

Women Caring for Women: Introduction
CBC Sunday School
October 5, 2025

Discussion question: What's something you always wanted but never got?

1. What is lost?

- a. What we lost in the Fall is the center of all our sorrow
 - i. Loss of perfection: spiritual, physical, emotional, relational
- b. The loss continues as we live in a world devoid of perfection

2. Where is God in the pain?

- a. He sees our pain (Hagar, Hannah, Leah)
- b. He hears us - Lament (Ps 42:9-10)
 - i. There is a temptation to shy away from the pain, to cover up the sensation. But - just as the Bible models for us - working through grief to healing means we must confront the pain, feel it, and name it.
 - ii. Is it okay to complain to God?
 - 1. Lament - telling God you don't like what he's doing
 - 2. Murmuring - telling others you don't like what God is doing
- c. He is grieved with us
 - i. Jesus grieved Lazarus' death not because he couldn't do anything about it, but because – like us when we grieve – he was resisting the fall. This is not the way it's supposed to be. (John 11)
 - ii. Scripture tells us that grief is a gift - it is good for us to be confronted with death – literal and metaphorical – and be forced to think about eternity. (Eccl 7:2-4; Psalm 90:12)
- d. He is present with us in suffering (Isaiah 43:2)
 - i. Suffering is the symptom of losing good things in this world - and loss is the result of sin. Since sin will be present until Jesus makes all things new, we can expect suffering until then. (Psalm 34:19, Phil 1:29)
 - ii. He does not promise to take away the suffering, but he promises his presence. (Psalm 23:4)
- e. He uses suffering for our good
 - i. Suffering is one of God's methods of teaching us, suffering makes us pay attention (Job 5:17, Psalm 119:71)
 - ii. Suffering makes us more like Christ (2 Cor 4:8-10)
 - 1. Eliminating pain is only secondary. Our primary motivation for change is to grow as a disciple of Jesus.
 - iii. Suffering prepares us for eternity (2 Cor 4:17)
 - 1. "The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain." - Kahlil Gibran
- f. He sent His Son to suffer FOR us so that our suffering need only be temporary.
 - i. Jesus willingly suffered for us (Isaiah 53:3-4)
 - 1. "[At the cross] brutality is overtaken by beauty. Darkness is followed by light. Terrible, tragic loss becomes the source of glorious God-given

grace. The gospel is the most extraordinary reversal. The story of the cross offers an ultimate transformation that can speak to any and every trauma." Dr. Steve Midgley, *Understanding Trauma*, p 27

- ii. God's redemptive story is so much bigger than our life story
 - 1. "...a woman in pain is likely to focus on her story in trying to understand her hurtful situation. She assumes it is her story that gives life meaning, but her story taken alone makes no sense at all. **God has a story too.** It is God's story that gives our story meaning.... When we become willing to incorporate our story into his story, he enters ours in a way that empowers us to transcend our painful world... Women in pain also have the opportunity to contextualize their own story by entering God's story." Bev Hislop, *Shepherding Women in Pain*, p 55

3. What does healing look like?

- a. Reclaiming some of what was lost
 - i. Spiritual: Relationship with God restored through Jesus' sacrificial redemption
 - ii. Physical: Identity reclaimed as one made in God's image
 - 1. You have dignity, value and are loved by the Maker of the universe. Your value is given by God - not earned - and does not change. It is not defined by what has happened to you, what others think of you, what you think of yourself, or how you have been treated.
 - 2. Your body matters, even in its imperfect state it has value and purpose.
 - iii. Emotional: Accurate view of God and self – lies are swept aside by truth
 - iv. Relational: Able to view others Biblically, as broken images of God. Wisdom for relationships. Self control in our actions toward others. Forgiveness. Reconciliation.
- b. Aiming for wholeness/maturity, not perfection (James 1: 2–4, 1 Peter 1:6-7)
 - i. "The biblical picture of health is not one of perfection, but rather one of completeness or wholeness....Healing takes place in a world in which His kingdom is here, but His redemption is not yet complete." Bev Hislop, *Shepherding Women in Pain*, p 41-42
 - ii. We wait expectantly for a time when ALL THINGS will be made new (1 Pet 5:10, Rev 21:4)
- c. Reorientation - you will be different after experiencing a crisis
 - i. Paradigm for human change based on the Psalms (see note)
 - 1. Orientation – I know the questions and the answers. God is doing a good job of being God.
 - 2. Disorientation – I no longer know the questions or the answers. We can't even find God and we think His way of running the world has much to be desired.
 - 3. Reorientation – Now I see. I was asking the wrong question and now I see. This is a place of reshaping, or restructure. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the person's life may be the key to the openness of process and change.
 - ii. "The end goal is not simply the elimination of pain. Change in human responses, growth as a disciple of Jesus, and maturity of perspective are

some of the outcomes we are looking for. Eliminating pain is only secondary.”
 Bev Hislop, *Shepherding Women in Pain*, p 42

- d. Forgiving those who have hurt you
 - i. God commands us to forgive and his commands are always for our good!
 (Matt 18:21-35, Eph 4:31-32)
 - ii. What forgiveness is not:
 - 1. It is no big deal.
 - 2. Now everything will be as it was before.
 - 3. I will never have to think about this again.
 - 4. Welcome back into every area of my life (i.e. reconciliation)
 - 5. Well, that takes care of that.
 - 6. I can do it by myself.
 - iii. What forgiveness is:
 - 1. “Forgiveness means you no longer expect that person who injured you to owe you anything. You forgive the debt of the offender. This includes giving up the option of blaming the injurer for personal pain or injury...Forgiveness cuts the bond that held her to the offender and chooses to look ahead, not back.” Bev Hislop, *Shepherding Women in Pain*, p 34
 - 2. Forgiveness is strength
 - a. “Forgiving comes from a position of strength, not weakness. It changes people from objects of other people’s choices to people who create their own choices.” Bev Hislop, *Shepherding Women in Pain*, p 33
- e. Joy in suffering (Rom 5:3-4, Phil 3:8-11)
 - i. Finding joy will not change our circumstances. It changes our heart.
 (Habakkuk 3:17-18)
- f. Ability to comfort others in their pain (2 Cor 1:3-5)

4. What can comforters do?

- a. Listen...*as a learner!* Be slow to pass judgement or give advice.
 - i. “Faithful comfort and loving hope are always best communicated by those who have taken time to fully understand the sufferings of another.” Dr. Steve Midgley, *Understanding Trauma*, p 27
- a. Be humble (James 4:6)
 - i. Regularly confess your own sin
 - ii. Don’t take credit for your relative “goodness”
 - iii. Submerge yourself in God’s word - you’ll be confronted with the righteousness of God which highlights your own sin, your own undeservingness of forgiveness
 - iv. Be thankful-remembering that any good thing we have is from God and could be taken away
- b. Speak compassionately because someone around you is probably suffering silently
 - i. “The number of women suffering is astounding, and includes women who populate our local evangelical churches. Often their pain is hidden; women are fearful of being misunderstood or judged. Women are significantly affected emotionally by the quality of their interpersonal relationships. The risk of

- diminishing the quality of a relationship may be too great for a woman to reveal an emotionally painful trauma. The silence of women should not be interpreted as an absence of emotional pain.” -Bev Hislop
- ii. “We must be compassionate but not the kind of compassion that keeps us from telling the truth. We must be truthful but not the kind of truth that keeps us from being kind.” -Melissa Kruger
 - iii. Insensitive off-hand comments or jokes can communicate to someone that it’s not safe to open up to you
- c. Embrace Grace vs Shame
- i. Grace-filled system (taken from *Shepherding Women in Pain* by Bev Hislop, p 312)
 - 1. “What is real is more important than how things look. A grace-filled...church is a...place where a person’s outside can match her inside.”
 - 2. “People are acceptable and valuable because of God’s love and grace toward them.”
 - 3. “Feelings are valid and useful. They are a God-given means of expression and connection to others.”
 - ii. Shame-based system
 - 1. “In a shame based family system, members are given constant messages about themselves that something is wrong with them. Love is conditional and based on performance. Acceptance is earned by performing certain behaviors and avoiding others. *People* are not loved and accepted for who they *are* but for what they *do*. *Behavior* is all-important.” Bev Hislop
- d. Open your arms with warmth
- i. “The need to belong is at the heart of the human struggle. The community of believers gathered as the church is an ideal organism to embrace others who share the human struggle.” Bev Hislop
 - ii. “Beneath what culture calls psychological disorder is a soul crying out for what only community can provide.” Larry Crabb
- e. Care diligently for your own soul
- f. Pray - there is no limit to what God can do in a woman’s life, and it will strengthen your faith when you affirm your dependency on Him through prayer.
- g. Enlist professional help when needed

Recommended Resources:

Shepherding Women in Pain: Real Women, Real Issues and What You Need to Know to Help by Bev Hislop

Shepherding a Woman’s Heart: A New Model for Effective Ministry to Women by Beverly White Hislop

I’m Praying for You: 40 Days of Praying the Bible for Someone Who is Suffering by Nancy Guthrie

Note: The paradigm is from Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*