

Managing and Overcoming Grief: By God's Word and Prayer without Ceasing

Pastor Edward D. Seely

My Grief

My Grief

- I'm living my worst nightmare.
- Throughout most of my life, my precious wife, Carol, has been by my side. On a few occasions, I had a nightmare that Carol had died. It was a horrible nightmare, so anguishing that it would shortly jolt me awake, and the first thing I did was to look at her: What a huge relief to see her sleeping there beside me! Then I'd thank God it was only a bad dream!
- It has now been over 10 years since Carol died of what was diagnosed as "an atypical form of Parkinson disease."
- I feel times of sadness everyday. Sometimes I think, "Oh I wish the alarm would go off, and I'd wake up and see her still here with me."
- I'm greatly comforted by the Biblical revelation pertaining to reunion in heaven for believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, and that this time apart is only temporary, even though it's becoming what I call "a long temporary." Thanks be to God, that reality is the key to how he's getting me through it. I'll now explain how and with applications for you.

My Grief

- God gave me the most wonderful wife I could have ever asked for, the wife of my dreams. Carol and I had a wonderful marriage of 48 ½ years. She might give a different adjective or number, the latter pertaining not to the quantity of years but to the quality, since we had our share of arguments. At times she would say to me, “We need to talk.” Then I knew I was in trouble; most of which involved my spending too much time at church meetings, but based on what she said to me before she died, I don’t think her assessment now would be too different from mine. She served the Lord superbly as my wife and partner in life and ministry.
- In fact, I’m constantly comforted by her words to me about our marriage, which are a huge blessing and clearly Providential, for which I repeatedly and fervently thank God in eternal gratitude for her! I greatly look forward to being with her again and then forever!
- Thanking God is a powerful blessing. Practice it. Giving thanks, especially to God, is transformative. We’ll return to this subject shortly.

My Grief

- I periodically think how good it would be to have Carol here with me.
- But then, the next immediate thought is, “Oh that would be so good...for me...but not for her.” This “atypical form of Parkinson disease” was not a lesser but a more difficult form of that disease, and it was worsening. In spite of all that, Carol never complained; the most she would ever say, when she was experiencing extreme discomfort, was, “Oh, I wish I didn’t have PD.”
- Well, the day came when God relieved her of her struggle and brought her home in glory with Him. I cannot adequately describe how much I miss her and feel that pain, especially at certain times each day, without her beside me.
- Even after all these many years, I have times of sadness every day. For those of us who have had a good marriage, the grief continues to resurface. Thus, I maintain it is more realistic and helpful to view our task as managing grief, rather than trying to eliminate it. A physiologist friend says the same about stress: The most realistic and helpful perspective is to manage, not eliminate, stress, and that is true for grief as well, especially for those who have lived most of their lives with a beloved spouse in the one flesh marital bond God designed.

My Grief

We read in Genesis 2:18 that “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” The original Hebrew word for suitable is כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*kěnegdô*), like his counterpart; literally, like his corresponding opposite. Woman was formed by God to be man’s counterpart. Neither is complete without the other. They fulfill each other, especially in Christ Jesus.

She is of his substance and is his corresponding opposite, his helper for God’s purposes. They are equally loved and valued by God but have different purposes and different abilities in order to accomplish those purposes.

The woman completes the man, supplying what he lacks, and he completes her, supplying what she needs. The relationship is fullest and in its most profound manifestation in the one flesh, psychophysical, relationship provided by the powerful marital bond. However, all humans find in the opposite sex a fulfillment and joy in experiencing and appreciating what the other contributes to human relationships. And, to those faithful to him, who do not marry, or become unmarried, God gives gifts to accomplish his calling for them (cf., Matthew 19:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 7.) and to enjoy relating to those of the opposite sex. Can you imagine a world with only men? Or with only women?

My Grief

Dr. Michelle Cretella, President of the American College of Pediatricians, cites sound science demonstrating that there are only two sexes, as revealed in the Bible. (Genesis 1-2). She further states that “There are 6,500 genetic differences between men and women.”* Clearly, women are much more than “little men,” as some say. Thanks be to God!

Here is empirical evidence of what כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*kěnegdô*)—like his counterpart, literally, like his corresponding opposite—means. Woman was formed by God to be man’s counterpart.

This is one reason why I say that I miss Carol so greatly. I feel incomplete without her by my side. I have a Carol-size cavern within me, a huge hole in my heart that only she can fill. Thanks be to God, we’ll be together again and then forever! Since God brought her into my life, I am significantly different, much better, than I was before we met, developed such a powerful relationship, and became one flesh in marriage.

* <https://tfpstudentaction.org/blog/dr-michelle-cretella-on-transgender-ideology> (Accessed 7/15/21).

My Grief

- In fact, as a social science researcher and ordained pastor, teacher, and counselor for well over half a century, in this country and many others throughout the world, I know why people turn to many destructive means of trying to escape such pain, including but not limited to, all kinds of substance abuse, denial, immorality, and even suicide.
- Yet these choices harm and destroy not only the one suffering but many others.
- Without God, when people lose who or what they value most, what is left for them? God alone provides the means to manage and overcome.
- A vital part of the means to this management is the message he has given us to help them. How we do that, we'll consider shortly.

My Grief

- I tell you all this so you'll know and understand the source and intensity of my grief and **how real God's help is for me and for you**, as we encounter, manage, and overcome—with his help—this stark reality God warned Adam and Eve would occur if they introduced the evil that would bring death into God's beautiful creation by disobeying him.
- Carol is, and always will be, so much a part of me, that, as some of you have heard me readily testify, if it weren't for God's constant help, I'd be a basket case. He has given me the purpose and the power to not only survive but to thrive, though with a sense of profound loss that mitigates the joy I had when Carol was here. I long to be with her together with our triune God in his eternal service, including in his worship and presence—together again and forever!
- **He and his all-sufficient help—in and through Christ Jesus—are immediately responsive and available whenever moments of sadness emerge.**

My Grief

- He helps me in many ways, some of which I'll mention here. In all these ways, he is enabling me be well and productive. Much of this enabling began decades ago. For most of the over 10 years since he brought Carol home, he's given me a lot of work to do for the church, now mostly in Asia. That productivity, all from God, is encouraging, for the standard for mental and psychological health is functionality, being able to accomplish what one needs to do.
 - That functioning occurs in different ways with different people. He helps us in some ways uniquely and in some ways the same, such as serving him in the church, the very body of Christ.
- God comforts me by the awareness that I always wanted what was best for Carol, and now she has it! How could I ever be angry with God?! I never have! Thanks be to our triune God, I have the assurance she is with him, pain free with no more suffering forever, and that I can and will be with her again... together in God's eternal service, including in his worship and in his very presence!

My Grief

- That reality really helps!
- On occasion, when I think of some of the countless blessings she brought to me as my wife, I sometimes contrast the things I said that I shouldn't have said and things I didn't do that I should have done, I feel intense regret, and all the “coulda, shoulda, wouldas” start surging to the surface of my consciousness, and that adds to my grief.
 - E.g., “I think, ‘Oh, could have done this...’ ‘I should have done that.’ ‘If only I would...have sharpened those knives much sooner, the knives she needed—and which would have made it so much easier for her—to prepare the excellent meals she so faithfully provided every day.’”
 - Then I think, “Oh, how I wish I could tell Carol.”
- Several times each day, I think of subjects and feelings about which I'd like to talk with her, and I can't, which exacerbates my sadness...But this I can do, and it instantly pulls me out of my sadness! I can ask God to let Carol know what I'd like her to know; she's right there with him!

My (and Your) Help: Our Triune God

“God is our refuge and strength, A very present help....”

(Psalm 46:1)

How God Helps

1. God helps all people throughout the whole world, whether they know and/or acknowledge that the good in their lives is from him or not (e.g., Matthew 5:45; James 1:17a,b). In all we observe: **if it's good it's from God.**
2. Yet, in order to have the greatest blessings from, most of all with, God, for eternity, we must be in a relationship with him, through regeneration (the new birth) and nurture that relationship (in the sanctification process). Our relationship with God is nurtured by communicating with, and obeying, him.
 - It is essential to understand and remember that since God is entirely love (e.g., 1 John 4:8), his being is also holy, in fact holy, holy, holy—the Hebrew way of saying Most Holy—which means he will not permit in his presence, or associate with, those who are sinful and unrighteous, who offend him, including by harming people he loves.
 - Thus, he does not hear the prayers of the unrighteous. (Nehemiah 1:6; Psalm 17:1; Isaiah 1:15; 59:2; John 15:7,16; James 5:16; 1 Peter 3:12)
 - How do people become righteous in God's sight?

How God Helps

2. We must have a relationship with God, through regeneration (the new birth) and nurture that relationship (in the sanctification process). Our relationship with God is nurtured by communicating with, and obeying, him.
 - a. We enter that relationship with God through baptism and when we believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior and Lord. At that point, we experience regeneration, being born again (John 3:3-21), and the accompanying justification, the once for all declaration by God that we are righteous in his sight. By our faith in Christ Jesus we are credited with his righteousness and enter God's kingdom, his rule in people's hearts and minds. (Romans 4)
 - b. Our sanctification, our progressive maturing in Christlikeness, occurs as we read God's Word, obey (asking God's forgiveness and help to do better when we sin disobeying his Word), do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10), and pray daily, and worship him on at least a weekly basis with others in a church congregation where God's Word is faithfully preached and taught.

How God Helps

3. True communication in any relationship is two-way; it is not a monologue. We need to listen as well as to talk, especially with God.
 - a. To communicate with God, we need to attend to what he has to say to us in his Word, and do so every day.
 - b. In our most significant relationships, we plan times to meet with the key people in our lives. We must plan to meet with God regularly—individually daily and with the church at least weekly—since God is the most important being in our lives, our most important relationship.
 - c. Since Christ Jesus has brought us into relationship with God and connected us with him, we can talk with him; we can talk with God at any time. In fact, he calls us to do so “without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17. See how Nehemiah constantly prayed brief prayers without ceasing, e.g., 1:4ff.; 2:4; 4:4,9; 5:19; 6:9,14; 13:14,22,29,31)
 - d. What does God mean, that we should pray “without ceasing,” and how do we do so? That is the subject to which we now turn.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” (James 1:17a,b)

Preface: Friends and Family, in this presentation, I am not just teaching a class and offering Biblical, theological, and other principles. This is a personal testimony. I'm saying that these truths from God's Word are my experience. This is how very practical Bible doctrine is. So how is God helping me, and how does he help others?

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - a. God communicates with us through his Word.
 - 1) Consider just a few passages.
 - a) “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)
 - b) “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5, quoted in Hebrews 13:5)

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” (James 1:17a,b)

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - a. God communicates with us through his Word.
 - 1) Consider just a few passages.
 - c) Jesus said, “...surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)
 - d) Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
 - Notice in this verse even Jesus speaks of overcoming, with implied management of the evil in the world, but not yet eliminating the evil. He will do that when he returns in his Second Coming for the final judgment. The Greek word Jesus used for “overcome,” is νενίκηκα (*nenikēka*), which means “I have conquered.” Everything is under his sovereign rule and control.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” (James 1:17a,b)

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
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 - c) Jesus said, “...surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)
 - d) Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
 - 2) The Holy Spirit uses the Word he inspired the prophets and apostles to write in order to equip, guide, and bless us in abundance.
 - 3) When I wonder what to do in certain situations, many passages directly by command or by principle guide me as to what his will is in such matters.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” (James 1:17a,b)

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - a. God communicates with us through his Word.
 - 4) An especially helpful way to study, understand, and remember God’s Word is by subject category, or as it is also called, doctrine, theology, especially [historic Christian systematic theology](#).
 - a) Pertaining to our subject for today, the doctrine of eschatology (the study of what the Bible teaches about the last things) is very helpful. For example the special meaning of the original Greek word, καινός (*kainos*), new (in nature or in quality, i.e., renewed, not brand new), as in the new heaven and new earth revealed in Revelation 21:1, indicates we will have continuity with our present life in Christ but without sin and evil and their disastrous effects now experienced.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” (James 1:17a,b)

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - a. God communicates with us through his Word.
 - 4) An especially helpful aspect of historic Christian systematic theology is eschatology, the Biblical teaching about the end: the end of this phase of life individually and corporately, i.e., of history, and what will take place in eternity, especially for believers in and followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - b) One example of this continuity, expressed by *kainos*, is seen several verses later in the chapter (Revelation 21:24-27), showing the connection between our current life and our coming purified life in the new heaven and new earth, the revelation of which already now provides a highly encouraging perspective that helps us manage life today.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,” (James 1:17a,b)

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - a. God communicates with us through his Word.
 - 4) An especially helpful aspect of historic Christian systematic theology is eschatology.
 - c) In the study of eschatology, here is another, very encouraging, aspect of *kainos*, i.e., renewed, indicating continuity. Though we won't be married, since Jesus said there is no marriage in heaven (Matthew 22:30), knowing God and knowing Carol, I'm assured she and I can continue to have a special relationship, love bond, and be partners together in eternal life and service to God as he wills, including in his worship and very presence and with all God's other people, including our loved ones in Christ forever! What an exceeding joy to contemplate! **Yes, that makes my spirit soar out of sadness!**

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,...” (James 1:17a,b)

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit, who dwells within us his children, who believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior and Lord.
 - 1) He leads us to, and speaks to us in, his Word, where he gives us help, including reminding us of the profound and comforting meaning of *kainos*, connoting renewed and restored continuity with current good.
 - 2) He responds to our prayers. In so doing, he lifts our spirits and even gives us joy in times of sorrow.
 - 3) He gently guides us to do what we need to do, especially in response to prayer. Being very patient, but not without limit, he prefers this means rather than discomfiting “wake up calls” to get our attention.
 - 4) Here is how he helps me (and his other faithful followers) powerfully in prayer.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through planned times with him.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me (and other faithful followers of Christ Jesus) powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, e.g., early morning or before bed, and with your spouse, e.g., after supper, or any other time convenient for you both. Since God has commanded parents and grandparents to teach his Word to their children and grandchildren (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-7; Psalm 78:5; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4), if you have children and/or grandchildren present, in case of pressured time constraints, e.g., sports, music, clubs, family can be included with spouse when time is a factor. Do not neglect the children, and grandchildren; later, in Ephesians 6:10-18, the Apostle Paul explains why.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, and with your spouse. Include children and grandchildren.

Do not neglect the children, and grandchildren. In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul describes the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged against Satan and the demons, of which many Christians are even unaware! They and many others are ill-equipped for the battle, including not having their sword, the sword of the Spirit, the Bible (6:17). Even if the children attend a Christian school, they still need to have this time at home, especially led by dad. You won't have them long; don't send the children out into the war unprotected: **the ultimate child abuse!** We're talking eternity here.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

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 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, and with your spouse. Include children and grandchildren.

The idea some have that they'll just "let the children decide" whether they'll be Christians or some other religion is unbiblical and thoughtless. They must know hell is the result of choosing any non-Christian religion that does not emphasize the need to be cleansed by Christ's blood. Notice the definite articles Jesus used when he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) These are God's children! Review his commands in these Bible texts: Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-7; Psalm 78:5; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, and with your spouse, and with any children and grandchildren.
 - 1- For individual times with God, consider the following:
 - a- Recognize the huge difference between solitude and loneliness.
 - 1] Loneliness, refers to a very negative, including debilitating, feeling of being all by oneself and inadequate, without a connection with any other living being.
 - 2] Solitude, in historic Christian spiritual devotion, refers to an important time when one intentionally sets him or herself apart temporarily from involvement with other people and with the pressing matters of life in order to read in quiet a passage of Scripture, commune with God in prayer, and daily develop his or her relationship with God. He or she may even sing and/or play one or more verses of a related hymn.
 - One practicing such solitude is never alone: God is right there with him or her. Solitude helps us recognize his presence.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.

b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.

4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.

a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, e.g., early morning or before bed and with your spouse, e.g., after supper. Family can be included with spouse when time is a factor.

1- For individual times with God, consider the following:

b- Read a passage from the Bible, pray, and pray in a special place in your home. Pertaining to Bible reading, prayer, and praying in a special place in your home, see my paper, "[Aspects of Prayer according to God's Word](#)." Christians all over the world have these special occasions of Bible reading and prayer at different times of the day. For many years, I would arise early, read the Bible, and pray. Now in my later years, I very much look forward to my time of reading God's Word and then prayer before bed at night. Especially since Carol died, I feel that I'd much rather read God's Word and pray than sleep! I begin to read and pray, and I don't want to stop!

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day.
 - 1-c- Start by reading a passage in God's Word and listening to what he is saying. Talk with him about what you are reading; e.g., ask him to help you understand and apply his Word as he would have you do.
 - d- Pray using a model such as the ACTS format (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication). For more: [Worship](#).
 - e- In prayer, be receptive to what God has to say.
 - 1] As you've been praying, has an idea emerged that's a good answer to the question(s) you've asked him?
 - 2] If the idea is good, it's from God. (James 1:17a,b) Ideas that are truly good, i.e., in accord with his Word, are therefore from him.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.

b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.

4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.

a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day.

1-f- After losing a spouse, we wonder, “Why am I still here? Why am I not able to go home (2 Corinthians 5:8)?” There is a reason why God has not brought us home yet. Ask him. Ask God what he would have you do to serve him most effectively while you are yet here on earth. For example, ask him if he would have you do one of the following:

1] Help family members be and mature in Christ? Which one(s)?

2] Help family members in other ways? Who? How?

3] Serve God in the church? Teach? Also talk with your pastor and other church leaders, through whom the Holy Spirit works.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day.
 - 1-f- Ask God what he would have you do to serve him most effectively while you are yet here on earth.
 - 4] Would God have you serve him in the community? Where can you serve and be a witness for Christ Jesus? Talk also with your pastor and other Christians, especially leaders.
 - 5] Would God have you serve nationally or internationally? Consider other Christian ministries, e.g., Samaritan's Purse.
 - 6] Would his will for you include writing (e.g., letters to the editor, articles for publication, books, your own Website, social media platform[s], a history, biography, or diary of and for your family with photos and dates)?

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day.
 - 1-f- Ask God what he would have you do to serve him most effectively while you are yet here on earth.
 - 7] Especially if you're retired, through and with your background (e.g., education, business, vocational skills, contacts), what needs can you meet with your experience?
 - 8] How could you serve the Lord through helping neighbors?
 - 9] Or, if you haven't been as in touch with the Lord as you should up to now, what do you need to be and mature more in Christ yourself?
 - 10] If you haven't already, write a will or set up a living trust.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, e.g., early morning or before bed and with your spouse, e.g., after supper.
 - 2- **For times of Scripture reading and prayer with your spouse, consider the following:**
 - a- Discuss with him or her how he or she would like to share this time together. Several of the suggestions above for individual devotional time can be used with your spouse.
 - b- Make your decisions on these matters—e.g., when, where, and what book of the Bible, and prayer format—a mutual decision.
 - c- Include other resources and ideas: DVD, hymn, conversation.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly in our souls through including him in our plans.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in prayer.
 - a) Plan time for Scripture reading and prayer each day, individually, e.g., early morning or before bed and with your spouse, e.g., after supper.
- 3- **With younger children,**
 - a- a Bible picture book is edifying and enjoyable.
 - b- Close by singing a capella a verse or chorus of one of the historic hymns. Do this with your spouse devotions as well.
 - 1] Don't fret about how you sing. It's music to God's ears.
 - 2] Everyone will remember with joy doing so for the rest of their lives. Adults at the end of their lives, who have lost the ability to speak, still can sing joyfully and are blessed by the great hymns they learned as children.
 - 3] Singing such hymns helps learn and remember theology.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly throughout the day in unplanned times.

b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.

4) Here are some of the ways he helps his people powerfully in prayer.

b) He tells us to pray without ceasing.

- “Always rejoice; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, EDS translation)
- “[Be] rejoicing in hope; enduring in distress; steadfastly continue in prayer.” (Romans 12:12, EDS translation)
 - The original Greek verbs in Romans 12:12 are all present tense participles in the active voice indicating ongoing, continuous, action.
- “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:18)

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly throughout the day in unplanned times.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps his people powerfully in unceasing prayer.
 - b) One aspect of what God means by praying unceasingly is to bring to him at any time anything that is on our minds and hearts. We don't even have to articulate it perfectly. How wonderful to know that he is all-knowing (omniscient). We can just say as much or as little as we can at that moment, and take a breath and listen.

Pray any time but not ostentatiously to draw attention to ourselves. See, e.g., Nehemiah 2:4 and *sic passim*; contrast the hypocrites in Matthew 6:5.

God can and will respond perfectly; he never makes mistakes. This does not mean we should blabber on and on, as Jesus said the pagans do. (Matthew 6:7-8) When we can, we should mention to God all that is on our heart; when we don't feel up to saying everything, then we just say what we can, trust God, and be glad knowing he already knows; he knows best what we need; and he will act accordingly and perfectly.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

- 1.b.4)b) Talk with God throughout the day. Of course, that doesn't mean to pray constantly throughout the whole day and avoid responsibilities and other important matters, but it does mean to pray regularly, including spontaneously each day as opportunities arise.
- 1- We can ask him to forgive us when we do something wrong. ("Dear God, please forgive me for...and please help me to not do it again.") This is the Biblical meaning of repent: contrition and commitment to not repeat.
 - 2- Thank God as you recognize the good things that occur throughout the day; they're all from him. (James 1:17) Throughout the day, as I have a good thought about something; I hear good news; someone says or does something nice; the weather is pleasant, and for countless other good developments, I greatly enjoy this simple but meaningful prayer: "Thank you Father for...!" As I pray that brief prayer, I sense how close he is and that I'm not alone, indeed, I'm never alone.
 - Thanksgiving, especially to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift is vitaly important.

Psalm 100

A psalm. For giving thanks.

¹Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

²Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

³Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving [תוֹדָה (*tôdāh*)]

and his courts with praise;

give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Thanking God without Ceasing Shapes Our Perspective.

Strong empirical research links gratitude with mental health, including more optimism, energy, better sleep, improved relationships, and reduced physical pain, stress, and depression, the latter two being at the top of mental health issues today. Thanksgiving to God, the giver of all that is good, is most important.

The Hebrew word, תודה (*tôdāh*), means thanksgiving. *Tôdāh* is used 32 times throughout the Old Testament, and it is always only expressed to God—individually or liturgically—it is never used to thank human beings. Notice Psalm 100:4, the verb “Enter [בְּאוּ (bō’û) his gates with *tôdāh*]” is in the imperative mood—it is a command—and in doing so we honor and glorify God, and we also are blessed extensively and continually, what God is always pleased to provide for his people.

➤ For special joy, when you thank God, try saying “Dear God, in *tôdāh* thanksgiving I thank you alone for this blessing you’ve just given me, for I know, since it’s good [James 1:17], it’s from you!

+ It’s easy to remember *tôdāh*. It’s English transliteration is spelled like the word today only with an “h” on the end instead of a “y.”

I try to thank God every time something good occurs. It’s very easy: Simply say, “Thank you dear God.” Or, “Thank you, heavenly Father for that good....”

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly including in unplanned times throughout the day.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the other ways he helps me powerfully in unceasing prayer.
 - b)3- Pray for others throughout the day. As you think of a loved one, ask God to help him or her, e.g., “Dear God, please help _____ (spouse, son, daughter, friend, fellow church member) to feel better soon and be all better soon after that.”
 - b)4- Pray for your own needs throughout the day and evening: Many times I have a question as to what to do in a particular moment, including a question I would have asked Carol, and she would have a good answer. But now I can't ask her, and God prohibits his people from even trying to obtain guidance from those who've died (Isaiah 8:19-20); we are only to pray to God. However, now that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us access to God's presence, whereby through our faith God credits us with Jesus' righteousness (Romans 4), he hears our prayers.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly throughout the day in unplanned times.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in unceasing prayer.
 - b)4- So at such and other times I pray, “Dear heavenly Father, I don’t have a clue as to what to do in this situation, therefore, what should I do?” And usually immediately, before I even finish my request, an idea comes to my mind that I know did not come from anything in me. I know it came from God, the giver of every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17)
 - 5- Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ, indeed our whole triune God, I can pray to God, pleading for his help in a multitude of matters, and he always responds, usually right away, sometimes later, but always in perfect timing, when the time is right in his sight, **and then my soul is soothed and soars! Of course, you can have this wonderful experience too!**

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly throughout the day in unplanned times.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in unceasing prayer.
 - c) When I think of something I want Carol to know, which is typically many times each day, I ask God to tell her; I know she's right there with him. Will he tell her?
 - 1- I have prefaced my request by asking God to do what I'm asking in accord with his will and what is best in his sight. Of course, I never ask him to tell Carol anything that would make her sad. He wouldn't anyway: she's in glory, and I'm so glad for her—sad for me—but glad for her! I always wanted what is best for her, and now she has it! That awareness and knowing we'll be together again and with God, instantly lifts my spirit and comforts me greatly!

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly throughout the day in unplanned times.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in unceasing prayer.
 - c) When I want Carol to know something, which is typically many times each day, I ask God to tell her; I know she's right there with him. Will he tell her?
 - 2- Drawing on our study of theology (cf., [*Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology--With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions*](#)), I learn much about God, including that he is perfect; he never makes mistakes.
 - 3- Therefore, I trust God, and I'm comforted in knowing he will do what is best for her and for me. Since I only ask him to tell her things that will make her glad, I believe he has done so, or that he will do so when the time is right in his sight. **And then I relax, comforted with the assurance he will do what is best.**

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

1. God helps directly throughout the day in unplanned times.
 - b. God communicates with us through his Holy Spirit.
 - 4) Here are some of the ways he helps me powerfully in unceasing prayer.
 - c) When I want Carol to know something, which is typically many times each day, I ask God to tell her; I know she's right there with him. Will he tell her?
 - 4- For all the matters God has already let Carol know, and any that he prefers I talk with her about when we're together again, what joy that will be! Even thinking about that joy that is on its way, gives me huge joy already!

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,...” (James 1:17a,b)

2. God helps indirectly, through others.

a. God works through nuclear family members.

- 1) I remember when Carol’s obstetrician came out to the hospital lobby where I was keeping vigil (fathers weren’t allowed to be with their wives during their baby’s delivery in those days) and telling me, “You now have a daughter.” (Also, in those days we didn’t know what sex the baby was until the child was born.) When the doctor, who was an elder in our church, told me we had a daughter, I didn’t know what a great blessing she always would be and especially now. She helps me in countless ways, including having me over for supper most nights.
- 2) Our son, who lives in another state, calls about once a week. His calls are also an important blessing.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - b. God works through extended family members. Carol's two living brothers and I and our families are very close, even though physically separated by several states. Her brothers and I refer to ourselves as brothers, not brothers-in-law.
 - 1) I am especially blessed that they are fellow believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, walking closely with him.
 - 2) They lift my spirit when we talk on the phone and communicate in other ways.
 - 3) And when we have rare, but wonderful visits, we reminisce with much joy about times past when we were all together with Carol, our children, and our parents, fond moments which also lift my spirit.
 - 4) Doing all you can with God's help to facilitate such relationships, will be a blessing. Pray without ceasing concerning any challenges. We should do what we can and leave to God what only he can do.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 1) I have always urged our children and other Christians to make sure their best friends are fellow believers in the Lord.
 - a) Our best friends are the ones we allow to influence us the most. Sound social science research, particularly in the field of sociology, refers to such people as our reference group, defining that cohort as those, typically no more than five, people who help us shape our opinions. An old Spanish proverb says, “Tell me with whom you walk, and I’ll tell you who you are.”
 - b) For the sake of our souls and many others, these values- and opinion-shaping friends should be in Christ. (Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14; Psalm 1; Proverbs 22:24-25; James 4:4)

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.

c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

2) We're here for one another.

a) Our unique and special Spirit-imbued fellowship in Christ Jesus is referred to in the New Testament with the Greek noun, *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*), meaning fellowship, communion, partnership, sharing, participation, contribution, close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism, but all in and through the Holy Spirit whom the Father and the Son, Christ Jesus, have sent to us. (Cf. Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 12:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Romans 15:26; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 1:3)

b) Sound social science research reveals that one of the greatest human needs is to belong. What other social entity can meet that need better than the church, the Spirit-filled very body of the risen, living, and reigning Lord Jesus Christ?!

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 2) We're here for one another.
 - c) This God-instituted blessing is huge today, especially in the light of current carefully done research that addresses a rising epidemic of loneliness. In an 81-page report, U. S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, revealed these recent findings:
 - Loneliness is widespread: half of U. S. adults report experiencing loneliness.
 - This phenomenon is correlated with a decline in church attendance. Dr. Murthy finds "...Americans, who have become less engaged with worship houses, community organizations and even their own family members in recent decades, have steadily reported an increase in feelings of loneliness."
 - "The loneliness epidemic is hitting young people, ages 15-24 [known as Gen Z], especially hard...a 70% drop in time spent with friends" in the last two decades.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.

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2) We're here for one another.

c) This God-instituted blessing is huge today, especially in the light of current carefully done research that addresses a rising epidemic of loneliness.

- “Loneliness increases the risk of premature death by nearly 30%.
- “...those with poor social relationships also had a greater risk of stroke...heart disease...depression, anxiety and dementia.”
- “Technology has rapidly exacerbated the loneliness problem... people who used social media for two hours or more daily were more than twice as likely to report feeling socially isolated than those who were on such apps for less than 30 minutes a day. Murthy said social media is driving the increase in loneliness....”*

* Amanda Seitz, The Associated Press, “Mental Health—Surgeon general: Loneliness poses risks as deadly as smoking,” *Reporter-Herald*, May 3, 2023, p. 6A.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 2) We're here for one another.
 - c) This God-instituted blessing is huge today, especially in the light of current carefully done research that addresses a rising epidemic of loneliness. Appearing [on TV to explain his report](#), Dr. Murthy added:
 - “Due to the loneliness epidemic, there is also an increase in suicide.”
 - “A decline in productivity in the workplace, children’s performance in school, and civic engagement is also evident.”
 - “Loneliness contributes to division and polarization in society since people don’t know one another, making it easier to distrust and hate one another—it’s harder to hate people up close.”
 - “Helping others, service, is one of the most powerful antidotes to loneliness.”

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 2) We're here for one another.
 - c) This God-instituted blessing is huge today, especially in the light of current carefully done research that addresses a rising epidemic of loneliness.

Dr. Murthy concluded, “We are hard wired to connect with one another, so even a few seconds or a few moments of genuine connection with somebody listening to you deeply, where somebody asks how you’re doing and pauses to listen, when you hear the voice of a friend when you pick up the phone that says ‘Hello’...those moments of connection matter. They can leave us feeling good for a long time.” [Loneliness is] “like hunger or thirst. A signal that our body sends us when we need something for our survival. That’s social connection.”* [I add, especially with God!]

* U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, Morning Joe, MSNBC, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImEz971DLgY>. (Accessed 05/05/2023)

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.

c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

2) We're here for one another.

c) This God-instituted blessing is huge today, especially in the light of current carefully done research that addresses a rising epidemic of loneliness.

- At the same time, contrast this report with many local, county, state governments,' and the federal government's declaration of the church as one of the "nonessential" organizations that they ordered to shut down in 2020 ff. during the COVID-19 crisis.
- I include the information on the preceding slides from a secular government source we can use as effective documentation if any kind of government ever again tries to label the church of Jesus Christ as "nonessential." It always has been and forever will be essential. Recall the many successful U. S. court cases litigated during the height of COVID-19, which were won by the Christian legal firms representing churches that remained open instead of shutting their doors, due to their First Amendment rights.

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 2) We're here for one another.
 - c) This God-instituted blessing is huge. We must always remember that we believers in and followers of Christ Jesus are the church and what he is calling us to do.
 - We need never worry about the future of the church. Jesus said, on the rock of faith in him he will build his church, and "the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18 KJV) The church is his body here on earth, called out of the evil world and set apart to serve Christ and accomplish his purposes in and through him as empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit, whom he and the Father sent at Pentecost.
 - So, while we know Satan and his demonic forces will always fight against but never prevail over the church, God is still calling us to engage in this spiritual warfare (*op cit.*); he works through us to fulfill the great commission the Lord has given us. (Matthew 28:18-20)

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.

c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

2) We're here for one another.

c) This God-instituted blessing is huge today, especially with the rising epidemic of loneliness. What implications do you see pertaining to the previous slide? Consider the following pertaining to elections.

➤ To help avoid such an even temporary hindrance to the church in the future, we must engage the public square. Recall what one of the U. S. Founders, John Jay, the first U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, said, "...it is the duty—as well as the privilege and interest—of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." (William Jay, *The Life of John Jay* [New York: J. & J. Harper, 1833], Vol. II, p. 376, to John Murray, Jr., October 12, 1816 quoted in David Barton, *America's Godly Heritage* [Aledo, TX: WallBuilder Press, 1993], p. 21.)

➤ Billy Graham warned that "If America is to survive, we must elect more God-centered men and women to public office; individuals who will seek Divine guidance in the affairs of state." (Quoted in *Voter Resource Guide*, Kenyn Cureton, p. 24)

My Help (And Yours): Our Triune God

2. God helps indirectly, through others.
 - c. God works through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - 3) This congregation of the body of Christ is our church home. We help one another in many ways, including but not limited to the following:
 - a) We pray for each other, especially when needs arise.
 - b) We bring meals to those who are ill, incapacitated, or grieving.
 - c) We offer Bible study and fellowship groups.
 - d) We worship together, hearing the Word of God faithfully taught, which facilitates our sanctification, our maturing and strengthening in Christ, and we are conscious of worshiping also with the church triumphant in heaven, those who have gone ahead of us and with whom we will be united for eternity, thanks be to the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ, indeed to our triune God!
 - This is why God says we should not “give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but...encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)
 - e) The church offers specialized ministries, such as Stephen’s Ministry.

Managing and Overcoming Grief: By God's Word and Prayer without Ceasing

A historic Christian church catechism offers a good summary and conclusion of God's revelation to us of how to manage and overcome grief with a Biblical worldview. Reflect on Question and Answer 1 of *The Heidelberg Catechism*:

Q: What is your only comfort, in life and in death?

A: "That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of his own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that he protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit his purpose for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him."

Reflection and Discussion

Other Related Resources by Edward D. Seely

Note: For further information on these subjects, please see the following documents on my free and secure Websites at <https://fromacorntoak12.com> (or edwardseely.com) and <https://seelyedward.academia.edu>.

1. [“How to Sense God’s Presence and Commune with Him: Never Be Lonely”](#)
2. [“Aspects of Prayer according to God’s Word”](#) (Tips for Prayer)
3. [“Managing Grief: Thanking God in and for Everything”](#) (Video, 9:21)
4. [“Preparing for Living again as an Unmarried Person”](#)