

## **Introduction: “Man of Sorrows”**

*“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”  
(Isaiah 53:3).*

### **The Gospel and Grief**

Grief. It comes in all forms and fashions, because loss comes in all shapes and sizes. When we think of grief, our souls tend to focus especially on the devastating grief that accompanies death. Yet, life is filled with daily *mini*-caskets—losses great and small. A critical word. A critical accident. Betrayal, rejection, a stab in the back. The terminal diagnosis. Separation and divorce. A church split. A prodigal child. Job termination. The list, sadly, goes on and on.

The gospel. We know it has *everything* to say about grace for sin. But does the gospel have *anything* to say about grace for grief in our suffering? We know that Jesus came to save sinners, but does he understand and care about our suffering?

He understands. “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). “Acquainted”: Jesus intimately and intensely experienced grief, sorrow, loss, and pain.

He cares. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4). The intensity of his sympathy made him feel your grief as his own—and do something about it. He came to crush sin, Satan, and death so that *one day* there will never again be separation, suffering, sorrow, crying, grief, or pain (Revelation 21:4).

The author of Hebrews, who was steeped in Old Testament passages like Isaiah 53, adds his assurance of Jesus’ compassion, care, and comfort and the gospel’s help, hope, and healing. “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our

weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16). Jesus is not only a man of sorrows; he cares about *your sorrow*. Jesus is not only acquainted with his own grief; he is acquainted with *your grief*.

### **A Grief Journey with Jesus**

And Jesus is not only acquainted with your grief—he is always *with you* in your grief—he walks with you in the cool of the day and *he journeys with you* in the ups and downs of your grief (John 14:1-6; 16:33). Grief is not a series of stages that you complete in some stereotypical consecutive order. Grief is a very individual process—a personal journey we take with our personal suffering Savior.

What Isaiah predicts and the author of Hebrews declares, the Gospels describe. From birth into a broken world, to death at the hands of a sinful world, and everywhere in between, the Gospels guide us on *a grief journey with Jesus*. The sorrows of Jesus appear on every page of the Gospels. Jesus lived, breathed, walked, and ministered in the midst of scenes of sorrow.

And the Jesus of the Gospels is not only the caring Shepherd—which is amazing comfort. He is also the sovereign King—which instills us with amazing confidence. “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” (Hebrews 4:14). We entrust ourselves to him because he sovereignly shepherds us—guiding us to the green pastures of mercy, grace, and help as we walk through our valley of the shadow of death.

When life is knocking us down, how do we hold fast? We hold fast by holding onto Jesus who is holding us close to his heart. “He will tend his flock like a shepherd: he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:11).

In the pages that follow, we’ll journey together with Jesus, applying the following gospel truths to our grief journey:

- Jesus is a suffering Savior intimately acquainted with our grief: “It’s normal to hurt.”
- Jesus is a compassionate Savior lovingly consoling us in our grief: “It’s possible to find comfort in our hurt.”
- Jesus is a healing Savior compassionately speaking eternal truth into our earthly wounds: “It’s possible to grieve with hope.”
- Jesus is an empowering Savior mightily enabling us to comfort others with the comfort we receive from God: “It’s supernatural to love in the midst of loss.”

In our journey, we will grieve together. *And* we will hope together (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Let’s begin...

### **Applying Gospel Truth to Your Grief Journey**

1. What difference can it make today in your grieving to know that Jesus is a man of sorrows deeply and intimately aware of, acquainted with, and caring about your grief?
2. At this moment, in your grief, which of the following gospel portraits of Jesus resonate the most with you? Why? How will they make a difference for you today?
  - Jesus is a suffering Savior intimately acquainted with your grief.
  - Jesus is a compassionate Savior lovingly consoling you in your grief.

- Jesus is a healing Savior compassionately speaking eternal truth into your earthly wounds.
- Jesus is an empowering Savior mightily enabling you to comfort others with the comfort you receive from him.