

## Meeting the Ups and Downs of Life – Week 13

### Lesson 5.3 – When a Loved One is Diagnosed with a Terminal Illness

#### **LIFE EXAMPLE – Anger**

Eunice was very angry with her doctors because, from her point of view, they weren't doing enough to help her. In reality, there wasn't much more they could do. Still, she switched doctors twice. She got some help from home healthcare organization, but that didn't last long either. The caregivers did not want to work with Eunice because she was so bitter, angry, and impossible to please.

1. Describe the difficulties that come from trying to help someone who is in this stage of grief.

#### **Light from the Word**

2. We hear about the beginning and end of Job's story. However, let's read **Job 3:1-4, 24-26** to get a sample of the middle of Job's story. How would you describe the tone of Job's words?
3. Job was obviously going through a serious spiritual struggle as his life seemed to fall apart. As depressing as it might seem, Eunice might be encouraged as she studies these words. How so?
4. We know the truth of **Romans 8:28** well—God works all things out for good. That's an easier pill to swallow when our troubles seem small. When we're faced with death, we have a harder time comprehending the good. What good can we point to when a person is angry about an illness?
5. Grief doesn't just affect the person who is diagnosed with an illness—loved ones grieve, too. However, what kinds of relationship issues might develop if Eunice and you (a friend or family member) are at different stages of the grieving process?

#### **LIFE EXAMPLE – Bargaining**

Eunice remains terribly frustrated. She tells you that she is praying and praying that God will make her healthy again. She has promised God that if he heals her, she will give all of the money she would be spending on hospital care to Martin Luther College, so that more people have an easier path to becoming pastors and teachers and more people will hear about Jesus through their service. How could God not take that deal? Still, she's not getting any better.

6. The bargaining stage isn't healthy. A person's thought process is completely skewed and disconnected from reality. What false assumptions lead people to think they can bargain with God?
  
7. What would you say to Eunice as she complains that her bargaining has gotten her nowhere?

### **Light from the Word**

8. Read **1 Samuel 1:10-11**. Hannah wanted a son and prayed fervently for one. What similarities and differences do you notice between Hannah and Eunice?
  
9. God said "Yes" to Hannah. What caution should we give when we share this story with Eunice?
  
10. Read **Romans 8:31-32**. What truth does Eunice need to hear from these words?
  
11. In **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**, Paul prayed that God would take away some sort of affliction. Explain what God's answer to Paul means for those who want to bargain with God.

### **LIFE EXAMPLE – Depression**

Bargaining with God didn't work. Eunice gives up. Deep in self-pity, she sees no hope for her future. Since she doesn't sleep well, she is listless and lies around all day. She forgets things easily. She neglects to take care of much of anything, including herself. She says, "What's the use if I'm just going to die soon?"

12. Depression is a nasty thing to deal with. Where does depression focus people's attention?
  - a. What else does depression do that makes it so hard to deal with, both personally and as a loved one of someone who is in this stage of grief?

## Light from the Word

13. In many ways, the thoughts in **Psalm 88:13-18** reflect the thoughts of a person suffering from depression. Using this psalm as a guide, describe some of the feelings Eunice might be feeling.
14. How might you use this psalm as you talk with Eunice?
15. When Paul wrote **Romans 8:37-39**, he and many other Christians were suffering. List the comforts that you can share with Eunice as she suffers.

## LIFE EXAMPLE – Acceptance

As time passes, Eunice begins to accept the fact that she is going to die. She trusts that her Savior loves her and that she will be in heaven. When she sees a tear in your eye as you visit with her, she says, “I know. It’s been a rough road. But it’s going to be over soon, whenever the Lord decides to take me home.”

16. Is your work of encouraging over once Eunice reaches this stage? Why or why not?
17. In **2 Corinthians 4:7-15**, God reminds us that he uses frail, ordinary human vessels to convey his precious gospel. He follows with a description of the hope every Christian has. Look at each “comparison” in verses 8 and 9. How are each of these things true for someone like Eunice?
18. What light do these verses shed on the purpose of human suffering?
19. How might Eunice’s suffering be a benefit to others?
20. At each stage of grieving, Eunice has needed help in slightly (or majorly) different ways. What does that tell you about what our first step should be as loved ones who want to help?
21. What does this tell us about the process of offering help to those who suffer from terminal illness?

## Prayer – 783 Abide with Me v. 7

**Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes; shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.  
Heav’n’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee; in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!**