

Wounded by Shattered Dreams and Dashed Hopes

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Mended
The Book of Job

How many of you know this woman?

Simone Biles pic

It's hard not to know Simone Biles. She won five Olympic medals, four of them gold in Rio. Especially if you're here in Central Ohio, you need to know Simone since she's a Columbus girl. We just produce winners. I love the fact that she's been raised by her grandparents who have apparently done an amazing job. They are an inspiration to every grandparent raising a grandchild.

How many of you know this woman?

Charlotte Drury pic

I bet almost none of you do. She spent nearly seven years preparing for the Rio Olympics. It's not even clear if she watched the games. You see, Charlotte Drury was supposed to represent the United States as our top trampoline gymnast. At the US Olympic trials, the first thing she did is look up at the ceiling where there were red, white and blue balloons ready to fall on the winner of the competition. She thought, "I'm going to do everything I can to make sure those balloons are mine! To make sure those balloons fall on me."

While she was warming up as she had done thousands of times before, she drifted left away from the center of the trampoline. She remembered the top lesson in the sport is to fall correctly. Tuck your arms in, get both feet on the same surface, and try to balance your weight. She checked all the boxes, but her right foot clipped the trampoline's padded frame while her left foot slipped off of it entirely. She went to the hospital where her right foot swelled up and her mother came in with the news, "Your foot is broken and you're not going to Rio." The first thing Charlotte said was, "Mom, those balloons were supposed to be for me."

Have you ever dreamed of having something for years only to have your dreams shattered? Have you ever loved something or someone so intensely in then have them taken away from you?

There's a woman in our congregation named Jennifer. She grew up in a Christian family, in her final year of medical school she met a Christian man at her church. They married after a long engagement and moved to England. Her husband was a loving father, a senior consultant at Microsoft, an Elder in the church, actively preaching in the church, and they had two beautiful daughters. She was finishing training in pediatrics in London. They had a perfect life.

Then on the evening of November 11, 2010, their perfect life was shattered. While they were sleeping, the refrigerator which had been working perfectly caught fire on its own because it was defectively made. Jennifer woke up to find the house filled with smoke, fire spread to the stairwell. Here's what Jennifer says:

We as parents did what any parent would do to get our children to safety. I handed my 3-month old daughter Rachel to two strangers. My husband placed Anna, my older daughter who was three years at the time, onto a flat glass roof over our conservatory. We both succumbed to the smoke and had passed out by the time the rescue teams arrived. My husband went to be with the Lord and I was in a coma for two weeks in an ICU. God miraculously healed me.

When doctors treating me told the hospital that looked after my girls that I will not survive, my little girls were to be adopted and had an emergency foster care parent allocated to them. The doctors gave my parents a 50% chance of my survival with at least two months on the ventilator.

Jennifer walked out of the ICU. But she walked out without her husband. Have you ever wondered why God allows some tragic events to happen to you or to someone you love? A freak accident. An illness. An act of violence. Or perhaps, have you ever wondered why God wasn't answering one of your prayers? A prayer for healing for yourself or a loved one. Or some prayer for another blessing like a job or a marriage or a baby.

A few weeks ago, I started a series that I titled, "Mended". Talking about the various ways that we can be wounded. A few weeks ago, I talked about how in this broken and sinful world we can be wounded by church. Last week, I had a message on forgiveness. I talked about how we can be wounded by our relationships. Today, my message is titled, "Wounded by Shattered Dreams and Dashed Hopes."

Let's pray.

How many of you have moved in the last three years? Or downsized? One of the things that we almost always do when we're moving is decide what am I going to keep and what do I need to throw out or give away? Over time we just store so much stuff. And you think to yourself when you're moving, do I really need to keep my kids' broken

toys? Especially since they've grown way past using them? Do I really need a bag full of mildewing old stuffed animals? Or books from my childhood that no one will ever read? Do I need to keep this camping gear when I know I will never go tent camping again? What do I need to get rid of?

As we consider this topic of shattered dreams and dashed hopes, I want to begin by speaking about the myths that we need to get rid of.

Myths that we need to get rid of

There are myths about life that we need to throw out if we ever hope to move on from the experience of shattered dreams and dashed hopes. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11 says this:

1 Corinthians 13:11

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

How many childish myths do you and I live with that are entirely inconsistent with reality? I know my two favorite myths are these:

1. Life will contain no surprise or shocks for me.
2. Everything will go according to my plan.

When I wake up in the morning, I already have a plan for my day. My plan never includes an accident, a sudden crisis or any really bad news at all. One of my favorite childish myths is that the Lord would say to me on January 1 of each year, "Rich, my dear son, this next year will bring no unexpected tragedies or any crises or disappointments to your life. You have a 12 month pass to comfortably move through life. A free trip around the board. You'll be able to collect your \$200 as you're passing go. And, one more thing, Rich, I'm going to keep pain not only far from you, but far from anyone you might know and love.

Childish myths. If you play by the rules, you will prosper and be blessed. If you violate God's rules, you will immediately be punished.

The Book of Job, in the Old Testament, sweeps away all of our childish myths about how good people and people we love will always be safe and protected. All the myths about how we will never be shocked. Nothing will ever intrude on our happy little world. Our dreams will always be fulfilled and our hopes will never be dashed.

Here's what we read in Job 1:

Job 1:13

One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house

It was a day like every other day. Job probably woke up early in the morning to pray and to give thanks to God and to acknowledge God who is the one source of all that he had. It was a day like every other day. But on that day he lost everything. On that day suffering broke into his life and everything that he cared about was taken from him. On that day he lost his wealth, his health, and his children.

Fifteen years ago, September 11, 2001 was a day like that for America. It was a beautiful autumn day. People were grabbing newspapers and a cup of Starbucks on their way to work at the World Trade Center. And then there is sudden total and appalling devastation. Buildings are destroyed. The sun is blotted out and filled with dark clouds of smoke and dust and ash. Thousands of New Yorkers are horribly murdered. Life around the world is drastically altered. And the weeks that followed are filled with funerals and grief and questioning how could God have done this?

One day. A day like every other day. The thing about pain and suffering is that it often comes so suddenly, so utterly unannounced. It is so disorienting. It is so dislocating. It leaves you with a feeling of vulnerability and helplessness. We human beings desire at least the illusion that there is a predictable order to life. If you keep your nose clean and you try to be a good person and you trust God everything will be okay for you and for the people you love.

We think in America that we want freedom, but like every other human being, we really want a world of order and security. We cry out like children awakening from a nightmare and we just want someone – our mom or dad, some politician – to put their arms around us and say, “It’s okay, honey. Everything is going to be all right. I will fix this” It is this sense of order, this sense of rationality that pain and suffering so disrupt.

We almost instinctively try to get some rationality back into this world and the first thing we say is, “If only...”

We can't live with the thought that the world may not be working along a sane or orderly or just direction. And so we try to grab control. We try to put order back in. We say, “If only I hadn't stayed at the gas station for five extra minutes, we wouldn't have been coming over the hill when that drunk driver hit us. We would have missed him entirely.”

If only...

How many of you have had that thought following the death of a loved one? My wife, Marlene's, dad was in the hospital a few years ago. He had been ill for about six months. His health had taken an upturn. He was recovering nicely. We went to visit him and had a great talk. Marlene and I decided to go to a national board meeting for the Vineyard. Before she left she hugged and kissed her dad and said, "Dad, I'll see you next week." He said, "I'll see you next week." Flying back to Columbus the next week, we changed planes in Charlotte. And while we were in the airport we got the call, "Marlene, your dad just died."

If only we hadn't gone on that trip, we could have been there in the last moments of his life. If only we had paid better attention that he wasn't, in fact, improving.

What are the childish myths that we need to throw out if we're going to be mended from an experience of a shattered dream or a dashed hope? The first one that I want to mention is

If only God would make himself more evident then...

You know, when we are really struggling with our faith and cry out to God, "God, if you would just show up! If you would make yourself more evident, then I would believe and follow you. If you would just miraculously totally heal me or my child this one time that I would surrender my whole life to you."

I remember going through a crisis in my Christian faith while I was in college. Marlene and I were up at a Christian summer camp and I took a walk at night. I was struggling to believe in my new-found Christian faith. I remember looking up at the sky. The camp was way off in the country. The sky was really dark and full of stars. I said to the Lord, "Lord, please just send a shooting star. Send one star across the sky and then I'll know you are there. And I'll believe and follow you." I stared up at the sky for the longest period of time as I begged God to send a shooting star across the sky, and you know what the Lord did? Nothing. There were no shooting stars.

We think, "Lord, just yourself more evident. That will get me through this crisis, that will help me to continue to follow you." But is that really true? If God made myself really evident, really obvious one time in your life, then you would be faithful and follow him? Really? Think back, friends, to the Old Testament Children of Israel. As one writer put it,

The Children of Israel are like every other human being only more so.

The story of Israel is like a magnifying glass describing what we're all like. Did God make himself evident to the children of Israel? As Sarah Palin says, "You betcha!"

God split the Red Sea. The Israelites walked through as if on dry ground while their pursuers were drowned as the sea closed over them. If that wasn't enough, God fed them with manna falling from the sky. And then they get to Mount Sinai and the mountain is shifting and quaking and there's fire on top of the mountain. You think God is making himself evident enough? When their leader, Moses, comes down from Mount Sinai carrying the Ten Commandments, what does he see? He sees the Children of Israel dancing in worship around a golden calf.

Looking at the Old Testament, God making himself evident doesn't guarantee people's continued faithfulness or obedience to the Lord. You say, "Well, Rich, that's the Old Testament. Those folks didn't know Jesus."

What about Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends? Do you think he got to see God make himself evident through Jesus? You betcha. In fact, along with James and John, Peter saw Jesus transfigured on a mountain where the glory of God shone through Jesus so brightly that the disciples had to shield their eyes. Did that experience guarantee Peter's faithfulness? No. When crisis hit and Jesus was arrested, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

The truth is, friends, that it's simply not the case, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament or in our own lives, that if we had a certain experience that God made himself completely evident in "such-and-such" a way, then we would love and follow him.

Here's another childish myth that we need to get rid of:

If only God would answer this one prayer then...

You say, "All I want is this one thing. If God just answered this one prayer, I would be totally satisfied. God knows how much I always dreamed of getting married. If he would just let me get married. Or God knows that I've loved children since I was a little child. If you would just let me have a baby. If God would just heal me or someone I love, I would be totally satisfied."

But is that really true? If God just answered this one prayer, we would be totally satisfied? Of course that's not true. We don't just want a child. We want a healthy child after a series of miscarriages. We want a child who will grow up and easily make friends and not be picked on. We want a child who will not die when they are teenagers or young adults. We want a child who will grow up and be safe and not become an addict or go to jail. We always want something beyond what we're asking God for. We don't want to just get married – we want to have a happy marriage. We want a marriage to someone who will always be faithful to us, who will always love us, who we can always count on. They will not abuse us or be an addict.

See, we think that with every unanswered prayer or every tragedy we experience – God is on trial. God’s justice is on trial. God’s love is on trial. That was Job’s error in the book of Job. We cannot count on God to do whatever we want. This was the test presented to Job. In the Book of Job, God was on trial – Job believed and God had to prove himself. God’s love, God’s justice were on trial. Will God give me what I want? Job didn’t know that God wasn’t the one on trial. Job was on trial. And the trial boils down simply to this.

Job 1:9

“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied.

Satan says to God, “The only reason Job serves you at all is because you blessed him. Because you pay for your services. Job doesn’t love you. He’s just a hired hand. He’s just an employee. You take the blessing away from Job, he will have no faith.” So a trial was held for Job with the question: will Job continue to love God and serve even if God stops paying him. Job is a picture of all of us, particularly during times of disappointment and tragedy, shattered dreams and dashed hopes. Will you continue to love and serve God even if he doesn’t give you what you’ve been praying for? Do you love God because of what he pays you or do you love God because of who he is?

We say, “If only God would make himself more evident. If only God would answer this one prayer then.”

If only God would be fair then...

We all hold on fiercely to this childish myth that life should be fair because God is fair. We should only suffer if we’ve done something wrong. We should be blessed, life should work smoothly if we just follow the rules.

This is good solid biblical theology. We see this in the book of Proverbs. There is according to Proverbs an order to this world and if we violate the order, we destroy ourselves. If you violate the physical order by jumping off of a building, you will destroy yourself physically. If you violate the biological order by drinking too much or abusing drugs, or by having promiscuous sex, you can destroy yourself biologically. If you violate the relational order by being unkind to your spouse, or by having an affair, you will destroy your marriage. If you violate the spiritual order by neglecting your relationship with God, refusing to confess your sins, rejecting God’s offer of forgiveness through faith in his son Jesus Christ, you will destroy yourself spiritually. We see in the book of Proverbs that when you run your hand across the grain of the universe, you pick up splinters.

And then we come to the book of Job. Job suffered virtually everything a person could suffer. He suffered the loss of all of his possessions. His business has absolutely failed. He lost his reputation. Children and old people mocked him in his community. He lost of each his beloved sons and daughters. And Job, himself, was wracked with great physical pain – pain that plagued him from morning till night.

It is hard to conceive of worse suffering than the suffering of Job. How do we explain it? Job's so-called friends explained Job's suffering as being the deserved payment for Job's sins.

Look at Job 22:5-11:

Job 22:5-11

Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless? 6 You demanded security from your relatives for no reason; you stripped people of their clothing, leaving them naked. 7 You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, 8 though you were a powerful man, owning land— an honored man, living on it. 9 And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. 10 That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you, 11 why it is so dark you cannot see, and why a flood of water covers you.

His friends savage him with accusations. You are a wicked, evil man, that's why you are suffering and we know this because God is fair therefore life is fair.

The problem with this analysis of Job's condition is that these accusations are all false. Job was not an evil man. Job did not mistreat the poor or send the hungry away empty. Job was a good man. We see that in the very first verse of the book of Job where we read:

Job 1:1

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

He lived the Proverbs life of wisdom – fearing God and shunning evil.

Not only does the author of the book of Job tell us that Job was good, but God himself says Job is a good man. Look at Job 1:8:

Job 1:8

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

Yes, the book of Proverbs offers us general principles of life, that life goes better for you, if you obey God's law than if you don't. As a general rule, hard work leads to success, and as a general rule, if we sin, we'll get it in the neck.

But not always. People don't always get what they deserve. Do you think that the bank executives and Wall Street brokerage firms that helped to plunge our world into a global recession from which many people have still not recovered got what they deserved? Especially when their companies were bailed out when many of them walked away with millions and millions of dollars in buy-out packages. And one of them went to prison.

Philip Yancey, in his wonderful book, *Disappointment with God*, tells a story about a man named Doug who could be considered righteous. He was a good man. He left his career in psycho-therapy to start an urban ministry to work with people in the inner city who didn't have counseling services.

And then one day, a day like any other day, his wife discovered a lump in her breast and the trouble began. Surgeons removed the breast, but the cancer spread to her lungs. She suffered from the effects of chemo. She lost her hair, she couldn't hold down any food.

And then one night in the midst of the crisis, as Doug was driving back down a city street with his wife and 12-year old daughter, a drunk driver swerved across the center lane and smashed head-on into their car. Doug's wife was badly shaken, but she was otherwise unharmed. His daughter suffered from a broken arm, but Doug received the worst injury of all – a massive blow to the head.

As a result of that massive blow, Doug suffers from crippling headaches. Worst of all, the head injury affected his vision and he now suffers from double vision. He can't read more than a page or two at a time. Doug always loved to read. That's the book of Job.

When Yancey asked Doug, "What did you learn? Weren't you disappointed with how God treated you?"

Doug said, "You know what? I actually have not felt disappointment with God."

The reason is this. I learned, first through my wife's illness and then especially through the accident, not to confuse God with life. I'm no stoic. I am as upset about what happened to me as anyone could be. I feel freedom to curse the unfairness of life and to vent all my grief and anger. But I feel that God feels the same way about that accident – grieved and angry. I don't blame him for what happened. I have learned to see beyond the physical reality in this world to the spiritual reality. We tend to think, "Life should be fair because God is fair." But God is not life. And if I

confuse God with the physical reality of life – by expecting constant good health, for example - then I set myself up for a crashing disappointment.

Friend, do you confuse what life is like with what God is like? We cannot confuse God with our lives. Life in this world is not working according to God's design. The world is fallen and broken, but because God sent his Son Jesus into the world to bring salvation, this world is in the process of being mended.

When we move from one place to another, there are things we need to throw out. And when we want to move on from deep disappointment, from shattered dreams and dashed hopes, there are some childish myths we need to get rid of, we need to throw out. But with every move, there are things we need to hold on to. If you want to move on after deep disappointment, there are truths we need to hold on to.

Truths we need to hold on to

What do we need to continue to hold on to especially during crises? Especially after we experience some kind of trauma? Especially when we're struggling? Because life is not turning out the way we hoped it would. There are truths we need to hold on to. We need to:

Continue to believe in God's Word

You know, so many people today pick and choose what they are going to accept or reject in the Bible. They say, "I love Jesus, but I just can't go along with what the Bible teaches about forgiveness or I don't like what the Bible says about loving everyone – even foreigners who have a different religion than me. I like this business of not judging. I just can't buy what the Bible says about divorce." The pick and choose method will never get you through deep disappointment with what has happened in your life or in the life of someone you love.

The principle upon which Jesus staked his life was his submission to Holy Scripture. I'm told that there are 1800 verses of Jesus' actual words in the New Testament. 1800 verses. If you have a red-letter Bible you can count them up. 1800. Of these 10% or 180 verses are scripture quotations from the Old Testament. Jesus frequently says, "It is written."

Let me put it this way. To say that you are a follower of Jesus, but you disagree with Jesus' approach to the Bible is to deny the very principle upon which Jesus based his life. It would be like saying, "I agree with Rich on most things, but I just don't get this Christianity that he is into. I personally think that it doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you are a decent person. And I don't think it really matters what you believe about Jesus – whether he died on a cross for sin, or rose from the dead. But, otherwise,

apart from that, I really agree with Rich on the whole way that he thinks about life.” I would respond and say, “You don’t understand me at all!” The entire basis on which I have staked my life – the way that Marlene and I have arranged our marriage, the way the we arrange our finances, my career choice and what I do in the morning, what I do during the day, what I do in the evening, my friendships, my choices, my future – it is all rooted, it is all staked on my view of Jesus!

So to say that I’m a follower of Jesus and deny the principle of his life which was his confident embrace of the whole of scripture is to simply conjure up a Jesus of your own imagination. It is simply the crudest form of idolatry which is always about re-making God in our own image. To continue to believe even if your dreams have been shattered requires you to follow the real Jesus’ approach to the Bible.

Jesus staked his life on what God said in scripture.

Let me make this really practical. At the depth of Jesus’ sorrow and suffering, he quoted scripture. While he was on the cross, we read in John 19:28:

John 19:28 (NIV)

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.”

Why did he say, “I am thirsty?” To fulfill scripture.

In Luke 18:31, Jesus is going to Jerusalem. Why did he go to Jerusalem?

Slide Luke 18:31 (NIV)

Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.”

And in Luke 23:27-30 here’s Jesus carrying the cross. He sees women and quotes scripture to them:

Luke 23:27–30 (NIV)

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then “they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” ’

Jesus based his entire life on scripture. Being mended from shattered dreams requires us to do the same thing. Notice that when Jesus was facing the hour of his greatest

need, when he was suffering, when he was overwhelmed, when he couldn't possibly move forward in his human strength – when he faced the cross and when he was hanging on the cross, what does Jesus rely on? He relied on scripture. Over and over, especially as he approached the cross, Jesus quoted scripture.

When you are at bottom, friend, when you are facing your own cross, when you are out of resource, when your world is collapsing, when you suffer another miscarriage, when your marriage is collapsing, when you face severe health problems, or a terrible car accident, or cancer, or financial problems, when you are overwhelmed – you are out of work, your daughter is pregnant out of wedlock, your son is in prison, your family members are using drugs, you are wrestling with a problem, life is going entirely in the wrong direction and you have reached the end of your rope and at the end of your wisdom, how do you find faith? How do you keep going? You hold onto Scripture. In Scripture I find God. In Scripture I find God's forgiveness. Here is God's coming kingdom. I might not be able to feel anything right now, or experience anything right now, but I am relying on the Word of God.

Friends, I tell you in good times feed yourself with Scripture so that in bad times when you are squeezed and pressured and at the end of your rope, what comes out of you is the Scripture.

Do you remember the story that I told you before about a woman named Jennifer who lost her husband in a fire? She sent me her testimony and what was so striking about her testimony is that at every point when she was in despair, was struggling, it was God's Word, God's promises in scripture that got her through. Her letter to me was filled with Bible verses and what God had taught her through his Word. If you want to be mended from broken dreams and dashed hopes, you need to continue to believe in God's Word.

Here's the second thing. You need to continue to believe in God's Word. And if you are going to be able to move on from the experience of shattered dreams and dashed hopes, we need to

Continue to believe in God's Kingdom

In the book of Job, after Job has suffered so much and lost so much and complained so much and struggled so much, with great confession that's been turned into a song that we often sing at Easter:

Job 19:25-27

²⁵ I know that my redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand on the earth.

²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed,

yet in my flesh I will see God;
²⁷ I myself will see him
with my own eyes—I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

What is Job saying here? He's saying, "I will not be ultimately defeated! Justice will not be ultimately defeated! Love will not be ultimately defeated! The whole universe will not ultimately be defeated because God will not be ultimately defeated. All of life will end in joy. As the Psalmist says, "Sorrow may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

See, friends, the way to not recover from shattered dreams and dashed hopes, the way to not recover is to compare your life with the life of someone else. Don't compare your situation, whatever your situation is, to the situation of someone else. Don't do that. Because if you compare your lot in life with someone else's lot in life, you'll become bitter, you'll become envious, you'll be disappointed with God. Or you can be proud and say, "Look at how much better I'm doing than someone else."

The only way to move on from this deep disappointment is to compare your suffering now with the joy you're going to experience when Jesus returns. We Christians, we know, we don't have to get it all now.

David prays:

Psalm 17:14

By your hand save me from such people, LORD,
from those of this world whose reward is in this life.

He says to God, "Lord, I don't want to think the way everyone else in this world thinks. I don't want to think the way that everyone at my job thinks. I don't want to think the way that everyone at my school thinks. I don't want to think the way that everyone in my family thinks. I want to think differently, Lord. I want to think the way that someone who has a personal relationship with you thinks. Protect me, God, from the counsel and advice of other people who continually tell me that I better get mine right now because there's not going to be anything for me later on. Save me, Lord, from those who tell me that I will ultimately be defeated. That love will be ultimately defeated. That joy will be defeated. That if my dreams are shattered and my body doesn't work or my marriage ends then my life is over. Help me to believe, Lord, that it's only a matter of time before you come and mend me and everything else in this whole broken universe.

How do I get mended from wounds suffered from my shattered dreams and dashed hopes? I need to continue to believe in God's Word. I need to continue to believe in God's coming kingdom. And I need to:

Continue to believe in God's ultimate purposes

I started this message by saying, "I know what I want. I want life to be safe and predictable. I want everyone that I love and I care about to be protected. What I'd really like is for God to give me some formula, like the TV preachers promise, that if I do A and B and C, then D will always result.

Kids and grandkids will always be well. My finances will always increase. Those I love will always be healthy. My ministry will always multiply. I want a formula that will guarantee me success. The reason I want a formula and the reason you want a formula, the reason the whole world is a sucker for formulas is because that allows us to maintain an illusion of control. So long as you do these things, you'll always succeed.

But Christianity is not about formulas. Christianity is about having a personal relationship with an infinite God who is not subject to our control. He is an infinite God who doesn't explain himself to me or to you. I don't know why God allows terrible things to happen in this world. I do know that God can use whatever it is that we've gone through to achieve some good in this world.

So many of the ministries that we have in the church were started by people who themselves went through deep pain. Experiences of profound failure and humiliation. Every Monday night, dozens of men from all over the city gather here at Vineyard Columbus to be healed of a variety of sexual addictions in a group called 180. That 180 ministry was started by a former Baptist pastor who himself lost his ministry and almost lost his family because of his own sexual sin. God took the broken pieces of his life and brought good out of it. Help and healing for hundreds of other men.

Our Body Builders ministry, which is a ministry to young people with developmental disabilities – on the autism spectrum, was started by Deb Peterman. She experienced the challenge of having a brother who was severely developmentally disabled. Out of that pain, she's brought hope, she's brought Christ to hundreds of young people over the last two decades.

Let me close with this story because I want you to believe that God has an ultimate purpose in whatever it is that you go through. This story is from a woman in our congregation named Sher because no one's life is totally hopeless.

I was divorced from an abusive man who told me to look over my shoulder for the rest of my life because when I least expected it, he would kill me. I became bitter, angry and

for years I was scared for my life. I came to Columbus, became a ballroom dancer and had my own studio for many years.

In a short amount of time, I was brutally attacked in my home, mugged outside my studio and while driving on I-71 I passed out from heat stroke on a busy Sunday afternoon and crossed 4 lanes of traffic, totaling my car. I was audited by the IRS twice and my business, which was my baby, started failing. I also attracted more men who were abusive. With no kids and no purpose in my life, I was a hot mess and went into a deep depression. My life was HOPELESS! I took a large bottle of pills and said, "God, if you are real and you really have a purpose for my life, wake me up and I will follow you for the rest of my life."

When I woke up, I started looking for a church that allowed dancing. I wanted to bring people in the church that would not come for any other reason through social dance classes but I did not believe that anyone would let me do it until I cleaned up my act. Eighteen years ago, God brought me to Vineyard Columbus which was all about "Come as you are, and you will be loved" and I started working here in 1999. God brought a couple of amazing, godly women who really showed me the love of Jesus. One of the first things I remember Rich saying was to use your gifts to help others. I knew if I helped others I would not focus so much on my pain and I get more out of helping others than they get. I offered to teach social dance classes and to my surprise they let me start right away. They obviously didn't know what a mess I was. We attracted a lot of people from the community and I soon started a Singles Group on Saturday nights after service with 80 people attending.

Do you know that our Singles Ministry over the years has attracted hundreds and hundreds of singles to build community, to connect with each other? And, many of these singles have found partners that they've married. And many have found Christ. Sher closes this way: "I would very much like to be married, but I am still single. Except now, by the grace of God, I have a very full life. God is enough. And I know that I'm the daughter of the Most High God."

God will repurpose the broken pieces of your life to make a difference in this world. No one is beyond hope. Everyone can be mended!

Let's pray.

Wounded by Shattered Dreams and Dashed Hopes

Rich Nathan
August 20 & 21, 2016
Mended
The Book of Job

- I. Myths we need to get rid of
 - A. If only God would make himself more evident then...
 - B. If only God would answer this one prayer then...
 - C. If only God would be fair then...

- II. Truths we need to hold on to
 - A. Continue to believe in God's Word
 - B. Continue to believe in God's Kingdom
 - C. Continue to believe in God's ultimate purposes