

THE PROBLEM AND POWER OF PAIN

WEEK 1 • DAILY BRIEFING 5 • REMOVING GOD DOESN'T REMOVE PAIN

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Revelation 21:4

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

This week follows Sunday's sermon, "The Threat of Pain," from Jesus' parable of the soils in Luke 8. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me fix my eyes on eternity and remember that the pain I endure in this life is temporary, and so is the pleasure. Help me accept that when the pull gets intense in either direction. Give me a clear vision of the hope found in You alone, and give me the strength to endure every trial and temptation. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

On Sunday we walked through Jesus' parable of the soils, and this week we have taken the soils one at a time. We saw two ways people fall away from God. On the rocky ground, pain drives them away, and among the thorns, pleasure drags them away. Today puts both of those side by side. Sunday ended with a question: "If you don't get an explanation you like on the timeline you like, are you going to forfeit everything you're longing for in the world to come?" Here is today's idea: if you walk away from God, the pain still doesn't disappear and the pleasure still doesn't satisfy. If you patiently endure with God, the pain has meaning, and the fulfillment of every good pleasure gets closer every day.

First, think about the pain side. Plenty of people walk away from God because of pain. Some leave after a diagnosis, and others leave after a prayer that seemed to go unanswered for years. The reasoning usually sounds something like, "If God were real and good, He would intervene, or this would not have happened." That is an understandable reaction, and it deserves an honest answer. Still, notice what walking away actually changes. The cancer is still there. The marriage is still over. The empty chair at the dinner table is still empty. The only thing that leaves is the hope that any of it will ever be made right.

Second, think about the pleasure side. People who drift from God to chase pleasure find out that pleasure never satisfies for long. There is always another trip to plan and another upgrade to buy. The vacation ends, the newness wears off, and the next thing has to be lined up before the emptiness sets back in. Walking away from God does not fix that. It just removes the only One who can.

By contrast, here is what staying with God gives you. Your pain can have a purpose. It can be part of your development, and it can be part of a mission that reaches other people, which is what we talked about yesterday. Your pain also has an expiration date, because Jesus promised a day when He will "wipe away every tear" (Revelation 21:4). For balance, the same is true of pleasure. We saw on Day 3 that God is not anti-pleasure. Every good thing you enjoy now is a small sample of what is waiting, and one of today's passages describes where pleasure finally lasts.

Today's main passage comes from a day when a crowd walked away from Jesus. In John 6, Jesus had just fed a crowd of about five thousand men with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. The next day the crowd tracked Him down, and Jesus told them plainly, "you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves" (John 6:26). They came for more bread. Instead, He told them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger" (John 6:35). Many of His followers said, "This is a

hard saying; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60). That is where we pick up. The other two passages come from Psalm 16, a song King David wrote about a thousand years before Jesus, and from 1 Thessalonians, where Paul writes to a young church in Greece that was grieving members who had died. Paul describes those believers as having "fallen asleep," because for a Christian, death is not the end of the story.

READ & MEDITATE

John 6:66–69

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–14

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

As you read, notice where each passage says real joy and real hope are found.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Jesus did not chase the crowd that left. He turned to the twelve men closest to Him and asked them a question.

1. Fill in the blank from Peter's response in John 6:68: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of _____ life."*

Peter does not say he understood everything Jesus had just taught. What is his reason for staying?

Peter did not stay because he had every answer. He stayed because he knew there was nowhere else to go that offered eternal life, and that is the same choice Sunday put in front of us.

The crowd that walked away in verse 66 had come looking for bread.

2. What pleasure have you been chasing that keeps leaving you hungry for more?

David wrote Psalm 16 as a song of trust in God.

3. Fill in the blank from Psalm 16:11: "in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are _____ forevermore."*

What does this verse say about God?

God is not the enemy of pleasure. He is where pleasure finally lasts, and walking away from Him trades something permanent for something that runs out.

Paul does not tell grieving Christians to stop grieving.

4. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14, what is the difference between the way Christians grieve and the way others grieve, and what is that difference based on?

Christians still hurt, and Paul never pretends otherwise. The difference is that their grief has a future, because Jesus died and rose again.

Some people who walk away from God leave angry, but many others simply drift.

5. Is there a pain or a pleasure in your life that has been pulling you away from God? What is it?

If you walked away from God in that situation, what would stay exactly the same, and what would still leave you empty?

What would it look like in your context for you to answer Jesus the way Peter did this week?

Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

**These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.*

MY "I WILL" STATEMENT

This week we walked through every soil in Jesus' parable, from the path to the good soil. Staying with Jesus is not passive, and it shows up in specific choices.

Write one sentence that begins with the words "I will." Make it something you can actually do in the next seven days, name the day you will do it, and tie it to one of this week's five Briefings.

Example: I will tell one person in my LifeGroup on Tuesday night that I have been drifting since my mom's diagnosis, and I will ask them to check on me every week this month.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Revelation 21:4 from memory.