

Life is definitely uncertain

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

It seems that life can throw you a curve ball sometimes. When things appear to be heading along a particular course and suddenly tragedy strikes and throws everything else up into the air, sometimes we find ourselves unprepared to handle it. Life is definitely uncertain, and often this means unexpected pain. It is at times like this when everything that we hold as true is challenged, our faith is confronted head on, and the reality of God, his penetrating love, and saving grace is almost always on trial.

Today is one of those days for some people close to me. One of my good friends and partners in practical pieces of serving Jesus, in behind-the-scenes labors of love kind of stuff, is in the hospital today. They recently found cancer and are attempting to remove it. Like me, he is a family man with young children and many people need him. Believe me when I say that lots of family and friends are praying and pleading for big things. This is no time for apathetic Christianity.

Another person close to me will be burying the body of his mother today. I will lead the service. Their relationship was extremely close and they experienced the kind of deep love that few ever understand. He has the comfort of knowing her eternity is with Jesus and yet his heart is torn into shreds. She was 51. Somehow he must find a way to live anew. So much of his life is altered from here forward and things will never be the same as before. Philosophy and pop-psychology mean nothing now; he needs Jesus.

I got a call late last night. Two heart-struck parents standing stunned at the County Hospital in Ventura waiting for the helicopter to arrive. Their precious daughter was being airlifted to Cedar Sinai in Los Angeles. Global warming, political unrest, terrorism, economic doom, and even rescue efforts in Haiti — everything they are talking about on the news fades away when catastrophe hits at home. If only the clock would stand still and the high-speed motion of the world would pause and realize that a personal crisis is happening now and it is life and death. But it doesn't, and most won't, and in the midst of the chaos; Jesus' light still pierces through the darkness to give hope and answers to those who are looking.

Many of my favorite heroes of the Bible had their lives turned upside down by an unexpected tragedy. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Elijah, Moses, the list goes on and on. When his cousin, John (the baptizer), was suddenly

killed for his cause, the Scriptures record the very real impact this had on Jesus and his need to get away from the commotion to pray. Each of these stories ultimately tell of success beyond the circumstance, purpose through the pain, "beauty from ashes."

There is a commercial on television that uses the slogan "Life Comes at You Fast." They are trying to sell auto insurance. The message is effective because the simple phrase rings true to our real experience. The Bible authenticates this universal truth; bad things happen in an evil world that needs redemption. But the message of Jesus is not to satisfy a temporal need for financial insurance but an eternal need for saving assurance. It may be a smart thing to do to carry car insurance in the culture and society that you and I live in today, it is also a wise thing to invest in the eternal assurance that is only offered in Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of the world.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View