



PEACE

IN THE

*Waiting*

WHEN YOU  
LOVE PEOPLE  
WHO DON'T  
LOVE GOD

JUNE CHAPMAN



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Books for Courageous Women  
from David C Cook

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# **This Situation Feels Unfair**

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In fifth grade, I won the red-and-black mountain bike in a school-wide raffle. On a flight home from vacation in college, I won the passenger grand prize giveaway: two hundred dollars. I've won holiday gift baskets at multiple office parties. I've won social media giveaways. I've never purchased a lottery ticket, but I've often thought I should give it a shot. I've always been a lucky person.

I feel much the same way when it comes to my faith. I had every advantage growing up. I was raised in a Christian household, went to church most Sundays, attended Sunday school and vacation Bible school, and had some degree of solid Christian community. I never had an overwhelmingly negative experience at church, and most of the religious folks I knew were genuine and well-meaning. Most of my extended family identified at least culturally as Christian, and what's more, I was raised in South Carolina, right in the middle of the Bible Belt.

In terms of external obstacles to faith, I've had very few. So I can get caught up on the fact that so many of my nonbelieving friends didn't have the same advantages I did. I often feel less chosen, more

like I was entered into a cosmic birth lottery and hit the jackpot. Sometimes, it feels unfair to me, like I had a better shot than others. This thought keeps me up at night. Even more than the pain, confusion, doubt, and despair I feel about my loved ones' eternities, my own luck distresses me.

Maybe this thought has crossed your mind as well. I have friends who come from abusive homes, friends who grew up in families that followed different religions or none at all, and many friends whose backgrounds include some questionable church theology or even mistreatment by church congregations or leadership. It's no wonder that of the few of them who *have* realized the possibility of God's existence, even fewer have chosen to follow Him. Such a leap to faith would be great. And the odds of it happening just seem low.

I feel that even if I shared the gospel with these friends a thousand times over, their response would, at best, be, "That's nice." In fact, I'd go so far as to say I have done this. Perhaps not a thousand times, but definitely dozens. Still, the people I love go about their daily lives apart from Christ, terrifyingly unaware of what eternity could hold for them.

If you're anything like me, you read the accounts in the Bible of entire villages rejecting the gospel and Jesus's command for the disciples to leave those towns and shake the dust from their feet,<sup>1</sup> and you think to yourself, *What if people I love live in that town?* And you might wonder, *How could a God who crafted man in His image, ordaining each individual's personal existence, leave entire cities behind, shaking the dust from His feet on the way out?* If we were to stop here, we might say this all seems pretty unfair, if not cruel. Especially when our loved ones seem to be in that "village."

One night after sharing dinner at Charlotte's apartment, I was struck particularly hard by the realization that this person I adored continued to live her life separated from her Creator—and she didn't even know. No words of mine seemed to have an impact on her beliefs or even her curiosity. Walking to my car that evening, I couldn't stop thinking, *If she were to die today, she'd spend eternity in a place most of us don't like to think about, let alone discuss.* The unfairness of the situation seemed to wrap around my heart and constrict it.

Crying the entire way home, I let God know how confused I was. I let Him know how little sense it made that He'd created mankind only to let so many be consumed by the world, never learning to worship Him. I turned off the radio and the air conditioner, and I drove home with tears blurring the streetlights. It seemed to be a very cruel world, indeed. But as I cried out to the Lord, I felt the Spirit gently remind me that I was right—nothing in this world *is* entirely fair, and it never will be. This world, in many regards, is an experience in cruelty.

But there's good news too: God is not cruel. And He's certainly not unfair. In fact, He meets us in the unfairness we experience. He comforts us. He redeems our brokenness. He even sent His Son to die on the cross so that all the unfair, cruel realities of this life would eventually pass away. They're fading to dust, day by day. And one day, very soon, they will be no more.

Thanks to Jesus, all the suffering we don't understand now will be made clear in eternity. Our view of fairness might even be conformed to God's all-knowing perspective. One day, we won't have to wonder anymore. We won't drive home crying, afraid of what lies ahead for the people we love most.

I'm looking forward to that day ... but I don't live there yet.

## Reflection Room

**Wrestle:** Are you ever tempted to view God as unfair or even cruel in this season of waiting? As we begin our journey, consider spending some time in the Psalms as you process your pain. See how the psalmists direct their sorrows back to God as a good Father, even when they are under debilitating distress. Reflect on their heart postures of worship and surrender. Remember the power and might of God described in Psalm 33, paying particular attention to verses 20–22:

Our soul waits for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.  
For our heart is glad in him,  
because we trust in his holy name.  
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,  
even as we hope in you.

## Some Things Are Not Ours to Know

Recently, I had a discussion with a wise mentor at my church. Her mother had passed away unexpectedly, leaving their family to grieve and grapple with unanswered questions. Despite a lifetime of service, prayer, and concern for her mother, my mentor doesn't know if her

mother ever repented before Christ. As a result, she doesn't know where her mother resides in eternity. She doesn't know if she will ever see her mother again.

Deeply troubled, she turned to her husband with her questions, fears, and sorrow. He comforted her by sharing a sentiment that might help quiet your questioning heart as well: some things are not ours to know.

On the surface, this didn't feel like much of a comfort to me. But mulling it over, I realized that we all come to the Lord in the same way: by *faith*. And in faith, our hearts can be comforted in the knowledge that, while we don't know all things, our Father in heaven does. He knows all things and ordains all things in the context of His perfect, unceasing love. In our faith, we trust our Father. And who better to trust so wholly than a Father who sees all that we are and loves us completely in spite of ourselves?

I bet we've all received our fair share of well-intentioned comforting with reminders of God's omniscience and sovereignty. We can also be encouraged by Scripture. I'm reminded of Romans 8:28, in particular, which reads, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV).

I know, you've probably heard that a million times. But consider this: He doesn't just work in all *things*. He also works in the hearts of all *people*. He knows the state of our hearts: hardened or inclined to Him, willing to see Him or not. God made my friend Charlotte. It's even more comforting to meditate on the fact that He knows Charlotte better than I do. He's intimately familiar with her heart, and He knows the paths her life will take.

*He doesn't just work in all things. He also works in the hearts of all people.*

When I revisit my thoughts on the unfairness of life, I land on the same conclusion every time: when we expect *only* good things from the world—fairness, justice, peace, clarity—we're sure to be disappointed. This world is not fair. Shrouded in sin, the world is full of confusing, painful, unfair circumstances. Ironically, it is our own doing. Sin paves the way for worlds of pain. We ourselves are the inventors of the cruelty we experience.

When we try to reconcile our lives with how God intended for us to live before the fall of man in the garden of Eden, we'll be continually perplexed and dismayed. We can see remnants of that life, of course. We can enjoy the beauty of God's creation. We can revel in covenant signs like rainbows. We can experience God's love displayed through others. We can welcome all the wonderful emotions that we were created to experience—joy, excitement, amusement, awe, and peace, to name a few. We can appreciate God's artistry in our friends and family and neighbors. These beautiful parts of our design are shattered fragments of our intended lives lying all around us like broken mirror pieces reflecting back to us the glory of God.

But this world in all its brokenness, bearing the depravity and weight of sin, will never measure up. A wide expanse exists between this broken world and the new world to come. And so, when this world does not live up to our expectations, it's okay to mourn. *We should*

mourn. But we can let it be our aim to mourn well, remembering that some things are not ours to know.

## *Reflection Room*

**Recall:** Psalm 139:13–14 and reflect on how it applies to your loved ones. To whom do they belong? Be comforted in the knowledge that God knows your loved ones because He ordained their existence before time began. He formed them intricately out of His deep love.

For you formed my inward parts;  
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
my soul knows it very well.

## **Go Therefore and Make Disciples**

Walking this journey of mourning feels acutely unfair because the eternal fate of people is something we were made to care deeply about.

We were created to be disciples of Christ, sharing God's love with others through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our

hearts. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” When we start to take salvation personally, we’re literally living out our global purpose as commissioned by God Himself. It’s a call that demands our time, our resources, and our unique personalities.

I won’t lie though—I haven’t always thought of it that way. For much of my life, I’ve kept a busy calendar, running from one appointment to the next to fit in workouts, dinner with friends, social activities, work ... you name it. I’ve lived much of life so busy and distracted that even in sharing the gospel I never paused to consider that my friends, coworkers, and neighbors might be living and dying completely separated from God.

The pandemic changed all that.

For the first time, my schedule was cleared. My plans were canceled. My life seemed rather empty. I still had lots of friends and a wide social circle, but the entire world was on lockdown for a while, and everything came to a crashing stop. As people were dying of the COVID-19 virus, I opened my eyes to the quickly coming eternity and began to seriously consider what might happen to the people I loved if nothing changed.

In the quietness of my home, I was struck deeply with concern for their souls. Don’t get me wrong. I’d shared the gospel with good intentions and hope in my heart, and I’d been troubled by the world’s separation from its Maker. But this time, the observation was accompanied by a deeper burden and heaviness than in the past. Where previously I’d cared and then moved on to the next obligation on my schedule, now I sat in silence before the Lord until my care grew into deep and paralyzing sorrow.

In solitude, I wasn't quite sure what to do with all that grief.

If you're anything like me, you may have grappled with that sorrow too, especially as we were forced to face the constant threat of death on a global scale. Questions about the eternal lives of people I didn't even know weighed heavily on me. Where were all these people going?

I was caught off guard at first. I would describe my newfound awareness as sort of an encompassing darkness for which there seemed to be no immediate light. I became deeply confused and frustrated by the unfairness I perceived. But then I realized that these negative emotions were never part of God's original design. I certainly hadn't read about confusion and frustration *before* the fall of man.

*As I began to go before the Lord  
in search of answers and comfort,  
He reminded me in His Word to  
approach Him in faith because  
faith, when exercised, grows.*

Things *weren't* fair. Things weren't as they *should* be. I began to realize that my feelings of unfairness stemmed from my unmet expectations. None of this was what I would choose. My mission to go and make disciples felt extraordinarily difficult, and I felt like I was being set up for failure. I had a whole laundry list of complaints. I needed to figure out what to do with all my angst. As I began to go before the Lord in search of answers and comfort, He reminded me in His Word to approach Him in faith because faith, when exercised, *grows*.

Hebrews 4:15–16 is one such reminder. We can bring our needs before God and trust that He will meet us with His mercy.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

He comforted me with gentle, tenderhearted mercy. It soon became clear that before I could move forward, I needed to lament over the fact that the people I loved most had not come to know their Father in heaven or to understand His love for them. I felt acutely aware of their separation and of the difficulty of the mission set before me.

Lament is a concept we see in Scripture. When we experience suffering or loss, we feel pain. But rather than absorbing our grief or sorrow, letting those feelings infiltrate our attitudes and outlook, we can take our pain to God in lament.

In the Word, we see psalmists lament their distress, calling out to God for deliverance. In the book of Job, we read about Job's suffering and his expressions of lament to the Lord as he seeks understanding for his circumstances. And in Romans 9, we even see examples of lament over the spiritual condition of other people (vv. 1–4). Scripture is full of lamentation.

*Our* lament is for our loved ones. We want them to experience salvation, much in the way Paul describes Christ in Colossians 1:19–23:

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Here, Paul makes it clear: We have been separated from God by our sin against Him. We've directed our love not to God but to idols, whether those are ourselves or things in the world. We all deserve His just judgment. He is perfect, and in our brokenness, we cannot stand before Him.

But the gospel changes everything. The gospel message is this: Though we have turned from God, He has pursued us. He came to us in the person of Christ, whose sacrifice on the cross paid the price for our sin. Through faith in Christ, we can be reconciled to the Lord.

Salvation comes when we put our faith in these truths and their source—Jesus. I want my loved ones to follow Him and to live for His glory. I want them to place their faith in Christ and be restored to our Father by His grace alone. I want them to walk in the truth of Titus 2:11–14:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Bearing in mind our Great Commission, we know that the desire we carry for the salvation of our loved ones is inherently good. What we're grieving is the difference between the good things we long for and the confusing reality we observe. Before we dive into our peace-seeking journey, we can acknowledge our frustration and pain.

There's one more thing we might need to acknowledge before we move forward on this journey together. I'm confident that, as Bible-believing Christians, we all believe the gospel message we've just walked through. And yet, even *we* may have differing convictions on some matters of Scripture. We're talking about a deeply personal, deeply painful topic. It is possible that you and I might come to this message with differing perspectives or interpretations. Believers across the centuries have approached the dynamics of God's will and human free will from different perspectives, especially as they pertain to salvation.

I'd like you to feel very welcome here, wherever you stand and whatever you've experienced. As you read this book, please take what

is helpful and feel free to leave the rest. My struggles might not be your struggles. And we may not align on every thought or question or interpretation I present. But as Bible-believing Christians, we have the divine privilege of bearing with one another in love despite any unique convictions we might bring to the table.

I wish I could share a cup of tea with you and listen to your concerns and questions and understand the ways you process those things through your unique lens. I wish I could learn about the journey that led you to this book and pray with you for all the lost people you love. I am so thankful that we are united in the message of the gospel. I'm confident that we have more things in common than we have differences. And if we ever do get to meet, I promise to be quick to listen.

So if I present any individual viewpoints through these pages that don't align with your understanding or with your struggle, I encourage you to converse with mature believers in your life and carry one another's burdens as you seek to find peace in your waiting. I encourage you to stand firm in your convictions and to be curious, to listen long, and to love well. And I ask humbly for your abundant grace.

My desire in discussing such a deeply personal challenge is to live out the apostle Paul's command found in Ephesians 4:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in

love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (vv. 1–3)

It is so appropriate that this passage of Scripture concludes with the idea of peace—and not only peace but our “bond of peace.” I hope that we can walk in peace together. But know that I desire to point you not to me, my words, or my understanding as your source of peace but only to Christ.

Division over the interpretations of Bible-believing brothers and sisters is another thing I often pause and lament on this side of heaven. Division is brutal. We’re here together because we mourn being divided from people we love over the most important thing in the entire world: the gospel. We know Christ, and the people we love do not. If we’re not careful, even mourning this divide can lead us to focus on ourselves rather than on Jesus and all He came to offer.

So, as we practice lament over unmet expectations and unfairness in any area of life, we should take care not to sink into self-pity. When we refuse joy, we invite steady streams of sorrow. I know because I experienced it! My despair over my lost friends became soul crushing. Isolating. It did not reap hope.

In time, I have learned to grieve in a way that promotes healing: by taking all that pain and bringing it before the Lord in lament. Our Father in heaven is eager to show us His gentle loving-kindness, to listen to our hurting hearts, and to fill us with steadfast hope. But before we can *make* progress, we must be willing to *seek* it.

I encourage you to open that line of communication with the Lord and give Him your life as a stage upon which to present His grace.

## Reflection Room

**Request:** Lord, thank You for the deep care You've given me for the lost. Please give me the strength to bring You my lament. Even as I experience the unfairness in the world, let me also experience Your merciful loving-kindness. Let my pain not keep me from You but instead keep me running to You.

## Let My Heart Be Tender

As my months of prayer for Charlotte continued, my heart began to harden. I even began to avoid time with God. Rarely have I been more miserable. I came to realize that a *heart with tough walls around it has a very hard time letting in joy*. In many ways, this hardening carried into my relationships as well.

I became impatient. I felt less empathy. I didn't have a lot of space to give to the problems of others. My own suffering kept me from showing up well in the lives of the people I loved. I was so focused on my own pain that I couldn't see the struggles of others. A stubborn heart replaced my servant's heart, as I punished myself through an unwillingness to rely humbly on God.

In these prolonged times, there was one plea that would eventually pull me back into a place of trust. That plea was a cry to God to let my heart be tender. My prayer journal captures me begging God on more than one occasion to give me back my tenderness, to end the cycles

of misery, and to let the pain coexist with the joy He wants us all to experience.

When we're left to our own devices, pain has the capacity to overwhelm us and blind us to God's goodness. That unchecked pain can suffocate our trust in God. It can distract us from the mission He has set before us. It can cause us to grow weary.

In moments of irritation, we can listen to the Lord speak gently to us from His Word. Psalm 16:5–6 reminds us:

The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

When we're tempted to dwell on unfairness, this psalm reminds us that the Lord has foreseen our circumstances and has always been present, leading us through even the situations that seem the most unjust. Our relationships, our struggles, our pain ... they aren't surprises to Him. Our Father has placed good boundary lines around our lives. He's using the things that seem unfair to us to draw us closer to Him. He's using our painful moments to refine us and sanctify us. The boundary lines don't separate or punish us, but rather, they lead us back to the Father.

Though religious events weren't common in her life growing up, Charlotte would occasionally attend church with relatives. From the way I understand it, this proved to be more harmful than helpful. Church messages delivered more promises of hell than of hope. But for a time, as a child, Charlotte did consider the existence of a higher

power that might, for some people, be called God. She told me, though, that the most plausible version of a god she could come up with was nothing more than an apathetic creator who'd made the earth, populated it with people, and then sat idly by, watching from a distance and leaving the creations to their own devices, come what may.

You and I have the divine privilege of knowing that nothing could be further from the truth. Our God is intimately involved in the details. He sees our friends and family, and He pursues them. He sees our confusion, and He wants to comfort us. That doesn't mean He'll give us all the answers. Some things are simply not ours to know. But rest assured that God is not limited by the unfairness we perceive in the world. He operates in a plane that exists above brokenness. None of us are outside His reach.

*When we're left to our own devices,  
pain has the capacity to overwhelm  
us and blind us to God's goodness.*

I might've once thought myself lucky, but in matters of salvation, luck's got nothing to do with it. God isn't pulling names out of His hat in a cosmic raffle. He sees all people, and He knows all hearts. He loves our sweet friends and family ten thousand times more than we can possibly imagine. He is totally unlimited by human standards of fairness or chance. Rest in the Lord's great love and know that His plan is not at all random. Rather, it is based on a great knowing, not only of the end result but also of the details in between.



## *Prayer Starter*

Thank You, Father, for the ways that You are mindful of my friends and family. You hold their lives in Your hands, and You love them deeply. When circumstances feel acutely unfair to me, I am even more thankful that my view is incomplete and limited. Please be gentle with me in my confusion and pain. Please let my heart not be hardened by frustration or impatience. Let me bring my hurt to You rather than filling my mind and schedule with distractions. Please keep my heart tender and allow me to receive the comfort and joy that You have for me even in the waiting.