

FORMATIONS

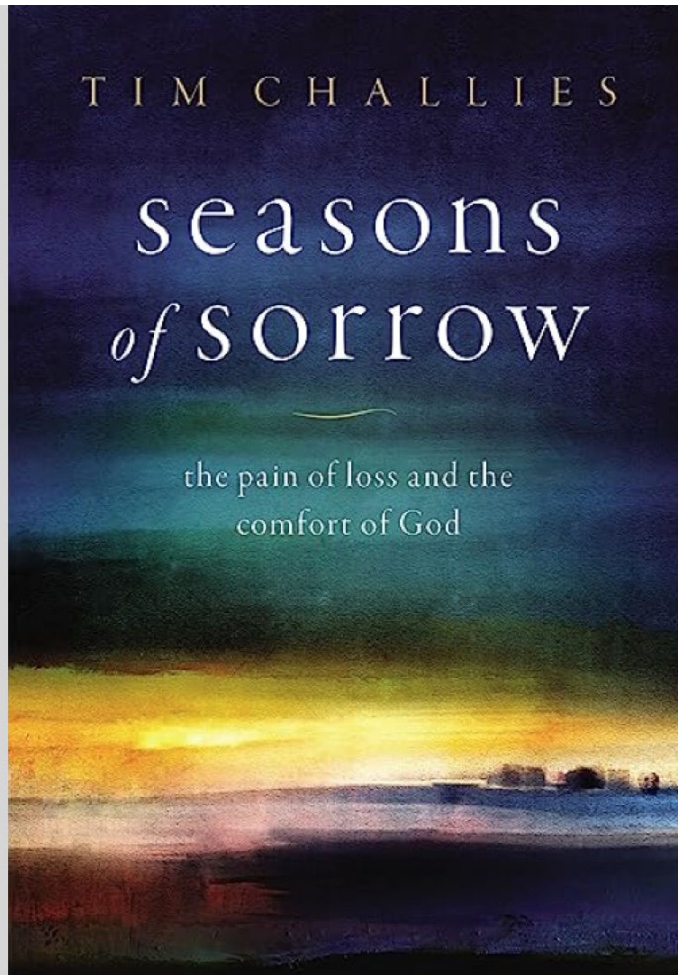
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS



TIM CHALLIES

seasons *of* SORROW

the pain of loss and the
comfort of God



“Though my eyes may have remained clear,
my mind has not. My heart has not. Everything
is muffled and distorted. Things that should be
easy are difficult.

“My memory is full of holes. I’ve lost the ability to make decisions. I’m lost, I’m confused, I’m discombobulated, I’m so very weary ...

“Yet even while all this is true, amid the death,
amid the grief, amid the sobs, I can sense
something arising, something swelling.

“Deep in the darkness, almost imperceptibly, something is stirring to life. It is a hope. It is a longing. It is a determination. Though my eyes are fixed on the dirt, my heart is fixed on Christ ...

“I may not be able to see the way I go, but I don’t need to, because my eye is fixed on the one who is guiding me there. He has given me every reason to trust him.

“He has given me every reason to have confidence that he will hold my course steady until the keel of this weather-beaten little boat has finally nudged against the shore of glory and I am home.”

Tim Challies

Tendency #1 - To judge the **character** of God by our **circumstances** rather than judge our **circumstances** by the **character** of God.

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Tendency #2 - To judge the character of God by what we think we would do **if we were** **God.**

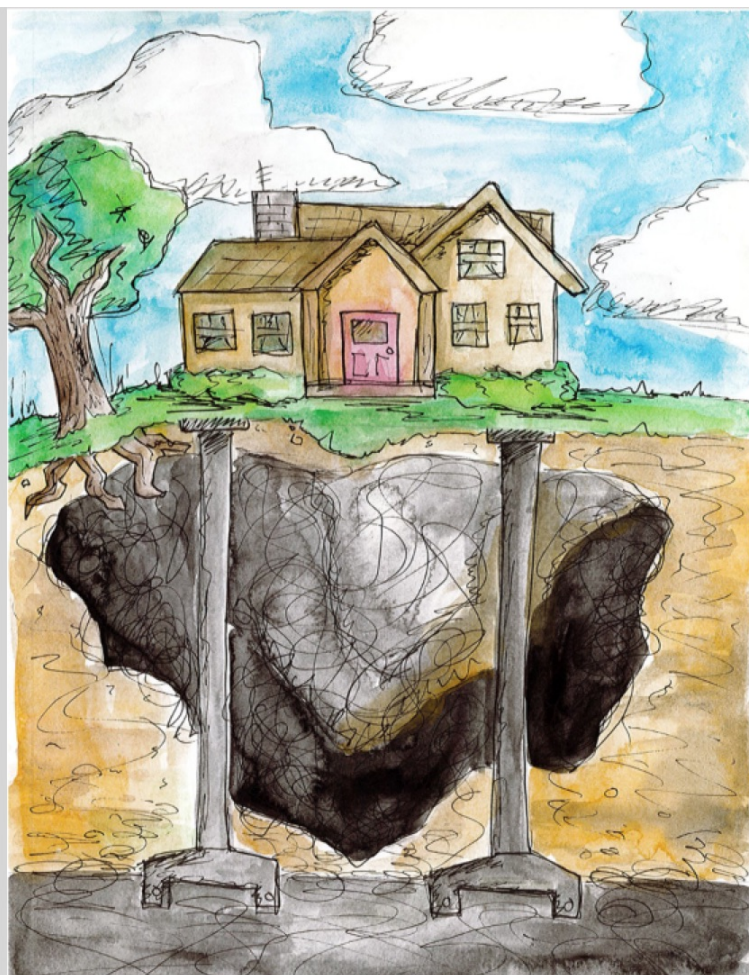
If God were really in control,
then _____

If God really loved me,
then _____

If God were really present,
then _____

If God were really good,
then _____







1. The providential **control** of the Lord over all things



“... we rejoice in [the midst of] our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame.”

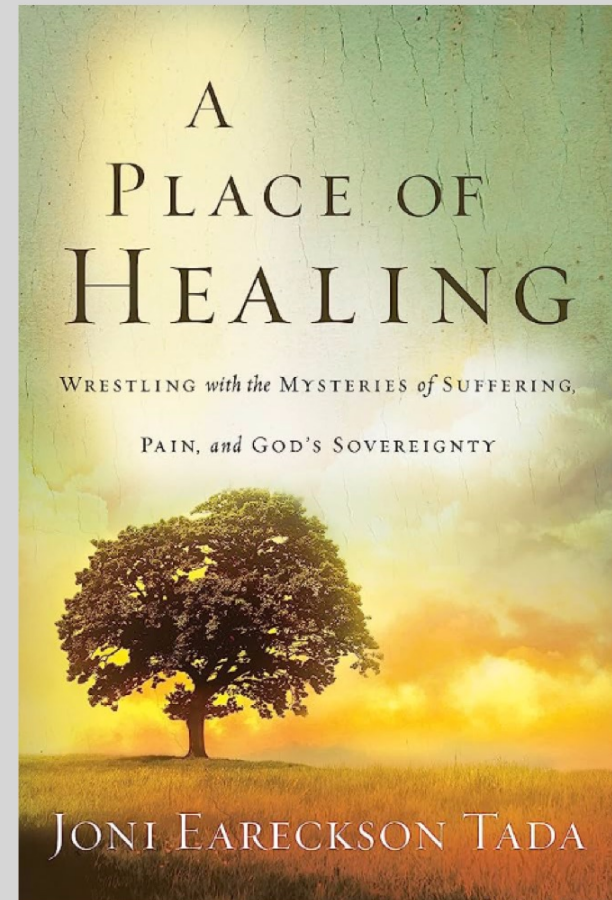
Romans 5:3b-5a



Joni Eareckson Tada



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“God bids me that I not only seek to accept it,
but to embrace it, knowing full well that
somewhere way down deep — in a secret
place I have yet to see — lies my highest good.

“Yes, I pray that my pain might be removed, that it might cease; but more so, I pray for the strength to bear it, the grace to benefit from it, and the devotion to offer it up to God as a sacrifice of praise.”

Joni Eareckson Tada

2. The personal **care** of the Lord over all things



“... and hope does not put us to shame,
because God’s love has been poured into our
hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been
given to us.”

Romans 5:5

“Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. My soul also is greatly troubled.

“But you, O LORD — how long? Turn, O LORD,
deliver my life; save me for the sake of your
steadfast love.”

Psalms 6:2-4

“How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?”

Psalm 13:1-2a

“But I have trusted in your steadfast love ...”

Psalm 13:5a

“My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, ‘My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD.’”

Lamentations 3:17-18

“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’”

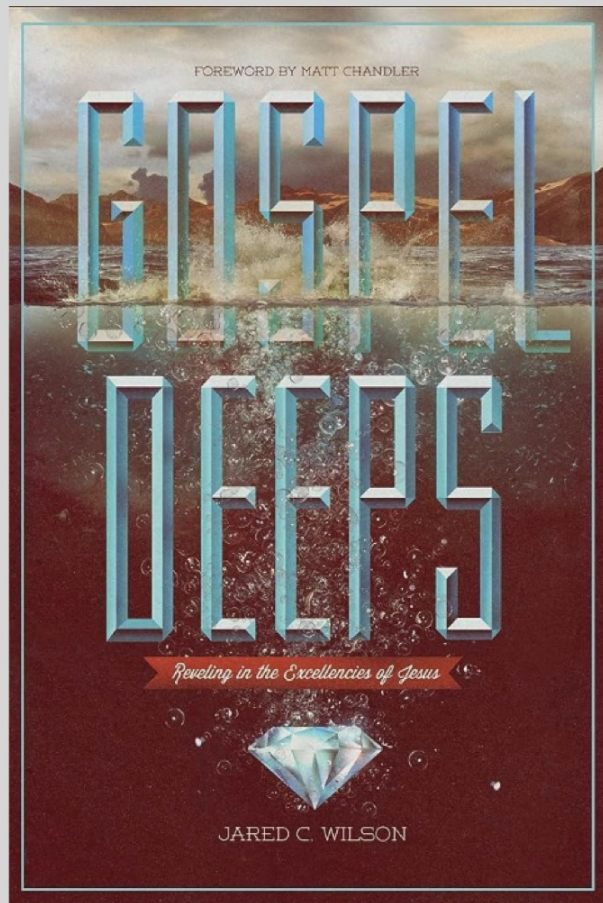
Lamentations 3:21-24

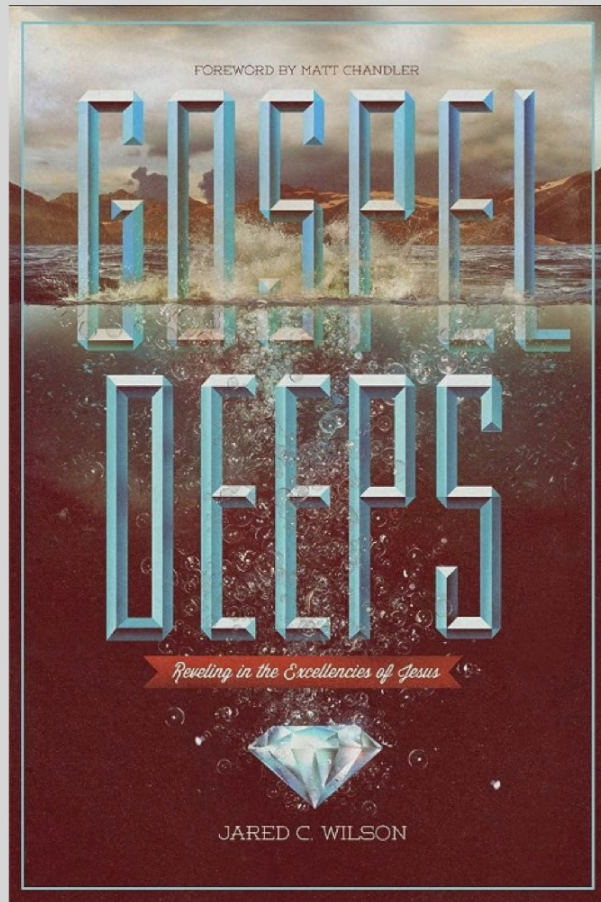
“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

Psalms 23:4

“He has chosen not to heal me, but to hold me. The more intense the pain, the closer His embrace.”

Joni Eareckson Tada





“The testimonies of the Bible about pain and suffering and the consequences of sin are not mathematical formulas for rational understanding.

“Instead they are constant proclamations about the God who rules and loves, and they are constant reminders to cast our care upon him.

“God wants us to hope in him. In other words, why is not the most fundamental human question when it comes to suffering.

“Even if we had all the answers to our whys, we might actually find them unsatisfying and ultimately unredemptive for the pain we are facing. A bigger question emerges.

“The most fundamental question, according to the Bible, is who. Who will we trust in the calamities and challenges of life? Who will we turn to in the reality of our pain? Who is worthy of our trust?”

Jud Wilhite



Vaneetha Rendall Risner



“I contracted polio long after it was supposedly eradicated. The doctor misdiagnosed my symptoms because she had never seen polio before.

“And the wrong diagnosis led to widespread paralysis and a childhood spent largely in hospitals, marked by painful surgeries.

“Over thirty years later, my infant son died because the substitute doctor was unfamiliar with his heart condition. The doctor took him off his life-saving medicine. Within two days, my son was gone.

“How could I possibly reconcile these losses?
They were unspeakable. Preventable.
Unexpected. And in the face of such
catastrophes, my natural question was ‘Why?’
Why did this happen? If God was in control,
why did he allow it? Why didn’t he stop it?

“I was certain that if I had an explanation for my trials, if I could understand God’s purposes in them, if I just had a reason, then I could have accepted my losses with more grace.

“Not knowing why, having to trust God in a senseless situation — when the world feels like it has exploded, and we are left picking up the splintered fragments of our life — seems impossible.

“God is asking the unthinkable. To trust him in the dark. To accept his will when we don’t understand. To submit to his sovereignty in the midst of uncertainty.

“To believe he has a purpose when nothing makes sense. Unthinkable as it is, God keeps asking me to trust him.

“The process of relinquishing my demand to understand is what freed me. While I thought that freedom would be found in answers, true freedom was actually found in surrender.

“I didn’t need to figure it out. It didn’t need to make sense to me. I didn’t need to understand the details. I just needed to trust God. Trust him because he is infinitely wiser, more loving, and more purposeful than I am.

“There is always a ‘why’ to our pain. We may never understand it in this life, but this we can know: As we surrender our questions to him, God will answer us with nothing less than himself.”

Vaneetha Rendall Risner