

## **Walking Alongside a Struggler**

Many of you work as lay counselors or caregivers in the body of Christ. You have a heart for those who are suffering and are willing to walk with them during the chronic and acute crises of their lives. You also, I am sure, desire to do so carrying the fragrance of Christ with you, knowing He has called us to be like Him. **Let us consider something of what that was like for Him so that we might follow Him into the lives He brings before us.**

**The first thing one must do to enter in to the crisis of another's life is "leave glory."** The leaving must occur before the entering can happen. He left what was rightfully His and entered what was foreign to Him. He left perfect love for hatred, order for chaos, beauty for ugliness, and light for darkness. He left behind functioning as the "self." He is in Heaven so that He might function as a self like us. He put on the cloak of humanity.

You must leave glory if you are to help those in crisis. You must leave that which is familiar, ordered, predictable, and comfortable for you. You must enter into foreign territory where you do not know that way. You must go and encounter things that have never been in your life. You will be forever changed by the sufferings and sin of others.

**Second, in leaving glory, He became little.** He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is eternal, immortal, and infinite. He became unlike Himself. He reduced Himself in size, power, impact, words, and potential to help. He became little for our sakes. He became like us so we could receive Him. His becoming like us is a kind of listening unlike any the world has ever seen. He allowed Himself, as it were, to be "taught" by us about what it is like to be human.

**When you enter a life in crisis, you must become little.** You will not help if you swoop in, tell people what to do, and take over. You need to leave glory and enter in small doses so you can truly listen and understand and be touched by their infirmities. If you have never been chronically sexually abused, you do not know what that kind of life is like. If you have been, you only know your experience, not theirs. Enter in, listen, live with, observe, and learn. Be little; it is about them, not you. You will put yourself into the mix by eyedropper

amounts, just the way the Lord of the Universe has done with you. If He poured everything in His mind into yours, then yours would blow up. You could not hold it, organize it, understand it, or use it.

**Third, in leaving glory, He entered darkness.** He dwelt in the unfamiliar. He carried it. It impacted Him. He who is the light of the world was eclipsed. He who is the Word became silent. HE who is perfection was scarred. His life was touched by many things that were utterly foreign to Him—things that were an assault on Him.

**Typically, when we enter into another's suffering, we try to drag them into our world.** We want them to think what we think, choose what we would choose, understand what we see, and live more like we do. Those are not necessarily bad goals, but you can only get people there by entering into their darkness.

**You must go in and get them *so that* you can bring them out.** You cannot call people out of suffering. You must go in to them and sit with them and listen and understand. Little by little, then, you can begin to walk with them toward a new and different place.

**Fourth, Jesus was not lost in the darkness.** He brought the character of the Father with Him when He became little and entered our darkness. He brought truth and love manifest in the flesh when He came and sat with us. He came into the darkness and sat down bearing the character of the Father, full of grace and truth. He lived out that character while He walked and ate and talked with us. Who He was explained the Father to us. Light began to dawn for us because it was lived out in the flesh in front of us.

**So often we think we need techniques, programs, plans—and those can all be very helpful things.** However, most of all suffering humanity needs the character of God manifest in the flesh before them. People do not just need knowledge *about* the character of God, but also the actual demonstration of it in the flesh, in you. They will know His truth, His love, His mercy, and His grace as we sit with them and live with them and they are greeted with evidence of Him. Someone who has been abused has been saturated with evil, lies, manipulation, humiliation, and rage.

Oh, how they need to sit with the loving and truthful character of Christ in you! They do not just need to hear about, but also experience it in you, in the flesh.

**Fifth, our Lord did not abandon us.** He left glory and entered into our darkness and did not run, even when facing the cross. He felt like running. He was overwhelmed by what He faced, but He did not abandon humanity. He did not leave us alone in our mess. Had He abandoned us, we would have never found our way out. We could not see, we could not think, we could not walk upright. He stays and waits and calls us to come to Him, to come *with* Him.

**You will want to abandon your most difficult clients.** There will be one phone call too many, one mistake too many, one bad choice too many. You will get weary and it will feel heavy. You will want a life free of crises, but the love of the Father does not abandon His own. I see many times how we in the body of Christ start off well with a crisis but do not have staying power. We find it difficult to maintain connection with crises, especially chronic ones, and so we abandon those who have no choice about the presence of suffering in their lives. They cannot abandon the suffering and so must endure it alone. Our Head, who entered in, also does not abandon.

**Sixth, our Lord entered the darkness but He did not catch the disease from which we suffer.** It is very easy to get caught up in the crisis and lose perspective. He did not. He did not sin—even when He suffered with our suffering. He did not allow the chaos, darkness, evil, and noise to destroy Him. He entered into the darkness, but stayed light. He entered into the sickness, but did not get sick.

**Deep beneath your ministry in God's service to the suffering, your roots must go down into Him or you will catch the disease of those with whom you are working. As you walk His way and learn of Him, you will bear His fragrance and His likeness into the dark places of this world.**

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