

Friday, February 13, 2026

The devotions this week are written by Lisa Liou. Lisa is the founder and executive director of All Gen Movement, a Christian ministry dedicated to healing the generations and renewing the Church. She previously served over 20 years with InterVarsity, most recently as Regional Director in the Western US. She is married to Jeff, an ordained CRC minister, and together they live in Monrovia, CA with their two teenagers.

Hebrews 12:2b

*For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

On the one hand, human suffering is natural to our condition in a broken world. On the other hand, there is nothing natural about suffering to humankind. When we are suffering, it is our instinct to end it as quickly as we can. Recent research shows how complex our bodies and minds are at coping with suffering and coming up with ways to survive our traumas and hardships. Something deep inside of us knows that we were not created to suffer indefinitely and it searches for relief by any means necessary.

But suffering is a spiritual practice. Recently I lost my spiritual director of 14 years to an abrupt and short battle with stomach cancer. I was blessed that she gave me an opportunity to come visit her in her at-home hospice care for one final appointment—a farewell. As I sat at the edge of her La-Z-Boy chair and she struggled to speak clearly, the cancer now spread to her lungs, she found enough strength to tell me, “You have borne the pain that you have been given, and you have done it well.”

Of all the final words I might have expected from a spiritual director, this was not on my list. Is that the purpose of the Christian life, I wondered? Upon reflection, I realized that Julie had lived this story with her own life, which hadn’t been easy. She had a son who was an alcoholic and he died an early death the year before. Her husband had nearly lost his life to COVID just before that.

Julie sat for countless hours listening to me monthly for fourteen years, but quietly in the backdrop she was suffering well. She was modeling Christ to me. What does that look like?

It looked like remaining with Jesus, staying the course, keeping a connection to Christ and letting Christ keep that connection to her, keeping her heart open even when it would have been easier to slam it shut. It looked like working through bitterness and what ifs. Closing comparisons and staying clear, with Christ.

I had never seen it before, but Julie was not just there to listen to me and help me listen to God, she was showing me how to bear suffering, disappointment, and heartache well.

Whenever I suffered most acutely, she told me I was doing a good job. I was taking the harder path, not the path of denying pain or bypassing it. Sitting in it and letting Jesus sit with me. No easy answers, but a journey with a suffering savior who had companionship to offer.

I must believe that for Julie it included a deep hope. It wasn’t a “Pollyanna” hope. She knew life was complicated. Until we all get to heaven with Jesus, someone she loved would be suffering. But she had to trust her Savior that it was worth it to put her stock in him and let him be the one true constant and abiding presence in her life.

She knew the reward Jesus was given for looking at the worst of humanity and still loving us. She knew he scorned the shame of the cross, disregarding the narratives that would be placed on him by onlookers, to live for the narrative that really matters.

All week we have been looking at the journey of Christ in sacrifice and denying himself even as a member of the Godhead to the lowest place he could go. And then we saw his resurrection, the other side of sacrifice. Hebrews 12:2b kicks the notion of cosmic child abuse to the curb. Jesus was not abused by his Heavenly Father. But, for the joy set before him, he took on the full pain and death of the cross, seeing through the other side to his reunion with the Father.

As believers, we take on the same journey. Our suffering does not end the sin of the world, but we continue in a prophetic stance as God's representation on earth. We are not called to deal with pain the way the world does - escapism, gluttony, subordinating or controlling others, or even endless pursuits of self-improvement and perfectionism (my favorite sin). We are called to walk through it. To bear it, with joy ahead of us, knowing that on the other side a better reward waits for us.

Take a moment and let your heart be still.

Let Jesus know the honest list of pains you have in your life right now. Ask him what it would like to bear that pain well with him. Ask him what joy and relief will look like in the future.

When you feel ready, in a posture of submission, hold out your hands in front of you, begin with two clenched hands and when you feel the nudge and presence of the Spirit, open your palms up to God. Let God know that whatever comes ahead you want to bear it with him for the joy set before you, the joy of being with him.