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Harding School of Theology

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Footnotes: A Word for the Suffering + Hacks for Ministers: Journal Articles

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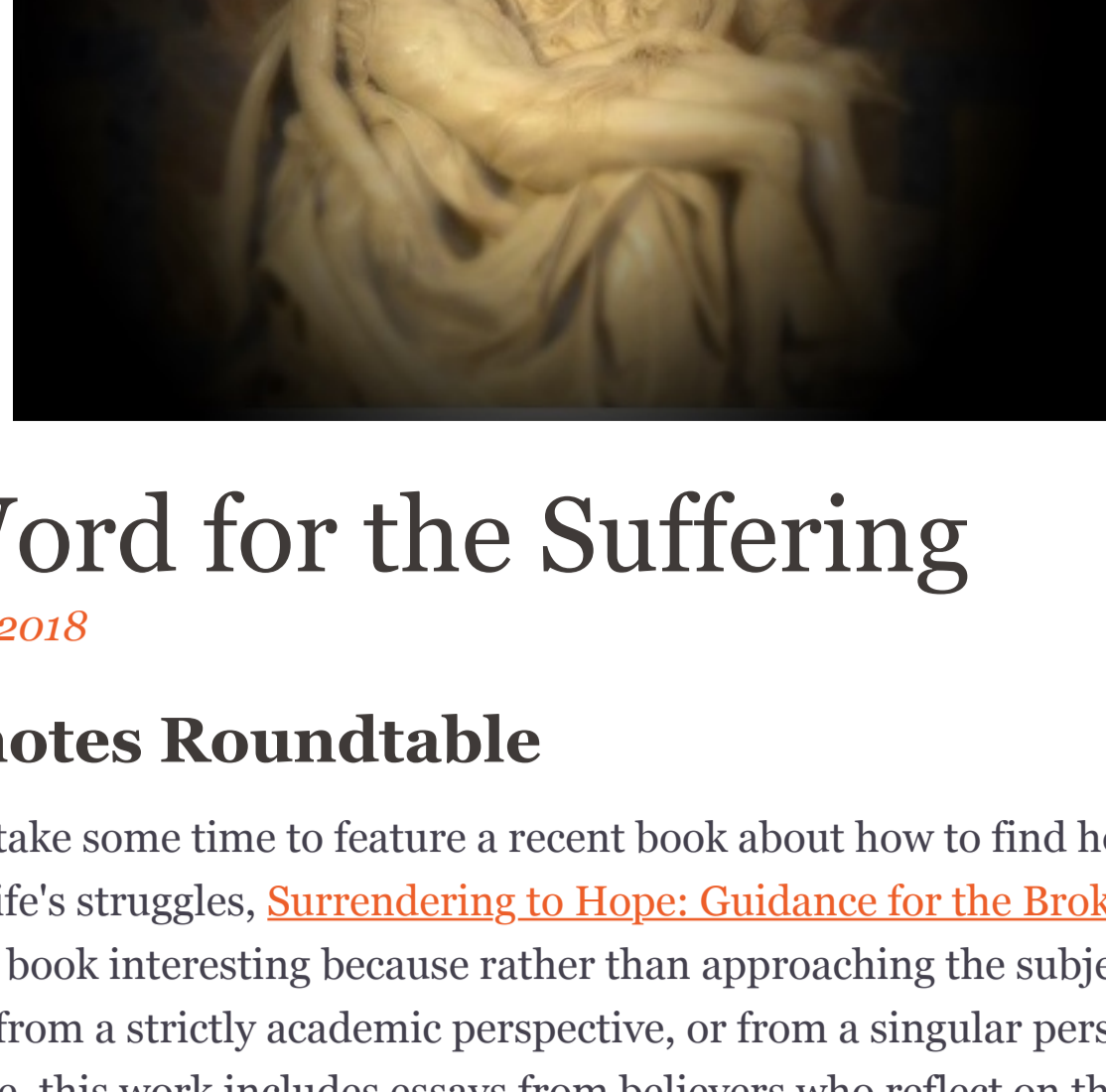
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Footnotes¹

Curated Resources for Ministers



A Word for the Suffering

April 30, 2018

Footnotes Roundtable

I want to take some time to feature a recent book about how to find hope in the midst of life's struggles, [Surrendering to Hope: Guidance for the Broken](#). I found the book interesting because rather than approaching the subject of suffering from a strictly academic perspective, or from a singular personal experience, this work includes essays from believers who reflect on their particular struggle. The chapters are engaging testimony to life's difficulty and to the power of God's healing. I think you will appreciate them. Because of this, I've asked two of the editors to share about their experience publishing the book.

Christine Fox Parker is a therapist and speaker. She lives in Parkersburg, WV, but formerly lived a few streets down the block from me in East Memphis.

John Mark Hicks teaches theology at Lipscomb University. His Facebook timeline is worth the follow.

• Why did you publish this book?

Christine Parker: There are many fine books that tell stories of great suffering and of those who survived the suffering. We wanted to tell the story of God in those stories. One of the first things I told John Mark when he asked if I'd be interested in this was that I'd been praying for a few months for a way to tell the story of God in my own experience of suffering.

People ask me all the time how I healed from such a great tragedy. What did I do? They insist I must have done something. I tell everyone the same thing: I did nothing. I did not heal. God healed me. And God continues to heal me.

John Mark Hicks: This book arises from the reality that people often do not feel safe to tell their stories in our churches. We don't hear these stories in community except on rare occasions. This tends to shame those who have these traumas, or at least silence them from fear of exposure or further trauma. We wanted to give those stories a voice.

We wanted people to hear stories of deep trauma, but also struggling faith--and faith that had been tried in the fires of pain. There is hope. Not only might we experience some healing from our wounds, but those wounds can also become places of blessing for others.

• What good do you hope will come from this book?

CP: This is what God has been doing from the very beginning. It's not a hope wished for. It's an assured hope. I can look any hurting person in the eye and tell them without doubt, "there is healing for you. I know where to find it. I don't know what it will look like. But I know the One who is already generating your healing."

Every contributor to our book can say that. What I hope this book will accomplish is taking this message beyond the four walls of my counseling office. Past the steps of my front porch. To anyone and everyone who reads it, shares it, and attends to the story of God's healing in their own lives as well.

JMH: We hope that these stories will empower people to tell their own stories in community as groups study, read, and/or discuss the stories in this book, and others--with the counsel and example of this book--will listen to those stories with compassion and support those who have experienced trauma.

• This book reminds me of how unusually difficult some people have had it (I'm thinking of the chapter by Les Ferguson about having his wife and son murdered). But then it also reminds me that most people are working through some sort of junk in their lives. What are some practices/resources/habits you would recommend for hurt people who want to help others?

CP: It is to know and understand that God is the agent of our healing, that we can surrender to God's good intentions and steadfast loving kindness. This does not mean that all we do is lay around in a hyper-spiritual state of isolated holy-healing. God uses all that is at God's disposal to generate our healing. Yes, God very powerfully uses God's own presence. God also uses community, therapy, medicine, books, exercise, diet, and so much more. Being surrendered into God's presence, letting God take from us what needs to be taken, and participation in God's healing community are all the things God uses to heal God's children.

John Mark speaks in very specific terms about these things in the book, as do some of our contributors.

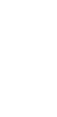
JMH: Everyone has trauma, though those traumas vary considerably. They are, nevertheless, traumatic, and they affect our self-identify, relationships with others, and our relationship with God.

When we are with someone who has experienced hurt, I recommend--first of all--that we be present and listen, that is, we come in silence to sit with others and listen to their stories. This is authentic love.

One of the more important aspects of healing is community. You see that in every one of these stories. It comes in different ways, but God heals and rescues through community. Isolation is death for the traumatized.

Faith dies when no one listens. Faith dies when no one helps (no community). Faith dies when there is no hope.

The stories in this book are about how faith survived these traumas. Faith survived and grew through the presence of others who loved them and listened to them during the deepest moments of their hurt.



Hacks for Ministry Journal Databases

In 2015-16, Dave Bland and I interviewed 400 preachers to talk about their study habits and delivery methods (Our findings are available at "Luke, Luther, LOGOS, and Libraries," in *Summary of Proceedings, Seventieth Annual Conference of the American Theological Library Association*, 43-53, ed. Tavny Burgess. Chicago: ATLA, 2016). It was curious both as a librarian and one who preaches twice-monthly. One of the questions we asked is whether preachers use scholarly journals in their preparation. It turned out that over 20% of the ministers we surveyed used a scholarly journal once per month.

I had a personal motivation for this one. Yes, I'll admit that I don't sit down and digest twelve peer-reviewed articles on every text I preach. That said, I do find that discovering one really good article can often be the perfect thing to help the sermon-writing process along. You might be thinking that journal articles seem really specific and narrow. Yes, they can be. Sometimes that is exactly what I need: a point. The articles often attend to one specific point in a way that a book or commentary cannot. Craig Keener's [recent commentary on Acts](#) contains 4,459 pages and thousands of footnotes. I appreciate his labor. But trying to find something in that commentary is like asking for a bag of Fritos and being given a 40-acre cornfield.

Journal articles aren't just helpful for guiding us in what to say, but also what not to say. They get to the point and let us know what the text might mean--and certainly what it does not mean. I know this means extra work. But I'd rather find out I'm wrong about something on Thursday night than on Sunday afternoon.

At this point you are thinking that this all sounds fine, but what about those of us who don't clock into a theological library every morning? Here are a few tips to help:

- 1. Use Public Libraries.** Most major city libraries have really strong collections of journal databases. This is one area where electronic has passed print. For instance, in 1990 it was unlikely that a public library system in Phoenix or Charlotte would have a deep collection of the journals relevant to sermon preparation. They didn't buy them, bind them, or shelve them. But in 2018, they probably have access to a major database like [JSTOR](#), [ATLAS](#), and others that have really deep collections of full-text articles, often in theology and religion. Not a member? You still might be able to walk in and use a public access computer to get into these databases. Wait, why aren't you a member of your local library?
- 2. Use College and University Libraries.** The same thing is true here. Just walk in, hunt around, and see what you are able to do. Some libraries might require you to swipe a card to gain access, but most do not. I'm not necessarily saying you need to go full-on *Ocean's Eleven* as you enter a collection, but I can tell you firsthand that if you enter politely and pretend to know what you are doing, most librarians will leave you alone. Don't feel like you are abusing a privilege; the staff will let you know if you are. But again, large schools often subscribe to thousands (or often millions) of dollars worth of electronic databases each year. If you get guilty and feel like you are freeloading from a school to which you've never paid tuition, find the librarian around the end of the year and give them a small check for the library. All will be forgiven.
- 3. Google Scholar.** There is a customized theological journals search embedded within Google: [Theological Journals Search](#). The good: it features all of the brilliant algorithms of Google. The bad: many of the displayed articles are located behind a paywall. My advice: get the citation and send it to a library you have an affiliation with (public or university). If you get a librarian in a cheerful mood they might scan a PDF of it for you. Also, your public library may obtain an Inter Library Loan for you. This will be tough to execute on a weekly basis, but if you are prepping a series in advance, you might be able to collect resources a few weeks before delivery.
- 4. Seminary Graduate?** This is where it gets really good. Back to the group of preachers who collected journal articles for sermons--- over 50% accessed these articles through a seminary-sponsored platform, such as [ATLAS for ALUM](#). This means articles in full-text, anytime, on any device, anywhere with Wi-Fi. I'm not as familiar with the details at other institutions, but here is more about the [Alumni Program at Harding School of Theology](#).

If you do get access to ATLAS for ALUM it might be difficult at first. Below, I've simulated the process of looking for articles about a particular scripture in the database.

You need to start at the page the institution provides to access the database. In the case of HST, it would be here: [Alumni Privileges](#)

That should take you to EBSCOhost. This is the platform that houses the ATLAS database. I know it can be confusing. The illustration I use in class is to say that EBSCO is the mall and ATLA is Macy's. Being at Macy's means you are at the mall, but being in the mall doesn't mean you are at Macy's.

Next you'll go to the top and click on More to get to Indexes. You'll be tempted to click on Scriptures, but you will get better results if you do it this way.

By selecting Add, you can insert all of the checked boxes into your search bar. This means you are telling the database to show the records that it has promised. One interesting feature is that you know in advance exactly how many results you will get, since the Records Count has indicated that number.

After you've gone through this procedure you should have a curated search result of the items you've already selected. Now all you need to do is to click on those you want and download the PDF.

A Few More Footnotes.

1. Less full-time jobs cause [seminary grads to look to secular work](#).
2. [Confessions of a \(Moderate\) Prude](#).
3. Does the New York Times bestseller list really represent the bestsellers? [Some authors have suspicions](#).
4. Nine Reasons People [Aren't Singing in Worship](#).
5. MIT scientists say conversations, not commands, are best for the [brain and language development of children](#).

FOOTNOTES helps church leaders discover the resources that will improve and sustain their ministries. It will regularly feature interviews, book recommendations, site reviews, and editorials. It is a project of Bob Turner. You can direct any questions or feedback to tjturner@harding.edu. Complaints can be sent to his [Juno account](#).

UPCOMING
Monday, May 14
Summer Reading

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