

COMING ALONGSIDE THE BROKEN AND BURDENED

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Sometimes we get front row seats to our people's deepest pain. And sometimes we stand there wishing we could magically produce a shield around them, or turn back time, or do literally anything to remove the agony. But we don't have that kind of power or authority, and the tricky truth is that lament ushers in comfort. Somehow lament dignifies loss. So how do we do this well?

I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." -- John 16:33

For those of you who are in proximity to the churning depths of tragedy, we can bear with one another and stay standing. Because we have been firmly planted. **Storms will rush in and we might bear the marks and evidences of heavy winds—but we can stand.** Maybe it's not even loss, it's just a very very hard assignment. Moses was given the task to hold up his arms during Joshua's first major battle with Israel's enemy, and guess what? He grew weary. The assignment didn't change, but his friends came up beside him and held up his arms. And we can come alongside our people and lift up their arms when they can't.

"As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset." — Exodus

17:11-13

I'm reading in Job right now, and someone recently pointed out to me the fact that when Satan was allowed full access to removing all of Job's blessings, he didn't remove Job's wife. I'm not totally sure why — but later on we see her prompting Job to curse God and die. Probably not a source of encouragement. We might have a front row seat to someone's pain, but let's be an Aaron and maybe not Job's wife.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." Romans 12:15

I think it's an honor to witness another person's life. And part of that honor is being present in pain. When you consider how vulnerable you are when you are lamenting, it's not likely everyone you know is invited into that. If you are an inner circle grief bearer, then simply mourning might be the greatest way to comfort and dignify the pain of your person. Grief and lament are biblical. Grief does not diminish trust. Jesus cried out in prayer on the night he was betrayed, not because of a failed belief, but his trust is what allowed him to go to his Father with his grief.

One of the things that stands out to me as I have seen a variety of people I love trudge through hard things is that **grief is expressed so differently from person to person**. And as we engage, what is dignifying to one person might feel crushing to another. So being quick to listen and slow to speak could benefit you both as you're learning what is most needed. Maybe they just want to play a game without talking. Maybe they need to take a walk or a grocery store run. Maybe sharing stories or listening to music is a relief. For the sake of loving our people well, let's continue on into the practical side of all of this. More to come.