather than doubt, with joy rather than discouragement. Look at all look at all these places where this is.

I mean, do you get the idea that God is trying to tell us something, rejoice and be glad Jesus said when you go through these kinds of times.

James said, consider it pure joy. We also rejoice in our sufferings, Paul said, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ. I want to I want to clarify something here, because I find among Christians that this is easily misunderstood. And you know what? It causes it. It causes a false, superficial kind of atmosphere among Christians. Might even happen sometimes here. A Bible, although I haven't observed this very much here, and that is this.

Somehow we get the idea that this joy means that I always have to have a smile on my face, that I always have to have my life all together. And and if I'm really going through a struggle, I can't let anybody know that, because if they know that, they might think that I'm less than spiritual or something is really wrong falling apart in my life. You know, folks, I'm convinced that this joy is not an emotion, although emotions may come from it, the emotion of joy may come from this.

This is the fruit of the spirit. And it is this deep. It's almost like that word blessed earlier. It's this deep inner conviction that God is at work here. And you know what I've concluded?

I don't think God expects us to enjoy hurting emotionally and sounds dumb, but some people think that you as a Christian, that you're somehow supposed to always have that smile on your face and always be on top of it. I think sometimes we can be open and honest. I'm really hurting here. What is the joy then? It isn't the emotion as much as it is the confidence that God is at work here, that God is doing good things here.

Maybe a word that is closest to this would be the idea of contentment that I'm content and I'm trusting in God in this situation. How can I face trials with prayer? I love this passage knowing

that the Holy Spirit is praying for me and James were invited. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask of God. And we quote that verse to relate to a lot of different kinds of wisdom. But I want to remind you that the immediate context of this verse, if anyone lacks wisdom, is a is a passage about trials.

And I think most naturally to be taken here. If anyone lacks wisdom about the trial you are going through, he should ask of God who gives generously to all without finding fault.

And then we're promised in the same way the spirit helps us in our weakness, we do not know what we ought to pray for, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Did you know that when you get so down and discouraged that you don't even know how to pray, that the Holy Spirit is there praying for you in an admirable kinds of words to the Lord on your behalf? And finally. We can face trials with peace rather than fear come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest Jesus's take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I'm gentle and humble and hard and you will find rest for your souls.

I don't know if you came to this seminar session today because of September 11th. I don't know if you came because I have a relationship with you and you know me. I suspect that there are a lot of different reasons why all of you came today. But I do know this. There are some of you here who came because you're really hurting right now. And a group of this size, it's inevitable that there aren't a number of you in this group who are hurting right now.

You know, this is what Tori is for. I know I've done some kind of academic things here today with PowerPoint. And again, I want to tell you that my reason for doing it is that I wanted to impress you with how much God has to say about this subject. I totally agree with Alistair Begg and what he said this morning, almost a comment in passing. And that is if we think that we're going to impress our world around with the Jesus that keeps us happy all the time, I forget the words you use.

What did he say? You've got rocks in your head. I might even want to say it's stronger. We're living in a time.

And I don't mean just since September 11th, but we're living in a time when the real need is to have a theology of real life, of life the way it is.

And I know that there is the life to come, but we live in a sinful world where bad things happen to even good people. And for some of them, it makes them bitter and for others it makes them better. I want to ask you, do you have a monitor of your life right now that is making you bitter or God is far away from you? This is what Torrey is all about. Tor is a time to really think about Christian life issues and where you are with the Lord and maybe even some of the stumbling blocks that are in your way right now.

I want to offer something to you. I have no schedules. I have no agenda here. I'm going to let you go. But if any of you want to stay after just to pray together, I would consider a privilege to do that. And I don't maybe you have to move out right from here. But sometime during the next couple of days, if you'd like to come and just pray with someone, I would be happy to do that with you.

I would be happy to talk with you, too. I'm not asking you to come in for counseling or anything like that.

I simply want to be available to you because I really care about this. And you know something? I really care that one of the greatest devices that Satan has to trip us up in our Christian walk is to discourage us when we're going through difficult times. Christ gives us so many resources and he gives us a peace that surpasses all human understanding. I want to invite you to just be with me in prayer, just in the silence where you are right now.

Would you take a moment just to come before the Lord if there's not an issue in your life, a struggle right now? Just thank God for that. How exciting. But if there is and if something that has been said here today has caused you to want to bring that back to the Lord, would you do that in just a few quiet moments right now? And then I'm going to close in prayer. Father, you know our hearts. You know that we struggle in some areas.

I want to thank you today that your words speak so clearly as to how we are to handle and face the difficult times of life. I pray, Lord, that you may equip us, those of us who perhaps don't have any immediate pressures, that you will equip us to be able to face those maturely in the future.

But for many of us here, Lord, it may be that right now we're in the midst of this. We pray for your wisdom, the.

We also pray for your peace and your contentment and your assurance that you are at work. Father, thank you for your time together today and for these days of Torrey, which allow us to think about important issues and areas of our lives that that are part of our work with you. I pray for my brothers and sisters here, as I do for myself, Lord, that we may humbly walk before you, that we may obey your word, and that your spirit may work within our hearts.

In Jesus name. We pray that.