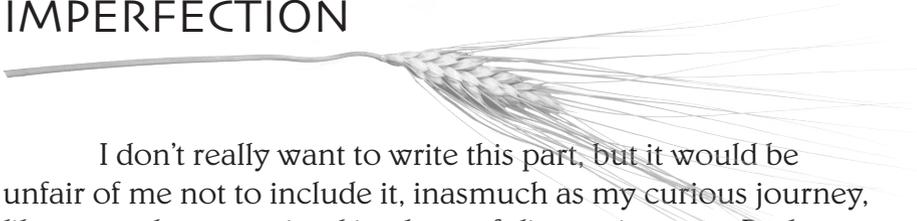


IMPERFECTION



I don't really want to write this part, but it would be unfair of me not to include it, inasmuch as my curious journey, like yours, has contained its share of disappointment. Perhaps being an "oldest" I have felt greater compulsion to "fix" things that don't go quite right. I call this "older brother syndrome." There **MUST** always be a solution.

When my youngest brother died at the age of 19 in a car accident my ideas about life, God, and what was "fair" really were challenged. When our youngest son was diagnosed with multiple heart defects and had to undergo two dangerous surgeries by the time he was 18 months, My wife and my beliefs were sifted in very painful ways. When my only daughter's boyfriend of her college years took his own life, deserted my little girl, and left her in a pool of agony, I think I had come to the point where "fixing it" was just not where I was able to live my life any longer. And when her firstborn daughter Rebekah died only hours after she was born, I finally got it. There are just too many things in life that I cannot fix.

Each of these heart-breaking events drove me to places I did not want to go, and each time the Voice told me things I did not know. As He dealt suffering into my life, He continued to open my eyes to His world – a world where suffering can bring redemption, and only through being rescued could true life flourish.

I have been meeting with a young woman for a number of months whom I met through my youngest son's network of friends. She has been hurt deeply by abandonment, abuse, and neglect and has finally come to her wits end over the incredible energy it takes to manage her disappointment, anger, and fears for the future. As she desperately and guardedly unfolds her story, I am overwhelmed with sorrow over her pain. At the same time I am filled with hope. The same

Heart who observed her years of imposed struggle is the One who even now is whispering to her searching heart. I am more accustomed to the Voice, so I do my best to help her to hear. “Julie, I am here. I have come to rescue you. You have felt lost, but I have never left your side. It is now time for you to come and find your purpose – your rest – your ultimate journey, your identity, and your destiny.”

You and I could recount many stories of imperfection. The times we have let others down or hurt them either intentionally or unintentionally. When we have been discounted, hurt, swindled, and even attacked. There are basically three directions we can go with hurt: we can become *embittered*, we can construct a labyrinth of *denial*, or we can wrestle with the absolute monster of *forgiveness* and come out the other end of the battle at peace. Peace in the knowledge justice belongs to God, “getting even” is a trap, and that imperfection is not unique to my life alone. It is a sad part of the fallen world in which we live.

We are, for the most part, unsteady travelers of sorts. We put on a good face, choosing to confidently size up our lives and push forward. We do so through the good times and the bad. But there are nagging questions at the edges of our minds: “Is my life counting for something?” and, “am I finding significance?” and, “Will I be missed when life is finished with me?” In times like this I have experienced Fusion as the Living God has disciplined, stretched, and comforted me. Imperfection has become my friend as deep strength has often been resurrected out of my human weakness. It is the sheer imperfection and uncertainty of life which pushes me to places I simply will not go on my own initiative.

Today I have just returned from taking part in the funeral of a 16 year old girl who grew up intertwined with our lives. This seemingly senseless death (she was broad-sided by a fire truck as she was going to a mall) is touching thousands of lives as we all attempt to sort through our loss of Erika.

Tragedy is a choice no one would choose. No one. And yet God uses loss and imperfection as a door into this uncertain place. The angry ask: "Why would a loving Creator allow such unjust sadness?" The fearful: "How can I possibly feel safe from this kind of tragedy happening to me or to someone I love?" The hurt: "How am I supposed to go on carrying this kind of pain?" And there are also those who live in denial about tragedy, life and death, pain and suffering. Each are ways of dealing with our personal grief.

In times like these we can walk bravely through the door of suffering and imperfection and find the heart of God. We can also shut down. Or we can embrace denial and detach from the bigger questions. My tentative, reluctant walk through the door of suffering has served my soul well each time. I'm actually not sure I have become any braver, - just more informed about life.

Perhaps you have had your share of disappointment. Someone who should have know better may have exposed you. An apparent friend has let you down and hurt you deeply. Or your dreams have been cut down to size by the reality of this imperfect world. All are part of the fruits of living in a fallen world, exactly the kind of circumstances which either can harden us into a protective shell or cause us to reach out for rescue.

Perhaps it was the consumptive-paced nature of my early years which accelerated my recognition I truly needed to be rescued. Or just God being gracious. Either way I have found a way to be free in the midst of imperfection. And even though I regret some of the circumstances of my life, I have found peace through authentic faith. And I long for you to experience this same freedom!

Why things are the way they are is one of the great questions of life. How does/has my heart coped with disappointment? Do I know how to comfort others? Have I experienced personal comfort?