



Links Players

WHEN DARKNESS ENTERS OUR LIVES

While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." (Job 1:18-19, NIV)

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU RECEIVED REALLY BAD NEWS? I don't mean the rain-is-coming-down-in-buckets-and-the-course-is-closed bad news. I mean news so bad it hurt. News so bad it grieved you. News so bad you sobbed.

Death is bad news. Sudden death much worse. Some would say there are events more painful than this. Events that must be *lived* with. Events that demand years of recovery. A drunken assault, a paralyzing stroke, a missing child. I find only one way to describe events like these: Darkness has entered our lives.

Go ahead, line up the platitudes, even the scriptural ones. If they are true, there will come a day when I need to hear them. I will need their life in me. Today, though—today I need to cry. Today I need a friend.

Unless I am the one not hurt. Unless I am the one who is meant to bear this burden.

If you've been around a while, you've likely heard the one anothers. These are the directives of God found in his word to come alongside each other. We read that we are to accept one another, encourage one another, forgive one another, love one another. These are the refrigerator verses, the passages you raise your children on.

Then there is this one: Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). There's a weight to that, and not just a metaphorical one. It is hard enough to carry our own loads, to live with our own bad news. But in Christ we are meant to lift the weight off another, to come alongside when it's least convenient and most onerous. Look up that last word in the dictionary and you'll find this definition: oppressively burdensome.

Is this really what we signed up for when we came to Jesus? It is. Oh, we must be careful. We don't want to be Job's overspeaking friends, who came at him with every answer. But neither can we keep our distance and let things work themselves out. In a time of darkness, we are called to do very hard things in the face of very bad news. We do this because of Christ, and we cannot do it without him.

Opening questions What burdens are you being asked to carry right now, either yours or those of another?

READING Psalm 13:1-6; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Galatians 6:2

The questions of darkness (Psalm 13)

How would you describe David's psyche in this psalm? What questions have you asked in times of darkness? What does it take for a heart to be turned to the assurances David expressed in verses 5-6?

Transferring comfort (2 Corinthians 1)

Where does our surest comfort come from? What happens as that comfort fills us (v. 5)? How can you best give the comfort of Christ to a hurting friend?

Stretcher bearers (Galatians 6)

What all is involved in helping to bear the burdens of another? How can you find strength for this daunting work?
