



August
2017

The News

**For the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the
glory of the LORD as the waters
cover the sea.**

Habakkuk 2:14

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THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

Compiled by Pastor Rich McDermott

A good friend of mine, Pastor Glenn McDonald, recently gathered his thoughts and some quotations about the problem of suffering.

He wrote:

There is no more exasperating and wrenching human reality than suffering. It’s safe to say that “the problem of pain” has historically been the number one obstacle to trusting God. Theologian John Stott put it this way: “The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation. Its distribution and degree appear to be entirely random and therefore unfair. Sensitive spirits ask if it can possibly be reconciled with God’s justice and love.”

Is it possible to get God off the hook?

Here’s a collection of quotes - beginning with skeptics and moving toward people who have bet their lives that God’s existence and the world’s pain are not irreconcilable.

“Suffering is fatal to Christianity.” (Philosopher John Stuart Mill)

“If God exists, then he is the devil.” (Poet Charles Baudelaire)

“The only excuse for God is that he doesn’t exist.” (Author Marie-Henri Beyle Stendhal)

The universe has *“precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference.”*(Cambridge biologist Richard Dawkins)

“If God were small enough to be understood, he wouldn’t be big enough to be worshipped.” (Catholic mystic Evelyn Underhill)

“God is not nice. God is not an uncle. God is an earthquake.” (Rabbi Abraham Heschel)

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Jesus of Nazareth, on the cross)

“If you have a God great and transcendent enough to be mad at because he hasn’t stopped evil and suffering in the world, then you have (at the same moment) a God great and transcendent enough to have good reasons for allowing it to continue that you can’t know. Indeed, you can’t have it both ways.” (Protestant pastor Tim Keller)

“The only effective antidote to the wickedness around us is to live differently from this moment on.”
(Archbishop of Philadelphia Charles Chaput, concerning the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings)

“The Lord never seems to get there when you want him, but when he arrives he’s always right on time.”
(Essayist and social critic James Baldwin)

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (Theologian C.S. Lewis)

“You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.” (Joseph, the son of Jacob: Genesis 50:20)

“Is everything sad going to come untrue?” (Samwise Gamgee in *The Lord of the Rings*)

It’s worth noting that the Bible never presents what one might call ‘the answer’ to the problem of suffering. We encounter instead the Answerer: Jesus addresses pain and evil by taking it upon himself.

Is it possible to get God off the hook?

It’s clear that God has never had the least intention of cooperating with such a project.

Instead, God’s mysterious and unexpected answer to suffering is to *put himself on the hook* - on the cross, that is.

You may be hurting today. But whatever you are experiencing, God has already been there himself.

And his assurance is that you will never suffer apart from his presence, grace, and care.

As we consider the problem of suffering, let us also consider the unfathomable depths of the cross, and a concept that is becoming very foreign to our contemporary mindset: that is the concept of *redemptive* suffering. When we are teaching a child to walk, it is inevitable that the child will, at some moment, fall and skin his/her knee. And we hurt with them. (Genuine love entails suffering with others.) But we understand that this suffering is in the service of learning to walk. So, we may even encourage them to continue to try to walk even though another fall is surely on the way. The suffering they will endure is redemptive. It is in service of a greater good.

Christians believe that Jesus’ suffering at the cross redeemed the world, and paid the price for the sins of everyone. 1 John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

May we always remember Jesus’ sacrifice for the whole world, and how the Lord may be redeeming our suffering even now.

P.S. A young immigrant couple in our congregation is in need of a reliable used car. If you have a car that is not in use, and are flexible on your terms for purchase/use, please contact Pastor Rich.



FOLLOWING JESUS, TRANSFORMING LIFE

One helpful and simple definition of discipleship I have recently discovered is this: helping people learn to trust and follow Jesus. The biblical idea of following is not a passive activity. Yes, it requires acquiring information and learning at the feet of Jesus. But it doesn't stop there.

Early in the process of investing his life into his disciples, Jesus sent them on mission. No one went out alone. In Luke, when Jesus needed a colt to ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, he sent two disciples. He sent disciples out and debriefed with them when they returned. Following Jesus means learning to imitate Jesus. That can sound intimidating, I know. But I want to share with you one simple way you can practice this daily. This is what I do with my daily reading.

First, I ask: "What is Jesus saying to me in this passage?" (Head knowledge, information, good stuff)

Second, I ask: "What am I going to do about it?" This is the tougher question. So in my journal I write down my answers. Sometimes they are simple things I need to be reminded of. On July 18, my daily readings were: Psalm 56:1-10; Isaiah 38:1 through 40:5; and Philippians 1:12-22.

1: "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." - Philippians 1:21

2: "Smooth the uneven and rough places in my heart for the Lord." - Isaiah 40:3-4

That's it! One day by itself may not seem like much, but when done on a daily basis, we see something glorious begin to happen: Following Jesus, Transforming Life.

Live Forever,

Pastor Chris.

AN OPPORTUNITY—



- To be the first smiling face a visitor to our church office sees.
- To get to know and appreciate our staff members.
- To add to your knowledge of office skills.

If this seems interesting to you, please think about volunteering to serve as a receptionist in the church office. Please contact Lona Watkins at wbloblo@aol.com or 817-460-1372.

UPDATE ON THE SANCTUARY ORGAN REPAIRS

Dear First Presbyterian Congregation,



As some of you may know, in May, we had the swell engine of our Reuter pipe organ repaired.

A little background on organ terms: The pedalboard and keyboards of a pipe organ control different divisions of the pipes. The divisions have names like great, swell, choir, solo, echo, bombard, fanfare, etc. Our instrument has great, swell, and pedal divisions.

The swell “engine” is the component that allows me to display the expressive qualities of the pipes in the swell chamber (the ones behind the grill on the south side of the chancel). Controlled by a swell pedal/shoe, the mechanism operates like blinds opening and closing to allow more or less air volume to escape the chamber.

Our swell engine was in very poor condition, outlasting its expected lifetime. Garland Pipe Organs did the repair, transporting the engine to their shop in Fort Worth, rebuilding it, and reinstalling it in our swell chamber all in the same week. Thankfully, it was ready for the next Sunday morning worship service.

Moving forward, at some point we will have to re-leather several ranks (rows) of pipes. Re-leathering is something that has to be done every quarter century or so. We should also complete the 4-foot hautbois (oboe) stop in the swell division to make it at 8-foot pitch, and re-pitch the mixture on the great division down so that it is less shrill.

Thank you for your support of our pipe organ and music ministry.

Sincerely,
Josh Lang

NEWS FROM CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

PRESCHOOL SUNDAY SCHOOL

We will start our discussion of our wonderful world in week one with the land and the plants. God made the land and all the amazing things that grow in it. Children will have an opportunity to dig in the dirt and look at flowers. Investigating with all five of their senses helps preschoolers learn! Our story focus is God made the land and plants, and they are wonderful. The children will hear (some for the first time) that God made the very land they are standing on! God made every food that they eat and every flower that they see. Everywhere they look, they can see something that God made.

Not only did God make the land and plants, but He made the water and the sky too! In week two, preschoolers will have opportunities to investigate water and talk about the seasons that are determined by the sun in the sky. This week's story focus is God made the water and sky, and they are wonderful. Every preschooler loves to play in water, but it may come as a surprise to them that God made all that water they love so much. This is also a great opportunity to introduce the concept that the sun is a star too and that it's so close to us that it determines our seasons. How awesome is God that He gave us the sun, the moon, and the stars!?



Week three is every preschooler’s favorite one. It’s time to talk about animals. They will have an awesome time mooing and quacking and oinking all while they learn about the amazing animals God made. The story focus this week is God made the animals, and they are wonderful. God made each and every animal unique and gave it certain characteristics to help it live. Giraffes have long necks so they can eat the leaves in the trees. Elephants have amazing noses to help them do a variety of

things. Help your preschoolers see the wonder of God’s creation as you share about the amazing animals He made.

In our final week of the month, we celebrate you and you and you. God made people! Isn’t that awesome? We’ll spend time looking in mirrors and talking about what makes each one of us different from the other. We’ll hop on the feet God gave us and clap the hands He created. This is an incredible week where we look each child in the eye and say, “God made YOU!”

The story focus for week four is God made people, and they are wonderful. People truly are God’s most wonderful creation. They were made to be in relationship with Him and given special qualities no other creation was given. We are able to love and care for one another. We are able to share God’s love with others. We are special because God made us that way.

ELEMENTARY SUNDAY SCHOOL

God is the all-powerful Creator of the universe. There is no one else who has the position or power of God. We can’t help but respond to Him with respect.

When it comes to people, everyone is important for two reasons: God made them in His image and Jesus died for them. That’s why respect is also a reflection of the character of Christ in us. When we see people like Jesus sees them, we can show everyone they matter to God.



RESPECT is a response to the character of God.

WEEK 1

Bottom Line: **Show respect to God because He’s in charge of everything.** Our respect begins and ends with how we respond to the all-powerful creator of the universe. Our respect for others flows from how we understand God’s power over the world.

WEEK 2

Bottom Line: **You respect God when you respect the people God made.** We pray that kids will start to see others like God sees them. All people are created in God's image and deserve our respect not because of what they've done or have but because of who they are.

WEEK 3

Bottom Line: **You respect God when you respect your parents.** Showing respect to our parents can be difficult, but it is something God wants us to do. Since God put us in our families, we pray that our kids will start to understand how respecting their parents is related to how they can show respect to God. And He can help us respect them even when it's difficult.

WEEK 4

Bottom Line: **You respect God when you respect the people He's put in charge.** We can't only respect people in charge because they have earned our respect. We should show them respect because God made them and God gave them their authority.

LUNCH, BASEBALL, SUMMER FUN – AUGUST 13

Sunday, August 13, we'll have youth, staff, and foster families from PCHAS at Sunday school, worship, and lunch before our 32nd annual Ranger outing.

Everyone is invited to have lunch with our guests, and if you want to see the 2:00 p.m. game with the Astros, we've got seats in the shade (Section 335, Rows 9 to 17). Tickets are \$25 each. For tickets, contact Bob Dawson at 214-415-5396 or Lew Johnson at 817-860-6327.



BELIZE MISSIONS - 2009 TO NOW

Next year, 2018, will mark 10 years of short-term mission from FPCA to the country of Belize. Now is the time to begin to form our team for March 2018. Is the Lord calling you to Belize? Contact Suzie McCoy (817-271-5995) if you are interested. Let's look at what the Lord has been doing with FPCA and Belize over the last nine years:

2009 - AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL MISSION AND THE COUNTRY OF BELIZE



The team experienced many different activities:

- Extended the classroom building for a school
- Stained an outreach building
- Taught special needs children to swim
- Visited orphanages/children's homes
- Fished with nets to catch and clean 10,000 fish
- Visited the women's sewing ministry in the prison
- Met Moises, a young boy with severe injuries who needed to get to the USA for medical care

2010 - AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH ENHANCEMENT SERVICES (YES) AND BELIZE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (BERT)

- Led worship and Bible study at YES
- Painted the administration building at YES
- Expanded an existing classroom building at YES
- Took a field trip to some Mayan ruins with YES
- Visited King's Children's Home
- Unloaded two shipping containers filled with items donated by West Texas A&M
- Participated in a worship service in the prison
- Scott and Jerry worked with BERT - training, teaching methods, and procedures



2011 - BEGINNING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YES

- Painted the YES classroom building we built in 2010
 - Did other fix-it projects around the property
 - Jim Cicherski began a relationship helping the cooks
 - Sewing, computers, and crafts with the students
- Led the girls in worship, shared the gospel, and began to build relationships with the girls and the staff at YES.
 - Visited with Moises and his family - taking the whole family to lunch and a visit to some Mayan ruins

2012 - LEARNING GOD'S TIMING

- Installed windows and painted at the YES Center for teen moms
- Mudded, sanded, primed and painted a new classroom building at YES (The projects were bigger than the time we had; someone else came behind and completed. Relationships are the focus, not a specific work project.)
- Taught dental hygiene, computer courses, crafts, and sewing - quilt patch project
- Visited Moises and his family and met with the principal of their school



2013 - INTRODUCTION TO 8-MILE

- Added new siding on craft building at YES
- Held daily worship, Bible study, and crafts at YES
- Set up Quickbooks for YES
- Worked with a youth group at 8-Mile to lead a day of children's games, kite making, Bible study, snacks, and fun, finishing with an evening worship with a bonfire and s'mores
- 8-Mile construction project - dug trenches, bent rebar, mixed concrete, and filled the trenches for the foundation of a storage and community building



2014 - WORKING WITH YES, 8-MILE AND MEETING PICKSTOCK ASSEMBLIES OF GOD



- Made kites and played games with children at 8-Mile
- Mixed concrete, built forms, filled the pillar forms
- Built floor beams and installed the first beam
- At YES, continued a week of worship, crafts, and computers. Sewing project involved creating praise flags.
- Witnessed three girls accept Christ!
- Worshiped with children of Pickstock Assemblies of God

2015 - CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP WITH YES, 8-MILE, AND PICKSTOCK

- Led games, worship, and scripture re-enactment with the kids in at 8-Mile
- At YES, dug a foundation and built the frame for a chicken coop
- Also led worship, Bible study, crafts, and sewing (Bible bags)





2016 - INTRODUCING RICH AND BETSY TO BELIZE

- Installed a 600-foot chain link fence with wooden posts at YES
- Led daily worship and Bible study
- Sewed, did crafts, taught juggling and kickball
- Visited the prison for a tour of the Christian facility
- Visited patients with the new hospice outreach in Belize

2017 - YES IN TRANSITION TO RESIDENTIAL

- Worked with teen moms from YES Center for Teen Moms
- Led daily worship, games, Bible study
- Did sewing (pillow cases) and crafts
- Held a computer programming class for teen moms
- The teen moms and their children joined us on the field trip
- Visited Moises and his family - the first in 4 years



Is Jesus calling you to join the team for 2018? Please prayerfully consider if you should be a part of this ministry.

BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION

FPCA is beginning a church-wide collection of Box Tops for Education to benefit Carter Junior High and Blanton Elementary. These labels can be found on the tops and sides of various General Mills packages. Each label is worth 10-cents for K-8 schools. You can turn them in at the orange "Box Tops" shoeboxes located in the church office and in the Fellowship Hall entrance hallway. Thanks for taking the time to save these labels to benefit our local schools!



THIS MONTH



Men's Bible Study

The Men's Bible Study group meets every Wednesday morning at 7:00 a.m. in the parlor. Men of all ages meet and enjoy great fellowship and a prayer session. All men are invited to join this study.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Monday Night Bible study is on summer hiatus. The next meeting will be on Monday, September 18, in the parlor.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

Men and women of all ages are invited to meet in the Bride's Room every Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m.

An icon for Music Ministries featuring a cross, a book, and musical notes, with the text "MUSIC MINISTRIES" in blue capital letters.

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Chancel Choir

This is the primary worship leadership ensemble for the 11:00 service. The choir also sings for special services around Christmas and Holy Week. It is more than just a great choir, it is a caring fellowship. Rehearsals are on Wednesdays from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. *Nursery care is provided during rehearsals.*

Ring of Praise Handbell Ensemble

This intergenerational handbell group rehearses Wednesday evenings from 6:15 until 7:15 p.m. If you are interested in ringing, please contact Russell Farnell (fpcamusic@yahoo.com or 817-274-8286).

Agape (Youth) Choir

During the school year, this group of youth in grades 6 to 12 meets on Sunday, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m., in the choir room.

Children's Music Ministries

The children's choirs meet Sundays, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., during the school year. Children ages 4 (when school starts) through grade 5 participate in activities including music/singing and bells/chimes, instruments, and listening activities. There are two sections, divided by age, and both participate in the 11:00 worship service twice per year, usually in December and April.



Deacon Meeting

Thursday, August 10, at 6:00 p.m., the Diaconate meets in the parlor to oversee the Congregational Care, Hospitality, and Fellowship ministries.

Team Meeting Night

Thursday, August 10, at 6:45 p.m., all teams meet for worship in the chapel with subsequent gathering into respective teams for ministry planning and coordination.

Session Meeting

Thursday, August 25, at 7:00 p.m., the Session meets in the parlor to oversee the ministry of the church. The work of the Diaconate, church administration, and all Discipleship, Worship, Facility Management, and Mission and Evangelism ministries will be discussed.

An icon for Discipleship featuring a cross, a book, and the text "DISCIPLESHIP" in blue capital letters.

DISCIPLESHIP

Library Team

The library team works the first Wednesday of each month, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Anyone interested is welcome. No particular skill is required, the work is easy, and we always have a good time as we process books to be added to our inventory. If you would like to be involved in library work but cannot come at that evening time, please contact Sandy Thomlinson and special daytime work sessions can be arranged.



Happy Quilters

This group meets Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. to quilt, sew, knit, crochet, embroider, and just enjoy being together. Bring your project and join in!

Saints Alive!

Church seniors will meet for a potluck lunch on Thursday, May 18, at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a casserole, salad, or dessert and enjoy a fun and interesting afternoon.

Contact Bev Koch (817-261-3202) for details.



First Presbyterian Church
1200 S. Collins Street
Arlington, TX 76010

Deadline for the September issue of The News is August 15!

PRAYER MINISTRY

Prayers for those with health and other concerns: Esther Albright, Yvonne Babb, Polly Baugh, Parker Bjornson, David Boice, Shirley Bragg, James (Andrew) Bridges, Crystal Castaneda, Jerry Colleps, Lee Carol Copeland, Laura Duffney, Tom and Bobbie Fowler, Lila Glenn, David Goff, A. Jack Gray, Dick Haney, Margery Harrand, Ken and Edna Harris, Elizabeth Harris, Bill Hayden, Andrew Hydock, Tim Karnes, Doyle Malone, Pat May, Jim McCoy, Allen Miller, J. Fred and Mary Ellen Miller, Kelly Miller, Pat Mingle, Barbara Mooers, Ruth Moore, Bill Olsen, Cosme Pacot, Dr. Darwin Peek, Jim L. Quick, Albert Ross, Eulabel Sheldon, Linda Smith, Al Smithson, Bob Spriggs, Brooks and Connie Taylor, Kyle Terwilliger, B. J. Thomas, Jerry Thomas, Allen Underwood, Donna Vickers, Jessica Villarreal, Karl Winter, Sherry Wolfe, Bernice Woods, and Mary Jane Wright.

Prayers for our family serving in the armed forces: Ben Boughton, Riley Curnutt, Austin Curran, Eric Dill, Jeff Grimes, Nathan Haerer, Damien King, Mike Mancini, Jack Murtha, Stephen O'Neil Sosa, Colin Peden, Jason Polk, Ryan Powell, Ryan Regalado, Christopher Young, and Robbie Wallace.

Pray for our homebound members.

Pray for those who do not know Christ!

Please contact Pastor Rich McDermott at the church office at 817-274-8286 or his cell phone: 970-218-3689. For questions about specific concerns listed above, please contact Juanice Young at juanicey@gmail.com or 817-794-5626.

