FINDING MEANING IN SUFFERING
FOR HEART, MIND & SOUL

WHEN THE JOURNEY *hurts*

M. ELIZABETH LEWIS HALL,
KELLY M. KAPIC & JASON McMARTIN

InterVarsity Press
ivpress.com

Taken from *When the Journey Hurts* by M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Kelly M. Kapic, and Jason McMartin

Copyright © 2026 by Miriam Elizabeth Lewis Hall, Kelly M. Kapic, and Jason McMartin

Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL

www.ivpress.com

CONTENTS

Preface: Suffering: The Bad News and the Good News — *1*

PART ONE

A ROADMAP FOR THE JOURNEY

1 Suffering and Meaning — *13*

2 Problematic Roadmaps — *32*

3 Choosing Better Destinations — *48*

4 Purposes for Suffering — *67*

PART TWO

MEANING-MAKING PRACTICES FOR THE JOURNEY

5 Identifying with Christ's Suffering — *85*

6 Lament — *103*

7 Surrender — *119*

8 Forgiveness — *134*

9 Gratitude — *149*

10 Remembering Our Mortality — *164*

11 Weaving Our Story of Suffering into God's Story — *177*

Acknowledgments — *193*

Appendix: Leader's Guide for Group Study — *199*

Notes — *205*

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

ONE

SUFFERING AND MEANING

[After my diagnosis] I would say, "God, I'm not understanding this. Why is this happening?" I wasn't angry with God. I was confused. And I was looking to God to help me make sense of it.

John, cancer survivor

You know that moment when life stops making sense? When something happens that's so at odds with how you thought the world worked that you feel like you're standing on quicksand? Fredrich Nietzsche, perhaps the most famous of all atheists, once said, "The meaninglessness of suffering, and not suffering as such, [is] the curse which has hung over mankind."[1] If you have gone through a devastating life crisis—the loss of a loved one, an assault, an unwanted medical diagnosis—you may recognize the feeling of emptiness that often accompanies these events. In a moment, your world is turned upside down. Things that brought you satisfaction and purpose now seem pointless or shallow. Life feels meaningless.

InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

In one way Nietzsche was wrong. Suffering is not meaningless in a world created and sustained by a loving God who is in the business of redeeming the world. But in another way, Nietzsche was right—he was right about how meaningless suffering can feel. It's like having the rug pulled out from under you, except the rug was actually the floor, and maybe the whole house. Your stomach drops. Your chest tightens. Nothing feels solid anymore.

Suffering challenges our ordinary ways of understanding the world and our place in it—our "meaning system," a kind of operating manual for life. You had a set of assumptions about how things work, guidelines you lived by, a story you told yourself about the world. Then circumstances hit you with something that didn't fit that story at all. Disorientation ensued.

To find our way out of suffering, we must begin rebuilding, sifting through the pieces of our devastated lives to rebuild our sense of meaning. We must figure out, again, in light of our new circumstances, what life is about, who we are, and what our place in the world is. Psychologists call this "meaning-making coping." The good news is that this disruption creates an opportunity for growth and even flourishing. But why is this the case? How can good come out of bad?

It is hard to overestimate the importance of meaning—that is, an understanding of one's place and purpose in the world—for well-being. Some psychologists even see the need for meaning as one of the main characteristics of being human. Suffering certainly illuminates the significance of meaning. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who spent time in a concentration camp under Hitler's regime, described this perspective in his famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. He wrote, "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how."[2]

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

WHEN YOUR LIFE BLUEPRINT COLLIDES WITH REALITY

Psychologist Crystal Park's meaning-making model clarifies what happens when we encounter difficult life events that challenge our sense of meaning and how this can produce positive outcomes.[3] She describes the process of meaning-making coping, of rebuilding our meaning system after it has been challenged by hardship. In order to understand how this process works, we must first understand the difference between global and situational meaning.

Think about it this way: You've been living your life according to a blueprint—your assumptions about how the world works, what matters, where you're headed. Maybe you didn't even realize you had this blueprint until something happened that made absolutely no sense according to your plans. That blueprint is what psychologists call your "global meaning." It is the framework through which we evaluate all the events in our lives and that influences how we respond to those events. Our meaning structures direct every decision we make at every moment of our lives.

Sometimes we refer to global meaning as our "worldview." It consists of core beliefs about the world and our place in it, our life goals, and the feeling that life has meaning and purpose. And then life happens. But life doesn't just happen; we also interpret what's happening in a certain way. Our views on what's happening right now—this new, unwelcome reality—is what we call "situational meaning." It's our assessment of the specific event at hand: the job loss, the diagnosis, the betrayal, the accident.

Here's the crucial insight: The degree to which our view of what's happening conflicts with our life blueprint determines how much distress we will feel. In other words, if this specific

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

event challenges or threatens the ways we understand the world, we will experience distress. The greater the distance between our view of what's happening now and what we thought was true about life, the more upset we will be. Much of this distress comes from the threat to our meaning system—our worldview. Life starts to feel meaningless and without purpose.

THE THREE PILLARS OF OUR LIFE BLUEPRINT

Our life blueprint—what psychologists call our "global meaning"—rests on three pillars. When suffering hits, it can shake any or all of them.

Core beliefs about reality. These include whether or not there is a God, what God is like, whether reality is just material or also includes spiritual elements, and whether our lives and the world have purpose or we invent purpose as we go along. These beliefs about the world strongly influence how we behave in the world. One study found that our global beliefs predict outcomes such as gratitude and life satisfaction more strongly than do our personality traits, such as extraversion or introversion.[4]

Maybe you believe the world is generally fair and good things happen to good people. Then your spouse—who's always been faithful, kind, and generous—gets diagnosed with early-onset dementia at fifty-five. Or perhaps you believe that if you work hard and play by the rules, you'll be rewarded. Then the company you've given twenty years to eliminates your position to boost quarterly profits. Suddenly, what you thought was true about how life works doesn't seem true at all.

Life goals. These are the high-level purposes that guide our behavior and that we pursue in everyday life. They include broad

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

goals that are informed by our values, such as the kind of person we want to be, the kinds of relationships we want to have, and what we will invest our time in. Life goals are closely tied to our values. Philosopher Eleonore Stump calls them "the desires of the heart" that, when blocked, cause suffering.[5]

Think of the mother whose deepest goal is raising healthy, happy children—then her teenager attempts suicide. Or the man who's worked his whole career toward retirement with his wife, only to lose her to cancer six months before he retires. These aren't just disappointments; they're threats to the very purposes that have organized their lives.

A sense that life matters. This refers to the feeling part of our global meaning system. It includes our subjective feeling that life has meaning, that our life has purpose, and that we matter. Even when we aren't able to verbalize what life's meaning is, or what our life purpose is, these feelings are an important part of our sense of well-being.

Emotional stability is often the first thing to go when crisis hits. Even if we can still intellectually affirm our core beliefs and remember our goals, we might find ourselves thinking, *What's the point?* We had meaningful work to do, but we can't bring ourselves to do it. Food loses its taste. Activities that used to energize us feel hollow. It's not depression, exactly—it's the sense that nothing matters anymore.

WHEN WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW DOESN'T MATCH OUR BLUEPRINT

In contrast to our life blueprint, what we call "situational meaning" is much simpler—it's how we interpret what's happening right now. When stressful events hit, we instinctively evaluate: *What is*

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

this? How threatening is it? Can I control it? Why did this happen? What does this mean for my future? Is this job loss an opportunity to move into a different life calling or a threat to my very identity? Is a diagnosis of cancer compatible with my life goals, or does it disrupt those goals? Is pandemic-related sheltering in place a chance to spend more time with God or a devastating loss? The same event can be seen in vastly different ways; our situational meanings can vary.

When difficulties hit, part of our suffering has to do with the event itself: When we lose someone, we feel grief; when we have been hurt, we feel anger. But if our assessment of this new event (situational meaning) conflicts enough with our usual assessment of ourselves and the world around us (global meaning), then in addition to the suffering directly associated with the event, we also feel tossed about and vulnerable to whatever unknown forces we may next face. The ground beneath our feet shifts. We are no longer sure of ourselves or the way our world works, a frightening experience indeed. The world as we knew it has disappeared. Depending on the situation, our very identity, our sense of who we are, may be challenged.

We're not just dealing with cancer or job loss or betrayal. We're dealing with the terrifying realization that our map of reality might be wrong. And if we can't trust our map, how do we know where we're going? How do we make decisions? How do we even get up in the morning?

WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF MEANING-MAKING LOOK LIKE?

Let's walk through an example drawing on personal experience. In her own words, Liz tells us her story of trying to find meaning in the midst of a cancer diagnosis.

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

* * *

The word *cancer* has a certain existential weight to it. Whenever it shows up in movies or books, it's shorthand for "this person is going to die." I vividly remember the moment I received the news. I was about to get into my car to take my two sons to church for youth group when my phone rang. My doctor said, "It's cancer."

I don't remember feeling much, but for some reason, I hunched over as if someone had punched me, and tears started streaming down my face. I asked the questions I needed to ask and took notes of next steps. But inside, my world had screeched to a halt.

That first night was the worst. I lay in bed next to my sleeping husband, my heart hammering so hard I was sure it would wake him. Every few minutes I'd remember all over again: *I have cancer*. The panic would crash over me fresh each time. I kept thinking about my teenage sons—how could I leave them without a mother? How could I do this to my husband, make him a widower when he still needed me? I couldn't make sense of it. This wasn't supposed to happen to me. I was healthy—I ate well, exercised, took my vitamins. I was young, only in my forties. There was no family history. I kept replaying my life, searching for clues: Was it something I did? Something I didn't do?

But the confusion went deeper than medical questions. I believed in a loving God who was in control of my world. So how was this loving? How was allowing me to potentially die young—leaving my sons motherless, my husband alone—an act of love? I found myself wrestling with God in my morning prayers: *How is this good? They need me.* To my surprise, the cancer diagnosis revealed something I hadn't known about myself. Even though my theology said the world was broken

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

and I was a sinner, somewhere deep inside I'd bought into the idea that the world was basically fair. That I was a good person. That good people who love God and try to do right deserve to have good things happen to them—a philosophy eerily similar to that of Job's counselors (see Job 4:7-8). Cancer happened to other people, people who didn't take care of themselves, people who were older, people who lived bad lives. Not people like me.

My life goals felt suddenly pointless. I had meaningful work to do—research to finish, articles to write, students to mentor. But what was the point if I was going to die? I'd sit at my computer, staring at the screen, unable to care about anything that had seemed so important just weeks earlier. The future I'd been working toward—watching my sons become men, growing old with my husband, maybe becoming a grandmother someday—felt like it was dissolving.

Here's what I didn't understand then: My life blueprint—everything I'd believed about how the world worked—was in complete collision with my interpretation of what was happening to me. My core beliefs (God is loving and the world is fair to good people), my life goals (live long, be a good mother and wife and scholar), and my sense that life had meaning were all crashing into this new reality: cancer, possible early death, shattered plans. There was an enormous gap between what I thought was true about life and how I saw what was happening to me. And that's exactly where the worst suffering lives—not just in the hard circumstances, but in that terrible space where nothing makes sense anymore.

But I didn't stay stuck there. Without even knowing there was a name for it, I began what psychologists call the meaning-making process—the slow, difficult work of rebuilding my

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

understanding of life so I could make sense of what was happening to me. Much of this happened during my quiet time every morning. I'd spend about an hour reading books about cancer—both secular and Christian ones—memorizing Scripture, especially psalms, writing in my journal, and, above all, crying out my distress before God. I wasn't just trying to feel better; I was trying to understand. How do I make sense of this? How do I rebuild my understanding of life so that cancer and God's love can both be true?

It took time, but slowly my terror faded, and my life blueprint—my global meaning—began to change as my heart theology finally started catching up with my head theology. I was able to internalize a bit more that the world was broken and consequently not just and that I didn't deserve for only good things to happen to me, but anything good I received was God's gracious, unmerited gift to me. My ways of understanding suffering began changing as I realized I needed more robust ways of understanding God's loving purposes for my life and for the lives of my loved ones.

My understanding of what was happening—my situational meaning—was shifting, too. Instead of seeing the cancer only as a cruel threat, I started wondering: What if God allowed this into my life for reasons I couldn't see yet? What if this wasn't just destruction but also an invitation—to know him differently, to help others in ways I never could before? The gap was closing—not because the cancer went away, but because my understanding of both life and my situation had grown deeper, more complex, more true. The meaning-making process had changed both sides of the equation.

* * *

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

As Liz worked through this process of meaning-making, she gained deeper insights even in the midst of the stress of this new season of life. For one, her goals changed. Her scholarship had previously focused on gender issues, but now it became almost entirely devoted to the area of meaning-making in suffering. Sometimes the process results in character growth. For example, Liz experiences herself as more even-keeled since the cancer, as she's gained greater calmness and perspective. Facing her possible death has made it easier not to be overwhelmed when other struggles come her way. Nor is she as shaken by the suffering of others—she doesn't feel the urge to move away from their suffering in order to protect herself, as she might have done in the past.

HOW DO PEOPLE GROW THROUGH SUFFERING?

Moving through suffering requires that we rebuild meaning structures—what Crystal Park calls the meaning-making process—if we are to resolve the discrepancy between global and situational meaning.[6] Resolving this discrepancy can restore a view that the world has purpose and that life is worthwhile. It can also lead to growth. For decades psychologists have been fascinated by people who don't just survive terrible experiences but say their lives are better because of what they went through.[7] The research reveals something counterintuitive: The more our fundamental beliefs about life get shattered, the more room there is for profound growth. This transformation tends to happen in three connected ways:[8]

We see ourselves differently. People discover they're tougher than they ever imagined, but also more human. They report feeling both stronger and more accepting of their own fragility and

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

finitude.[9] Many develop the kind of wisdom that comes only from having weathered real storms.[10] Increased patience and perseverance are also among reported positive character changes.[11]

Our relationships deepen. Suffering has a way of cutting through superficial connections. People find themselves valuing others more deeply, feeling more connected to fellow human beings, and developing genuine compassion for others.[12]

Our worldview shifts. The big questions about meaning, purpose, and what really matters get answered in new ways. What once seemed important may fade away, while previously overlooked aspects of life suddenly become precious.

We saw evidence of this in our interviews with cancer survivors. Greg said, "To me, what this cancer journey has done is it's changed my perspective. It's changed my perspective on what I want the last year, the last decade of my life, really, to look like. It's changed my priorities. . . . I always say, 'Watch where you spend your money, and I'll tell you what your priorities are.' I will tell you that I am probably spending less time on my career and more time on people and the relationships that matter to me."

Ginny similarly noted a change in perspective after her cancer. "I think it made me a lot calmer, a lot more accepting," she said. "I don't get as nervous or wound up about things as I used to. Because I've seen what real problems are. . . . It's like I have to go back to my faith and to where I belong, and the things that matter. And that's where I've landed, is I can separate what matters and what doesn't."

The meaning-making process helps us grow and enriches our lives when we engage with our suffering, drawing on our faith and its practices to reconcile our global meaning with our situational meaning.

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

Meaning-making can lead us to discard unhelpful or untrue beliefs and misguided goals and values, and to adopt a better way of understanding the world and our place in it.[13] For example, the simplistic belief that God won't allow any suffering to come to those who trust God may give way to the more resilient belief that suffering will come but can be redeemed by God. Even when global beliefs and goals are fairly solid, the meaning-making process can cause these to become more complex, nuanced, and internalized. Our faith is deepened and our trust in God grows. We see ourselves, others, and the world in a way that aligns more with the way God sees them—with love and compassion.

When we are able to resolve the discrepancy between our global and situational meanings through this reconstruction, our suffering can be incorporated into our life narrative in useful and informative ways. Psychological research suggests that the more complex and nuanced our global beliefs are, the better off we are. The more we incorporate our suffering into our life story, the more we will grow. When we see the world the way it really is, in all its complexity, ambiguity, beauty, and fallenness, we can live in that world in more true and productive ways. Simplistic ways of viewing the world and our suffering lead to conflict with reality, which tends to foster impoverished lives.

Nita, a cancer survivor in one of our studies, illustrates how she incorporated her cancer experience into her life narrative. She said, "I talk to people who've been newly diagnosed. I didn't want to at first, but now it feels like this is part of why I went through it—so I could help somebody else. And I don't give them medical advice, because I'm not a doctor. But I can tell them, 'This is what it was like for me. This is how I felt. This is

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

what helped.' And I can see it in their eyes, this relief of talking to somebody who's been there. And that gives meaning to what I went through."

The research also shows that the meaning-making process can lead to poor outcomes. Helpful and true beliefs may be discarded and harmful ones adopted, leading to worse mental health. Linda, for example, entered counseling for help with her profound depression. Many years earlier, Linda's sister had been killed in a tragic accident. Linda was a Christian and even taught in her church's Sunday school, but her global system included the belief that God's goodness meant nothing bad would happen to people who believed in God. After her sister's death, Linda's meaning-making process did not result in a more nuanced view of God's goodness, providence, or intervention in people's lives, but in a loss of belief. She resolved the discrepancy between her global and situational meaning by giving up her faith. For her, a world where God did not exist was more easily reconciled with her sister's death.

Unfortunately, this meaning-making process also produced the depression that plagued Linda for many years. Given Linda's lack of faith, her decision to pursue counseling in a church-based counseling center may have unconsciously been motivated by a desire to find a more hopeful way of putting the pieces together. Only when she recognized that her unbelief was a way of expressing her anger at God and started letting go of that anger and unbelief did her depression begin to lift.

The process of meaning-making can affect any or all of our global meaning structures. If someone's concept of God implies that only good things happen to believers, then disasters can easily lead to the belief that there is no God. Similarly, people

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

may discard important life goals without adopting new ones, leading to a sense of purposelessness. People can get stuck in the process and become unable to resolve the tensions, which leaves them in ongoing distress. In other words, suffering itself does not cause growth, as is sometimes simplistically assumed. Suffering may provide an opportunity for growth, but the quality and nature of meaning-making are what facilitate or hinder growth. It's a mistake to ignore the process of meaning-making and think that, as Christians, we need to jump to a triumphant place very quickly. The process needs time and care if it is to be beneficial, which requires allowing ourselves and others to invest that time and effort.

SUFFERING AND GLORY

The idea that suffering might lead to good things isn't new. After all, we see this throughout the Bible. God promises to work "all things" (including, one might assume, painful and traumatic experiences) together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). This doesn't mean the "things" themselves are necessarily good—for example, it was evil that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:12-36). But it does mean God remains faithful and active, bringing about good even through brokenness and suffering (Genesis 50:20-21). God will never compromise his holiness or love, and he will be faithful to his people, promising that their suffering is not the final word. Good can and will come.

Scripture describes these good outcomes by pervasively connecting suffering with the somewhat mysterious concept of "glory." Jesus interpreted his own suffering by referring to Old Testament prophecies, commenting, "Did not the Messiah have

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26). Reviewing these same prophets, Peter spoke of "the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow" (1 Peter 1:11).

The connection of suffering with glory also includes us, Jesus' followers. Peter tells us to "rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13). Paul picks up on this theme in 2 Corinthians 4:17, where we are told that "our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." Elsewhere he writes that "we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:17-18).

What does *glory* actually mean? Does it mean fame or notoriety? That seems fairly base and shallow, not reflecting what we find in Scripture. The Hebrew Bible gives us a different conception: "Glory" (*kavod*) is rooted in weightiness and is picked up in the Greek New Testament as conveying honor (*doxa*). Glory can communicate not just the physical meaning of "heaviness" (though not in a burdensome sense), but also "the majesty or honor in human interaction" and "God's majesty or honor."[14] This glory is linked to God's presence, even linked to the revelation of his face (Psalm 24:6-10). In the Psalms and the prophets, *glory* was also used to refer to the vision of God's power and presence that will one day fill the earth, provoking worship and awe before our majestic God (Psalm 29; Isaiah 6, 40; Ezekiel 1). In the New Testament, God's glorious presence takes form in the person of Jesus (1 Corinthians 4:6), and these end-time prophecies become intertwined with Christ's second coming. Jesus is God's glory made clear, so now our glory is linked to our connection to this Messiah.

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

Clark, one of our participants with a cancer diagnosis, was attuned to this connection between his suffering and glory. He said, "You know, Lord, if you allow me to go through this, then you definitely have a purpose. And whatever that purpose is, is for your glory. And I know that you're going to take me through it and everything. So just keep on giving me your peace. You know, and that, that's just what I stood on." Tying his suffering to the purpose of giving God glory enabled Clark to have peace in a very difficult time.

The apostle Paul used *glory* to describe the believer's salvation. Specifically, the Holy Spirit shapes us to become more and more like Christ, culminating in our complete transformation at the time of Jesus' second coming. And this is where suffering comes in. According to the book of Philippians, becoming like Christ includes participation in his sufferings (Philippians 3:10) and in his resurrection (Philippians 3:21). In linking suffering to glory, Paul points out that suffering enables us to increasingly know and identify with Christ (including, significantly, with his suffering), to become conformed to Christ's image, and to anticipate our ultimate transformation into glorious Christlikeness. We will fully and securely be in God's presence, soaking up the rays of his shining face. While we must be mindful of the warning of idolatry, that we become what we worship (Psalm 115:4-8), the flip side reminds us of the goodness of becoming like the true and glorious God. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Many of these themes were echoed by Christina, one of our participants, who discovered during her cancer treatment,

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

"this journey means something. . . . I'm anticipating what this greatness is going to be. . . . I know how to dive now whereas I didn't; I know how to dive down into my quiet place and just start worshiping." From the Christian perspective, the hard road to the good life is the hard road to glory.[15] Will you accept God's invitation to journey with God through suffering to glory?

FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. A good starting point for meaning-making is to identify the places where your global and situational meaning—what you thought was true and what you are now experiencing—are in tension. In Liz's story above, this tension was between her understanding that God was good and the perception that her potential death from cancer would be devastating for her young sons. Here are some approaches to help you identify your global and situational meaning:
   - Psychologists call global beliefs about the world "primal world beliefs," or "primals." You can take a survey and receive feedback on your own primals at myprimals.com/discover-your-primals. While primal beliefs are only one part of your global beliefs, reflecting on the feedback you receive can help you understand your global world beliefs a bit more.
   - Emotions can help us uncover places where our global and situational beliefs are in tension. For example, Liz felt surprise at her diagnosis and realized that this revealed some mistaken beliefs in her global meaning system. Pay close attention to your varied emotional reactions. Sit with them and try to figure out what those feelings are about. What

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

automatic thoughts and physical sensations accompany those feelings? Do they tell you something about what you expected, based on your global meaning system? Do they tell you something about how you are perceiving your current situation, reflecting your situational appraisal? Do they help you identify places where you experience conflict, which might help you see where your global and situational meaning are in tension?

- Have a dialogue with yourself, between parts that hold conflicting beliefs or emotions related to your suffering. For example, imagine a conversation between a part that feels angry or betrayed by God and a part that trusts in God's goodness. Approach this exercise with curiosity and self-compassion, leaving aside any judgments.
- Global purpose is an important part of the global meaning system that is often blocked through suffering. To identify what your global purpose is, imagine you are at the end of your life, looking back on your journey. What would you want to have achieved? What would you want to be remembered for? What kind of impact would you hope to have made on the world and the people around you? Now reflect on how your global purpose is affected by your current suffering.

2. Lectio divina is an ancient practice intended to open our hearts to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through the Bible. Throughout the book we suggest some passages for lectio divina. In this chapter we noted the connection between suffering and glory—here are two suggested passages for reflecting on this hard road to glory: Romans 8:18-23;

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Briefly, here are the steps you will follow to practice lectio divina:

- Read the passage slowly and attentively, listening for a word or phrase that stands out to you.
- Meditate on this word or phrase, pondering its meaning and significance in your life.
- Pray, responding to God's invitation and allowing the Scripture to guide your prayer.
- Contemplate, resting in God's presence and allowing the Scripture to sink deeply into your heart.

3. The famous theologian R. C. Sproul once quipped, "Why do bad things happen to good people? That only happened once and He volunteered." What is your response to this quote? How does it challenge or confirm your global beliefs?

FURTHER READING

Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Toward a New Psychology of Trauma* (Free Press, 2002).

Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon, [1946] 2025).

ivp | InterVarsity Press Copyrighted content.

BUY THE BOOK!

ivpress.com/when-the-journey-hurts