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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Looking Ahead - 11.17.2024 - At the Movies 2024

November 17, 2024

Have you struggled with hurt and pain? Of course! We all have. Unfortunately, it's part of the human condition.

The question is less about whether we'll encounter it, and more about what we will do with the hurt we've been handed. Our human nature is often to pretend it isn't happening and protect ourselves by building a wall to keep others out.

But God has a better vision and offers us a way to navigate the pain we experience.

1 Peter 5:7

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Today, consider how you handle hurt. Then respond to the following questions and reflect on how you can take steps toward freedom.

Discussion Questions:

Icebreaker: Share a time when something unexpectedly interrupted your plans.

What are some common responses to pain and hurt?

Read Job 5:11 and Isaiah 53:3. What do you learn about God? How do the verses encourage you to navigate your hurt differently?

What is one thing you can do this week to know God better and begin to dismantle the wall you have put up for the pain?

Who can you share this step with so they can walk alongside you?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the reminder that you understand the hurt and pain I am navigating. I don't have to traverse it alone. Instead of putting up walls and protecting myself, let me turn to you first knowing you love me and want to help bear my burden. Let me seek your protection instead. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Romans 1:20

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Today's post was written by Kelly Pagel, Director of the LivingItOut.

Take My Hand - At the Movies 2024

November 18, 2024

A few years ago, I found myself wrestling with a list of complaints I had brought to God, feeling weighed down by walls I knew needed to come down. Then, one particular night, I lit a candle and surrendered, letting God begin the work of breaking down those barriers.

Sometimes, pain causes us to put up walls, pretending everything is fine in order to protect our hearts and keep others out. Job, a man in the Bible who experienced all sorts of adversity, was lost in his grief and pain when he was reminded that safety comes on the other side of mourning.

Job 5:11 NIV

The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

This verse reminds us that God doesn't forget about us during our most difficult times. We are invited to climb into our father's arms so we can be lifted up.

This lesson was illustrated during week 3 of our *At the Movies* series. In the movie, *News of the World*, Johanna, a young girl who lost her family twice over, was found by Jefferson Kidd, a traveling news reader and storyteller. Burdened by his own unresolved pain, Kidd initially resisted the idea of taking Johanna in. But eventually, he faced his grief and tore down the walls he had built. Only then was he able to open his heart to the young girl. In the end, they were reunited and stronger, moving forward together as storytellers.

Just as Kidd had to work through his grief, God invites us to bring our pain to him. He understands our struggles.

Psalms 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

God is far bigger than disrupted plans, pain, and our complaints. He wants us to take his hand in our times of despair. We are encouraged to find safety in him. Then we can move forward from our grief and pain by stepping onto the journey God has for us, knowing he will be walking alongside us. We don't need to pretend with him or build walls. We can give him our grief and find comfort in his presence.

Questions:

Is there someone in your life whom you can trust with your story?

What do you do with the hurt you have been handed in life? Do you build walls around it or take it to God?

Next Steps:

Write down any past hurts or current struggles that trouble you. Perhaps light a candle to remind yourself of God's light in this dark place, pray, and give your grief and pain to God.

Pray over scripture, such as Psalm 46:1-3 or Psalm 91.

Prayer:

God, you are my refuge and strength, my ever-present help in trouble. I come before you, God, to find safety. I want to share all of my struggles with you. Help me to break down the barriers that keep you and others out. I don't want to keep pretending and protecting myself from letting others in. I pray you will take my hand today and lead me to safety. Amen.

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This post was written by Becca Roberts, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Despised and Rejected - At the Movies 2024

November 19, 2024

In seventh grade, I went through some pretty uncomfortable middle school drama. Between misunderstood comments and high-strung teenage emotions, I thought my friends no longer wanted to hang out with me. Yet even when I felt betrayed by my friends, Jesus was present with me through every moment.

Jesus promises his presence to all of his followers. He isn't distant in our pain and struggles; he understands exactly what we are going through. Jesus came to earth as fully human as well as fully God. He endured pain on both physical and emotional levels during his time here.

In a prophecy about the Messiah, Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

Jesus knows what it is like to be deserted. Before he was crucified, all of his disciples ran away, afraid and full of doubts, rather than remaining faithful (Matthew 26:56). The people who had been chanting his name mere days earlier were, instead, calling for his death (Luke 23:18-25). Peter, one of his closest friends, denied Jesus after promising to stand at his side (Matthew 26:69-75).

All of us have rejected Jesus at some point in our lives. We have all betrayed him, choosing to listen to our desires or fears instead of him. Yet he still pursues us, giving his life to get us back.

Isaiah 53:6

All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

After Jesus rose from the dead, one of his first actions was to meet with the disciples who turned their backs on him, including Peter. He reminded them of his love, gave them a mission, and promised to be with them through the trials and heartache they would face. This promise extends to us as well, two thousand years later.

Jesus walks alongside us through our own struggles and pain, whether they are as complicated as friend drama or as heartbreaking as losing a loved one. He has been there before and meets us in the pain now. There is no amount of darkness or heartache we could go through that would push him away.

Questions:

What is something you are struggling with right now? Have you been through a challenging or painful time in the past? How has Jesus shown up for you in those times?

Next Steps:

Read all of Isaiah 53. Take some time to sit with it, and allow yourself to be awed by a God who would go through that pain for you.

Groups are a circle of people who will encourage you in your struggles. If you aren't part of one, make plans to step into Group life in January 2025 when our new Groups semester starts.

Prayer:

Father, you went through so much pain to get me back. I am awed by your love, by your determination, by your constant pursuit of me. Thank you for meeting me here, knowing exactly what I am going through, and walking alongside me. I love you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

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This post was written by Lydia Snyder, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Give It To God - At the Movies 2024

November 20, 2024

When we look back on past pain and hurt, it's easy to see how deeply it impacts us. Often, we feel the need to hide our hurt, building walls to protect ourselves from further harm. But pretending to be okay only buries our suffering deeper, masking the pain and forcing us into survival mode. As we share our story, we find healing and a purpose we never anticipated: helping others break free from the weight of hidden burdens. God uses our victories to empower others to find their own strength and healing.

Psalm 55:22

Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.

Psalm 55:22 invites us to bring our burdens to the Lord. These powerful words remind us we don't have to carry our pain alone. God never meant for us to walk through life pretending we're okay or protecting ourselves with walls. When we release our burdens to him, we open our hearts to his healing touch and allow him to move us forward. We are an example to others of the transformation that happens when we are connected to him and other Christ followers.

The urge to hide our struggles can feel overwhelming. We fear others won't understand our pain—or worse, that our vulnerabilities might be judged or dismissed. God assures us that he will sustain us when we entrust our burdens to him. He doesn't require perfection, only an open heart, willing to seek his guidance. As we bring our cares to him, we learn to let go of the shame, the doubt, and the need to carry it all by ourselves.

In my journey, I have discovered that purpose rises from our deepest wounds. By sharing my story, I've found that God not only heals but uses my pain to help others. Each time I choose to speak up, I step further into the purpose he's given me. My hope is in God. By releasing my burdens to him, I find the strength to turn my pain into purpose, inspiring others to do the same.

Let this be a reminder today: whatever weight you carry, you don't have to face it alone. Give your worries and cares to God, trusting that he loves you and will lead you forward, even through the pain.

Questions:

What burdens or pains have you been carrying alone, and how can you invite God into those areas of your life to find healing and purpose?

In what ways might God be calling you to use your own story or experiences to help others who are struggling? How can you take a small step toward sharing or supporting others in a meaningful way?

Next Steps:

1 Peter 5:7

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Using 1 Peter 5:7 as your guide, set aside 10 minutes each day this week to bring a specific worry, hurt, or burden to God in prayer. As you do, repeat this affirmation: “I release my worries and cares to God, knowing that he cares deeply for me.”

Write down what you shared with him in a journal, along with any thoughts or feelings that arise. At the end of the week, reflect on any changes you’ve noticed in your heart, mind, or perspective. This daily practice can help cultivate trust and the habit of surrendering your burdens to God.

Prayer:

Lord, I come to you with my burdens and lay them at your feet. I know I don't have to carry these alone, and I trust that you care for me deeply. Help me to release my fears, hurts, and doubts to you. Guide me as I seek your healing and purpose in my life. Show me how to use my experiences to help others find strength and hope in you. Thank you for your endless love and faithfulness. Amen.

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This post was written by Monique Myers, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

I Need a Band-Aid! - At the Movies 2024

November 21, 2024

What do you do when you are injured? If it's a cut, you stop the bleeding and apply a band-aid to protect it while it heals.

What about an emotional hurt? The loss of someone dear, or a betrayal by someone you trusted?

We have “band-aids” for those too, don't we? Sometimes we turn to alcohol, gaming, food, or binging Netflix to block the pain. Other times, we deny the pain and build walls to prevent future heartbreak. Instead of healing us, these walls only trap us inside and prevent us from making meaningful connections.

In the movie *News of the World*, we encounter two characters burdened by loss and sorrow. The Captain mourns the loss of his beloved wife, while Johanna has been deprived of the love and security of two families. Both have put up emotional walls to prevent themselves from getting hurt again. However, God created us to be in relationships with others. In order to build trust, we need to lower our walls, both in connection with other people and with God.

When we bring our hurt and pain to God, he brings healing. But just like our physical hurts, it doesn't happen overnight, especially if the wound is deep. As we lean into God during times of pain, we can trust him to share our losses and suffer with us during our injustices and abandonment. Jesus endured all of those things too.

Hebrews 4:15

This High Priest (Jesus) of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do..

Jesus knew betrayal, loss, and pain awaited him at the end of his earthly life, but he risked it anyway—because he loves us. His love brought victory for us.

Ultimately, Johanna and the Captain had to take a risk out of love too. Lowering their emotional walls opened them up to hurt again, but it also provided an opportunity to find new love and new hope.

When we open our hearts and trust in Jesus, that new love and new hope can never be taken from us, because his love and care for us is for eternity.

Psalm 17:7-8

⁷ Show me your unfailing love in wonderful ways. By your mighty power you rescue those who seek refuge from their enemies. ⁸ Guard me as you would guard your own eyes. Hide me in the shadow of your wings.

Questions:

Where do you go when you are hurt? Can you trust God with your pain?

Next Steps:

Denying our hurts is as silly as ignoring a broken arm. God knows all about it, but it always helps to acknowledge it, say it out loud, and write it down.

Search the Bible for verses that speak to your pain, and ask God to direct you toward finding freedom from it.

This will remind you that God understands your pain and help you determine your next steps. You may need to discuss the hurt you've experienced with someone, or even with the person who caused it. Sometimes, it's even necessary to take responsibility for your part in the situation.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I rest in the shadow of your wings. It is always there that I find shelter and protection. Because I love you, you will deliver me. You protect me because I know your name. When I call to you, you will answer me, and you will be with me in times of trouble. You will rescue me and honor me. You will satisfy me with long life. You will show me your salvation (Psalm 91). I trust you with my whole heart, knowing it is secure in your hands. In your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Devotional.

Shelter of the Most High - 11.22.2024 - At the Movies 2024

November 22, 2024

The path of hurt and pain can feel incredibly lonely, but God doesn't want that for us. Scripture offers a fantastic reminder of how close God is and how much he cares for us.

Today, begin memorizing Psalm 91. Verses 1-4 are listed below, but the entire psalm is worth reading and resting in.

Psalm 91:1-4

¹ *Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*

² *This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.*

³ *For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease.*

⁴ *He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.*

Prayer:

Lord, you are my refuge. You are my place of safety. Draw me close, protect me, and let me rest in you. In Jesus' name, amen.

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Today's post was written by Kelly Pagel, Director of the LivingItOut.

Reflections - 11.23.2024 - At the Movies 2024

November 23, 2024

Pain is a part of life, but God doesn't expect us to manage it alone. He loves us, protects us, and places people in our lives to help us through it.

Today, reflect on what Scripture teaches us regarding secrets. Review the verses highlighted this week, such as Job 5:11, Isaiah 53:3, or one of the other verses you encountered this week. Spend time carefully exploring each word, listening to what God wants to teach you.

Review the notes you captured over the past few days, and jot down any additional thoughts you may have.

Prayer:

Lord, as I deal with the hurt and pain in my life, help me to walk through it, remembering that you are right by my side. Place people in my life so I don't have to bear it on my own. I know you understand pain, Lord, as you gave your Son to die for me when I didn't deserve it. I praise you for your love. In Jesus' name, amen.

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