



Season 3 | Episode 5

## How God Meets Us in Suffering

Vaneetha Risner

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Crystal Keating:

I'm Crystal Keating and this is the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast. Each week, we're bringing you real conversations about disability and finding hope through hardship, and sharing practical ways that you can include people living with disability in your church and community. Be sure to subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts, and find all of the resources mentioned at [joniandfriends.org/podcast](http://joniandfriends.org/podcast).

Vaneetha Risner:

What I want to do is just start with some takeaways that I'm hoping people are going to get. One that God is with us, every one of the people that I talked to said that was one of the biggest things that they experienced in their suffering. God is using this. God is using your suffering for something bigger than you can see. Sometimes we see a small glimpse of it. And sometimes we don't see it at all. There's so many things in my life that I don't really understand why they happened. And sometimes it feels like my suffering is wasted. But God promises that it's not wasted, and God promises that he's using it. So we can count on that.

And the last thing is that our suffering will end. I think at times when we're in the middle of pain, we think it's never going to end and we think that it's going to go on forever. And for many of us, it will end in a glorious way just around the corner, deliverance might be tomorrow for some of the things you're struggling with. But for some of us, it might not even be in this life. But this life is so brief and eternity is so long. And so we will all be guaranteed for those of us in Christ that we will live happily ever after. And our suffering is just momentary.

Well, I want to introduce you to my first speaker, who is Joni Eareckson Tada. Joni has been my hero for years. And I've gotten to know her recently, but her life has impacted mine in dramatic ways. Most of you are familiar with Joni, but Joni was 17 when she was injured in a diving accident and became a quadriplegic. And at first Joni really struggled with finding God in that. But then she drew near to God through friends who really introduced her to really what faith looks like and how God can use our suffering. And Joni is just the most radiant person. She's been through cancer, she lives with chronic debilitating pain. But Joni is radiant. And I'd love for you to meet her in this conversation. And it picks up when we're talking about her diagnosis of COVID.

Joni Eareckson Tada:

... Into the room to give me the doctor's report from the test, the COVID test, and it was late at night we got the report. He said, "Well, you have COVID." And I thought he said, "Well, you have cancer, it's back." And I was blindsided. I thought, oh my goodness, I'm a quadriplegic.



This is what I've been alarmed about all year long. This is why I've been sequestering. This is my death sentence. And you think you prepare yourself for that moment when this could be the ticket to go home to heaven. Like boy, when you're handed it, I just wasn't prepared.

And I literally cast myself on God. And I did say, "Lord..." Okay, this is what I did. I started repeating all the names of God I could think of. "Oh God, you're my ball of fire. You are my refuge and strength. You are my high fortress. You are my glorious sword. You are my bread of heaven. You are living..." I'm repeating them. And suddenly I stop and say, "God, God, I'm not saying all of your names just because I think there's some sort of magic incantation of what you're going to wave a magic wand and everything's going to be okay. I need you to know that you really are these things to me, please."

And I think it was as though, Vaneetha, I were taking my hands and ripping open my soul bare and saying here, "This is me. This is how much I need you right now." And all I can say is this incredible peace washed over me. God met me. And I think he met me so powerfully because I had ripped open my soul so vulnerably and transparently. I think that's all God wanted me to do was to have me reach down deep and be as transparent as I possibly could be. Laying forth the sin, the anxiety, the fears of the future, all that, and just allowing him to engage me at that point.

It was a precious moment that first night, and from then on out, my hopes remained bright. For me Vaneetha, and you know this, you and I have talked about this, it's not only Scripture, it sometimes is pleading to God using some interaction between Christ and some leper in the New Testament or some blind person in the New Testament, or maybe the woman at the well in the New Testament. Sometimes, I will appeal to God on the basis of the way his son reacted and dealt with and showed compassion to this individual. Jesus, I'm just like the woman at the well right now. I'm trying to hide myself. But you spoke words so tenderly to her, Father, would you do the same with me? Would you peel back the layers and help me to be as that woman by Jacob's Well, be open with you not trying to hide my hidden fault.

You speak about hidden faults in your word. I don't want to hide them. I don't want secret sins to lurk in the corners of the recesses of my soul, I don't even know about. Show me them and reveal them to me as you did to the woman at the well. So sometimes it'll be Scripture. Yes, like, you are my ever-present help in trouble. But sometimes it's just grabbing hold of a passage where Jesus dealt with somebody with a disability, and thinking and meditating on how he reacted, how he responded, what did they say, what did he say. It just constructs my problem within the framework of something that is all about God and not about me. You know what I mean?

Vaneetha Risner:

Yes. Oh, I love that, Joni, because I find as I get older, too, I feel like I had memorized a ton of verses when I was younger. And then the older I am, the less I have recollection of exactly what I'm looking for. But those I definitely did. The stories of where Jesus touched people and loved them and met them. So oh, that's so helpful for me. And I know, everybody who's listening to this. Wow.

Joni Eareckson Tada:

One of my favorite ones real quickly, Vaneetha is the 10th leper. And when my heart is just overflowing with thanksgiving, for something, grand that God has done, I will say to him, Oh, Jesus, can you just hear my heart, I am just like the 10th leper. And just how you sensed his passion and... That's me, isn't it me right now? Jesus, that's how I feel. Don't you see my heart.



And it's wonderful, again, to be able to put yourself in the place of someone in Scripture that you really resonate with. Wow, that's me. And it's a good way of praying Scripture, I think. Even voicing back our thanksgiving and gratitude to God.

Something that Nancy Leigh DeMoss put up maybe on her website, I don't know. She said, "This is not a time to curse the darkness, which is so easy to do, it is a time to shine a light." And I think when we have doubts about his sovereignty, which we should not have, Scripture is emphatically clear that God's overarching decrees even embrace what happens on the streets of Capitol Hill. As to what happens in the intensive care unit, your local hospital is dealing with COVID cases.

God's overarching decrees, embrace both, and everything in between and beyond. So we shouldn't have a doubt about his sovereignty. But sometimes it's hard to rest in that. And I think the quickest way to get your soul in a place of rest in his sovereignty is to do what Nancy Leigh had prescribed. Don't curse the darkness, start shining your light. I mean, Jesus came and what was the first words about him in the Gospel of John? The light enters the world. I think that's what we need to do in this dark, broken, bruised world right now.

When we shine his light. Just yesterday, Ken and I wheeled over to a neighbor's house. We haven't been able to engage these neighbors, but we saw an ambulance and fire truck at their home two days ago. And so we know something's up. So we just gathered our resources, I took a plate of cookies and Ken got one of my books and we went over there and talked, just were neighborly, prayed. And we just shined light, gave a little bit of hope.

And in so doing that, when you shine the light of Christ speak the name of Jesus... "Here let me pray over you. Let me lay my prayer over Susanna, right now." And even though we were socially distanced, 12 feet apart, he at the door, us on the pavement, nevertheless, to shine that kind of light. When you wheel back to your own house you just rest in his sovereignty. You're doing what God would want you to do, and nothing feels better.

And you suddenly are at peace with the world because God is in his heaven and all is right with his world, even though it all seems upside down to us. He's got it in control. And so I think serving, shining the light, speaking in the name of Jesus, being bold, walking across the street to your neighbors, giving hope where there's so much hopelessness on your cul de sac, it really does something to the way you view God's sovereignty in this crazy world.

Vaneetha Risner:

Don't curse the darkness, shine a light, speak the name of Jesus. Just so appreciate you, Joni and all that you've taught me, your words about Scripture I'm going to carry with me for a long time. Well, our next guest is Paul Tripp. And Paul is an amazing writer and speaker, his words have really spoken to me from the time I've started raising kids, I have really looked to him for a lot of wisdom. And his devotional New Morning Mercies is probably my favorite devotional of all time. Some of you may not know, in 2014 Paul suffered acute kidney failure. It was very unexpected, he had no idea it was coming. And he almost lost his life from it. And he's very weak as a result of that. But yet his faith in God has grown much stronger. So I'd love for you to join our conversation.

Paul David Tripp:

Two things that are very powerful to me in this experience. One was this deep abiding sense that I was not alone in my suffering. Suffering can be so alienating, and the experience of aloneness can be profound, because there's a way in which the person closest to you is still not going



through what you're going through. And it's so hard to communicate to them what it all means for you, at every level: physically, emotionally, spiritually. And so I experienced that I was not alone. And I kept praying in my suffering, "God help me, God help me, God help me." That wasn't a prayer just thrown out there. It was a prayer of confidence because I knew that the one I was praying to was with me, and would never turn a deaf ear to the cries of his child.

So this first experience, I don't know how I would have made it through that moment without that knowledge that I was not alone. But there's a second thing that as the word got out that I was very, very ill. And this first stay in the hospital, was followed, then by six surgeries, for two years, I had a surgery every four months, my body never had a chance to recover. I just kept getting weaker and weaker and weaker with surgery after surgery. But what I experienced is this thing that I've talked a lot about, that God makes his invisible grace visible, by sending people of grace to give grace to people who need grace.

God actually makes himself visible through his people. He comes to us with comfort and aid and wisdom and counsel through people that he's raised up. And it is amazing to me how I was held up by the body of Christ. I have a dear Irish friend, and in some of my darkest days, in my text stream would be a link to an Irish hymn from him, and it would change the day for me. And those kinds of experiences happened again and again and again.

I am more persuaded than I ever am that God doesn't just ordain things for us, he walks through with us what he ordains. And literally Vaneetha to this day, that's what gets me up in the morning, is my knowledge of the fact that I am not just a chess piece on the board. I'm a son of a sovereign King, who stoops, condescends to walk with me through what he ordains for me to go through. And I can't think of greater comfort than that.

You never just suffer the thing that you're suffering. You also suffer the way that you're suffering the thing that you're suffering. I thought about it this way since writing the book that suffering requires humility. Because what I have to do is I have to humbly be willing to look at myself and say, "What am I thinking? What am I telling myself? What am I bringing to this experience that is actually making it harder? That is deepening the experience of suffering."

And so you have to step out of that victim thing that all of us get into in suffering. Now, there's a way I am a victim because I live in a fallen world, and I'm going to be victimized by its brokenness. Of course, that's true. But I'm also a participant, because I never come to suffering empty. I bring life experiences, I bring an emotional set, I bring a particular theology, maybe I bring with me bad counsel that people have given me. And all of that shapes the way that I suffer. And so the humility part is I've got to confess that I don't just need the suffering to be lifted, I need change in me to lift the power of that suffering, even though I'm still going through the experience. Anger, bitterness, those things just deepen the experience of suffering when, in the midst of suffering, there are beautiful things to be experienced.

There are sweet graces that you don't want to miss. I would say it this way, God changed me through this experience of suffering. There's just no doubt about that. But people that know me say that I'm a softer man, the people that have heard me speak say there are themes in my speaking, there's a tone of my speaking, that's different. And I'm going to confess this, because I think it's important. Before I've went through this experience, I think much of what I thought was faith in Christ just wasn't. I was healthy, I was strong, I have the ability to be productive. And when in my moment of greatest influence, God rendered me weaker than I ever had been in my life. That's when I began to experience what true faith is.

And I can say this, honestly, I would choose not to go through what I've gone through. But if that's what it takes, for me, to get where I am, in my relationship with God, it's worth every



moment. It just is. And the Bible's quite clear that God does beautiful things in the midst of suffering. And maybe the most beautiful, the most precious gift of gifts, is the gift of himself. God makes himself known, his character known, His faithfulness known, his love known to us in ways that are, you know this, are almost hard to communicate, hard to put down on paper. When I wrote the suffering book, there's moments of frustration because I could write words, but they still were inadequate to capture some of the preciousness of what I've experienced in this and so doubt, bitterness, anger blinds my mind, my eyes, to these beauties that are there to be experienced.

Vaneetha Risner:

In the midst of suffering, there are sweet graces that we can enjoy. I love those words, because I see how God has really done that for all of us. We find God in unique ways in our suffering. And I loved what Paul said that he wouldn't choose to go through that suffering again, but he said, if that's what it takes, for me to get where I am in my relationship with God, it was worth every moment. What a great word for all of us as we look back on our suffering.

Well, my next guest is Katherine Wolf, and I had not met Katherine, before this event. And now I basically want to be her best friend. She's amazing. She's fun, and she's funny. And she loves life. Very similar to Joni in that way. And Katherine for a long time, had a great life in the eyes of the world. At 26, she was a model, she had a six-month-old son, and all of a sudden she suffered a catastrophic stroke. She was in a coma for two months, and spent months and months in the hospital and in rehab. And her life was radically different. But Katherine has an incredible joy. And she says that one of her goals in life is to show people that she wants to disrupt the myth that joy can only be found in a pain free life. So I'd love for you to join my conversation with Katherine. When you were struggling and felt desperate. And God met you.

Katherine Wolf:

So many moments, oh my goodness. Probably the first, not very first, but the most early on a clear, dramatic example of God meeting me when I just felt... I didn't know if I could go on. Actually, about six months after the stroke, I still could not eat food orally, and still could not even stand up, nothing, could barely speak. And I can remember wondering if God had made the mistake by leaving me on earth and wondering if I should be here, if God had messed up, and honestly looking around, then thinking like, "Jay would be better off if I weren't here. And James could have a normal mommy. And eventually everyone would stop being so sad all the time. I'm just such a burden on them."

And I can remember, I was in this big room that Jay had wheeled me into and he was in the front of the room playing with James and some friends who were there. And I was like watching the scene. And this is when I'm living at the rehab hospital, it was at the rental house. And I can remember in those moments, seeing the scene and recognizing, I don't fit in this scene anymore. Like I can't be frolicking around with my child. I think God made a mistake here.

And it was almost, Vaneetha, that like this supernatural landing flood on me feeling, it was very otherworldly. And I called it like an awakening of the truth of Scripture I'd always known. So was it like some new like word from the Lord, which I know people get. That's awesome. I never heard the Lord. But the deep truths of Scripture I've known, like my whole life. I mean, I received Christ at four years old. And I've loved him since, and grown up in His word. And in that moment, the very deep comfort that somehow he was at work, that he was writing a story in my life.



And it had very complex chapters where that makes the best stories that God was with me, in me. And I was just flooded with Scripture. I mean Romans 8, just so much, Romans 8, Ephesians 4. I mean, I was taken back to Psalm 139, then I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. And that's where the AVM that would rupture in my brain was, before I was born, it was in my mother's womb, in my brain. And just all these thoughts almost took me out of feeling like God made a mistake. And instead, almost bolstered me, gave me this deep sense of God is in this and at work. And you'll see, this is a very difficult chapter, but one day, you will think differently about this chapter, what God was teaching you in it. It was breathtaking. And it really did change my perspective, actually.

Vaneetha Risner:

Wow, that's beautiful. I've had moments and probably a few in my life where I felt like God has intersected me like that, and it kind of takes your breath away.

Katherine Wolf:

Right. Absolutely. When you know in those moments, that Ephesians 4:1 idea, that he's calling you in this crisis, to live a life worthy of a special calling that you've received. It almost makes you feel very special, chosen by God for this. Like, "Oh my goodness, I've got to live a life worthy of this hardship." Which is so upside down Kingdom living and so powerful that God can do that, and then instill in us the foresight to see a taste of it. That we can get through this with him guiding us.

Vaneetha Risner:

Amen. I mean, John 9 has been my kind of... The verse I came to Christ with, and that whole idea of this happened, which is all of our lives.

Katherine Wolf:

Yeah.

Vaneetha Risner:

So that the work of God would be displayed in our life.

Katherine Wolf:

That's right.

Vaneetha Risner:

And that's exactly what you're saying is this happened for that. And just having that perspective is pretty incredible.

Katherine Wolf:

I went on after my stroke to have a baby five years ago, John. Little John was just five years old. And John 9:3, the passage, you were talking, about the blind man asked Jesus "Why was he born blind?" And he said, "So that the word of God may be displayed in him." And that's our prayer. For our little bundle, John, is that the work of God will be displayed through his story and his life.



Vaneetha Risner:

I love his words, God is in this, you'll see. One day, you will think differently about this chapter. I love that. That's true for all of us in our suffering right now. God is in it, we'll see one day we'll think differently about this chapter. I think in retrospect, it's really easy to say that in the midst of it, we can't see it. And I think that's the hardest part about suffering is when we look in the rear-view mirror, a lot of times, we can see what God has done. But when we are in the midst of it, it's overwhelming.

I'd love to tell you a little bit about my story. I was born in India to Christian parents. And when I was three months old, I contracted polio. And polio had been eradicated by then, pretty much the vaccine had been developed. So the doctors did not know what I had. And they gave me something to lower my fever, which broke down my body's immune system. And so pretty quickly, I was paralyzed. And I was a quadriplegic, actually. And the doctors told my parents they needed to leave India because there was nothing they could do.

And so we moved from India, to England, and then to Canada, which is where I first started having surgeries. And I had 21 operations by the time I was 13. I lived in the hospital for years. And when I was in the hospital, I was actually happier probably than when I was home. Not because I didn't like being with my family, but I was bullied a lot. When I was seven years old kids knocked me down and threw stones at me and called me a cripple.

So I was just angry at life and the world. And as I mentioned a little bit in my discussion with Katherine, when I was 16, I came to Christ from the Scripture in John 9. And I thought my life was going to be great after that. And I really kind of felt sorry for people whose lives seemed like they had suffering. And I had a bunch of years without a lot of suffering and then suffering seem to come in wave after wave. I had a son who was born with a heart problem. And when he was two months old, the doctor took him off all of his medication, or most of it, saying he didn't need it anymore. And my son died soon after that.

And then I was diagnosed with post-polio syndrome, which is a little different from polio. And what it means is that my body is going backwards. And so even though I'd had all those surgeries, and I had learned to walk, my body is deteriorating. And so I use a wheelchair most of the time now, even though I can walk and my arms are very, very weak. And so one day, I probably will be or could be a quadriplegic again.

And then the last thing is my ex-husband came home one day and told me he was leaving for someone else. And I raised my adolescent daughters, Katie and Christie, who were 10 and 13 at the time, they were angry, I was angry, and all of us struggled to find God in the midst of that. So that's sort of my experience with suffering, lots of different things. And I just have to say all of them were hard. I don't want you to think that I am one of those people that experienced all of these things and just smiled and said, "God is good all the time."

I cried, I was angry. I yelled at God. I yelled at everybody that I knew. And yet God met me. And I would just love to share a time when God met me, just as a lot of my guests have shared. Probably one of the most dramatic times for me was after my son died. And honestly, I was really upset with God. At the funeral I wasn't upset. I was sort of being carried by God. But then weeks later, I just felt like God had let me down.

I remember being on my knees, begging God to save my son. And yet I got up from my knees, went to the hospital and found out my son was dead. And after that I pulled away from God. I wouldn't say that I walked away. And I wouldn't even say that I turned away. I would call it leaning away, which meant I didn't want to look at God. I didn't want to read the Bible. I didn't want to talk to people about faith. But I wouldn't say that I had abandoned my faith.



But I spent months just feeling desperate and lonely. And then one day in the car, I just cried out, and I said, "God, help me. I can't do this without you." That's all I said. And I pushed in a worship tape, actually, at the time. And I just started to sing, not really meaning it at first, and then all of a sudden, the presence of God filled my car. I cannot describe that moment beyond saying it was extraordinary. And in that moment, I knew that nothing in this world mattered, but Jesus. And if this was what heaven was like, I couldn't wait. It was the most perfect moment of my life. And it happened, right when I was crying out to God after my son died.

There's a lot more everyday things that I have struggled with. Also, a few days ago, I was in the shower, and my arms stopped working. And I really struggled, I cried out, because my husband wasn't there. And I thought, "What am I going to do?" I couldn't turn off the water, I couldn't wash my hair. And yet, I remembered this verse, Psalm 10:14, the helpless put their trust in you. And I cried out to God and said, "God, please be here with me." And amazingly, God was there.

It wasn't this dramatic moment. It wasn't extraordinary. But it was the sense that God said, I am with you. I will never leave you. That was one of the many times that God has met me that way. And I would just encourage all of you, if you are struggling, just to cry out to God and say, "Help me." You don't need eloquent words, just those. So that's some of my experiences with suffering. And I would love to introduce you to my next guest, Randy Alcorn.

Randy Alcorn has written the book *Heaven*, which was a New York Times bestseller. He's also written the books *If God is Good*, and the book *90 Days of God's Goodness*, which is a devotional that I have loved. And both of those have met me in times of real sorrow. Randy's wife, Nanci, is battling colon cancer, it's pretty significant right now. And I'd love for you to join my conversation with Randy, as we talk about that.

Randy Alcorn:

Lord, you've got to plan, this doesn't take you by surprise, this is part of your plan just as much as every source of joy and happiness in our life... our children, our marriage, everything else, our church. It's all part of your plan. And so is this. And so instead of making that second category of things, where there's the things that are really the plan, the great plans that I have for your life, for your prosperity, and all of that. Certain verses that we claim, then there's all those other verses that often we don't put on the refrigerator or on the dashboard, or whatever, but they're just as inspired, that relate to suffering, and also what God accomplishes, through suffering.

And I think one of the passages that's been extremely helpful for us has been 2 Corinthians 4, where he talks about, and not just Romans 8, the sufferings of this present time in what they're doing in us, the glory that they're going to produce in our lives. But a parallel passage with an added dimension in 2 Corinthians 4, these light and momentary afflictions, and you have to look at Paul's life to see what he's defining as light and momentary.

At the same book and what chapter 10 or so he lays out all the suffering that he has been through, he just, it takes your breath away. But these light and momentary afflictions are achieving in us, I think that's the NIV, are accomplishing in us, are producing in us and eternal weight of glory that far outweighs them all. And what he's really saying is, it's not just, well, hang on, you can get through that suffering and one day, you'll be relieved of that suffering forever. Now, that's all true. And if that was the only hope that we had, that would be great hope. But he's actually saying much more than that.

He's saying these afflictions are doing a work of grace in your life. God is using them in your life, to produce an eternal weight of glory, to actually accomplish a purpose that will be far greater for you forever than if these terrible things have not happened to you. And I know I'm speaking





to someone who really gets this. But a lot of people don't get it. I mean, the life that you live is the life that you live.

And so I sometimes kind of guilt trip myself because I'm going, "Well, you're way better off than all these other people." Yeah, but your wife still has this cancer and they're saying she has a 12% chance of surviving, and then something else went wrong. And then it dropped below that and I stopped asking. I didn't really want to hear percentages anymore. But yeah, it's a heavy burden. But at the same time, it's a light and momentary affliction compared to the glory that he's achieving in us.

Some people actually don't like... Anytime we don't like what Scripture says it's kind of revealing. But light and momentary way, that's like an insult. That's like telling everybody, this is a slap in the face. Like, "Are you kidding? What I have experienced." I mean, somebody has been raped, somebody who's loved one has been murdered, somebody a horrific car accident and disabled for the rest of their lives.

You look at all these things, you say, "Wow. That's minimizing them by calling them light and momentary." But I think what the passage is really doing is, I think Scripture comes to grips with the horrors of suffering and displays the horrors of suffering, and there's not... I mean, not just the Book of Job, it's just everywhere. And so it's not minimizing. It's like saying, okay, let's take the Rock of Gibraltar. And if we had gigantic scales, where we could put the rock of Gibraltar on one side of the scales, and then there's... I mean, nothing could be weightier than this. And then we say, Well, what if you had these gigantic cosmic scales. And then on the other side, you put the planet Jupiter.

Well all the sudden, we call the Rock of Gibraltar light and momentary. You could call it light, it's like, it's all relative. In and of itself, it's extremely heavy. And in and of themselves, the suffering we face is sometimes overwhelmingly heavy, but I'm interviewing all these people. And Nancy and her husband, Dave, I think it is. I was interviewing them. And then Nancy said, that she sometimes advises people, and I've used this since, a number of times to write on... She might have said, the top half of a sheet, and I just made it one side of a sheet, all the worst things that ever happened to you.

And for some people one sheet may not be enough. So you can make a couple of sheets, if you want to. All the worst things that have ever happened to me in my life, and then take the other side of the sheet or extra sheets, however it works for you, and then take the best things that have ever happened to you. And then ask yourself the question, "How many of the best things that have ever happened to me, came out of the worst things that happened?" Either directly or indirectly, how many of them came out?

Well, the older I get, and I'm getting very old now. 66, I guess. The older I get, the more I can take the worst things that ever happened to me and see, even now in this life, how God has used them for good will. That used to be maybe I could identify a third of the list that way. Now, I can identify easily two thirds of the list that way. And so for the one third that remains that I still don't see the benefits of can I have faith in God, even faith based on evidence, that two thirds becomes the evidence upon which my faith and the one third is based.

Now, of course, it should be sufficient that I believe God, and this is his word, and it's always true. But I mean, just from what I've seen God do the good that he has brought out of bad in my life. And you've seen that so clearly, and that's so clearly evident in your book, it's faith and trust in a sovereign God and grace is at work in the fiery trials of our lives.

Vaneetha Risner:



While Randy and Nanci are living in the midst of uncertainty, and they don't know how this cancer is going to turn out. But in some ways, they know exactly how everything is going to turn out. We all do. Because for those of us in Christ, happily ever after is a blood-bought promise. And that is one of my favorite quotes from Randy Alcorn. And I say it all the time is, happily ever after is a blood-bought promise for those of us in Christ. So, our future is not uncertain.

Well, I hope you've been encouraged from my guests, as they've all talked about how God has met them in suffering. But I want you to know that none of us here or at least I'm not some super spiritual person that has never struggled in the midst of suffering. And we've all cried. We've all wondered where God was. We've all felt alone and lonely and afraid. So if you're feeling that tonight, don't feel like you're watching people that have never experienced that.

But I would say each one of us has experienced that. But we found as we've leaned into God, looked to God, just said, help me or, as Joni said, just put ourselves into the Scripture of someone in the Bible, who called out to Jesus. And did the same thing that we call out to Him, and God is there, he will never leave us. God uses our suffering, and our suffering will end, it's not going to last forever. And that's why I write. I write to remind myself of the truth, those truths, because we all need to hear them. And that's really why I wrote this memoir is because I needed to remember the truths myself. I needed to remember the truths that I forget when I'm struggling. And I have to read them to remind myself. And Paul Tripp says none of us are grace graduates, so none of us have all that under control.

Crystal Keating:

Thank you for listening today. If you've been inspired by our conversation, please leave us a five-star review. This is a great way to help other people find encouragement from these conversations. And to get our next conversation automatically please subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts. I'm Crystal Keating, and thank you for listening to the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast.

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