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Introduction - Pradhan Thandra

Day 1 - Grief in a competitive world

Mathew 11: 28-30 (ESV)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

In the professional competitive world, grief is often revealed in layers and piles up when left unattended. During the pandemic, we powered through not only personal losses and sickness but the constant pressure and stress at work. The extended hours, late nights and unchanging deadlines drove us to work more than we ever did before. The grief we experience in times like these is unlike that of any personal losses or crisis; it's the stress weighing us down and cornering us to weep.

In most cases, we refuse to process this and be kind to ourselves. Instead, we pile up more work and add distractions like entertainment creating an unending cycle of a tiring lifestyle and a toxic work ethic. The solution is to recognise our limits, surrender our burdens to Christ and allow ourselves to rest in Him.

A few years ago, I landed a job that others could only dream of. But the environment was ruthless, unkind and demanded extreme hours, and I couldn't keep up. I was overburdened mentally and physically. Every night I would weep out of stress, cry out in prayer and wonder how a blessing could turn into such a horrible experience.

Most times, the advice I heard was to power through, till one day I had to prioritise my well-being and walked away from the job. I realised I had ignored a core principle Christ taught – to exchange my yoke for His.

The environments we grew up in often taught us to give everything and kill ourselves to prove our worth which only tires us over time. Though it is essential to stay faithful in our work offering excellence, we need not compete with others or follow a trend. We can work at our optimum best and be free of the constant need to prove ourselves to this world. Instead of chasing success or running the rat race, we can remind ourselves that our worth is safe in Christ. We can be kind to ourselves and rest in the Lord.

Commitment Prayer

Father, help me to understand my physical and mental limits today. Let me not be afraid to take the much-needed rest, assured that You will sustain me. Amen

Day 2 - Grief in the face of loss

Psalm 22:1-5 (ESV)

All of us reading this devotional know what losses are in the professional world. Our managers and owners constantly put us on the edge of our seats to ensure that businesses stay afloat. But what when we lose? When we experience losses at our points in life when we least expect them or even when we can see a loss coming at us from a mile away and we are ridden with anxiety with no answers or anything from God?

In addition to the Psalmist who's in a similar situation, Horatio experienced something similar. As an American lawyer, and a Presbyterian church elder he was running a successful real estate business, he invested heavily in Chicago but soon the [Great Chicago Fire](#) reduced everything to rubble and ash. Grieving and struggling, the Spafford family needed some time off, so they decided to vacation in Europe. Some last-minute business requirements came up, and Horatio was forced to cancel his vacation. He persuaded his wife and four girls to enjoy the vacation - and they set sail.

It was November 22, 1873, and while crossing the Atlantic, the ship Spaffords were on was struck by another vessel, killing 226 people, including all four of Spafford's daughters: Annie, Maggie, Bessie and an 18-month-old baby. The ship is said to have sunk in under 12 minutes, it is said that Anna could barely hold on to her youngest while the strong currents snatched her away. Anna survived. She sent a telegram to Horatio that read "Saved alone". In a few days, Horatio received his wife back at the port, we can only imagine them grieving in a situation like this, in a few days Horatio with his wife sailed to the point where their daughters drowned, in grief and worship penned the famous hymn "*It is well, with my soul*"

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

These words have never failed to comfort many weary souls in losses of all varieties, if you expected an answer to, "Why God allows such tragedies" I'm sorry I don't have the answers myself but I offer these lyrics to remind you that Jesus has been through the most losses in his life. We can find comfort that our God understands losses, unlike many, as a man who's been through more than we ever could be saying "I know how it feels and it's only a matter of time this ends, but through all these ashes I'm making something beautiful - trust me!"

Commitment Prayer

Father, I know you've been through unimaginable losses yourself, worst than Spaffords. It's hard in these times to even acknowledge that you are there, today I'm asking you to help me hang on to you while I struggle with my loss and grief. I give my entire life into your hands because you know how it ends.

Day 3 - Grief in an Anxious World

Mathew 26:36-39 (NIV) 36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” 39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow, his sweat turned into blood, a sign of stress and anxiety. He knew his purpose but was desperately asking God to take the cup of suffering away from him. Our work lives are filled with anxieties there's constant pressure of keeping up with the rest of the competition, staying up to date and consistently performing. For some of us, it comes naturally, the others toil to hone their skills. Every time my anxieties hit the roof, I cry out to God to take the cup away from me.

I'm not a natural-born professional, none of us are, but some of my colleagues are way ahead of me while I still struggle, only later did I discover that we all experience only some of us share our weaknesses. You have been putting the work in and still feel like you're not as good as the rest of the world and that's making you more anxious by the day.

Jesus himself asked for the cup should be taken away, if he could I think we can. Being vulnerable could be the best way we could ask God to work in us, it shows that we are open to being disciplined. Today's scripture reference is a sign of exactly that, praying every day as a discipline and expressing as a human being. I urge you to continue to stay the course and be real to God and yourself. Express your anxiety to God and submit your cares to Him.

Commitment Prayer:

Jesus help me with the daily anxieties that seemed to overwhelm me, today I express myself just like you did with the Father. Please help me share this with my family, friends and colleagues who will pray and support me through anxious times.

Amen

Day 4 - Grief in a Lonely World

Hebrews 4:15 (ESV) - 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.

In the last few years, the idea of work/life balance took a new meaning, leading us to work from home, and miss out on in-person interactions at work. Some of us enjoyed the office banter in-person while others enjoy the comfort of our homes, regardless of both situations I know we feel a sense of loneliness. It's surprising to realise that even with people around us - sometimes we feel like we are alone.

Our managers and teams are our safe space, the worst feeling to experience is when they start turning against us despite all the work we put in. We live in the world of results and numbers, no one pays attention to your intentions or the pain you are personally going through. It's easy when you are the popular person in the group, your team relies on you, be friends with you but what if we are just an average joe trying to figure out everyday work?

I had taken a professional break after working a long stint, I felt I had to go back to school. Loneliness was an everyday affair, I couldn't fit into groups easily because it was a new city and I was struggling financially to pay my fees and everyday expenses. I recall a very particular depressing time, sitting by myself during prayer time when my pastor and a friend who held my shoulders tightly and constantly kept saying "Pradhan, you don't have to go through this alone!", those words ring in my ear even to this day. It's important to understand that Jesus who was left alone at the cross and gave up his life for us ensured that we have the Holy Spirit and a community called Church.

It's hard to ask for help, I struggle even to this day. We must understand asking for help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of boldness to accept that we are not perfect and it's ok to ask someone to hear about our struggles. The church is the greatest privilege that God gave us, we can meet week are week, remind ourselves of God's goodness and have fellowship.

Over time I sought the courage to accept that I can't do this by myself and that I need help. I'm not living a perfect life right now but I do live in a community with family and friends who are ready to help each other.

Do you find yourself being lonely most times, I pray that you start by sharing with that one friend, colleague, pastor or mentor and wait for God to reveal the blessings you have never experienced.

Commitment Prayer

*Father, thank you for the privilege of community. Today, I realise that I can't do everything by myself and that I am not perfect. Please comfort me in these lonely times and help me find the courage to share and see you work wonders.
Amen*

Day 5 - Grief in a Conflicting World

2 Timothy 1:6-7 - For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

The cultures of our workplaces are made by people with varied personalities so we will have conflicts. Culture building within organisations has been the talk of the town with workplaces becoming diverse. When you have a team with people who come from varied backgrounds and skills conflicts and disagreements will arise.

I love working with people but I am terrible at managing conflicts, these situations leave me very bitter and sad because I keep thinking about the situation in a loop for long durations. The last CEO I worked with was not the kindest, he liked bullying employees giving them a hearing very often. My interactions with him left me in the pits of no confidence and depression soon followed. While I navigated through my feelings, it was important for me to stand up to myself, I had to have difficult conversations and stand up for myself.

Our gift from God is a spirit of power and love and self-control. After much reflection I learnt to empathise with my CEO, I figured he had his issues as well, and I sensed he was anxious himself. In my next meeting, I expressed myself without fear while I told him categorically that "I understand where his points come from, why he was upset" going deep into his fears and anxieties. It was not about me anymore but him, this changed everything. After a few conversations our working relationship certainly got better, we learnt to respect each other and ask often if we are doing ok. Our relationship was not the best after those incidents but we did become more communicative with each other in the latter days.

If you've been feeling attacked and bullied remember that there's another human being who might be projecting his issues onto you. They probably don't have access to Christ as we do and this could be an opportunity to be a good witness. It's hard to love and empathize with someone who's constantly hurting us, but that's the Gospel - it transforms and redeems everything it touches. As you read this devotion, I hope that you will be able to have honest conversations while you empathise with people who may be causing you pain.

Commitment Prayer

Father, help me empathize with everyone, even the ones who are hurting me without reason. Give me the love that you have people while I resolve these issues and glorify your name.

Amen

Day 6 - Rest in the aggrieved world

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG) - “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

In her recent article, Anne Petersen wrote *How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation* and commented that burnout isn’t a place to visit and come back from; it’s our permanent residence. Just from having conversations with my colleagues, we figured that we all overworked during the last two years and caused damage. Some of us have tried to keep working hoping it would go away but we all know that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. As the diagnosis unfolds, we learn that it’s quite the opposite we need a little pause to feel different.

I worked for long hours for days, weeks, and even months, I felt like I need rest like the rest of us. It was easy for some of us to work from the hills while the others bore heavy responsibilities. I was in the second category. I did not have the privilege of taking a break I kept working with just the weekends off. It was Christmas, and finally, I got the break I deserved but that was not good enough. I realised that just a vacation would not help because you eventually come back and fall into the circle again.

John Mark Comer writes in his book “The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry” identifies that following God’s theology is not enough but even his lifestyle. Jesus knows that the most restful gift he could give us during these times is a new way to carry life, a fresh way to bear his responsibilities. It has not been easy to remedy the emotional weight even considering options like vacation breaks and therapy. We even tried to bury our stresses and grief under addictions like tv, drugs, porn or even church activities, these dopamine hits help temporarily. We know that life is hard, and we are all looking for an escape from these burdens.

Jesus’ yoke is right there and available for all of us. It’s good to slow down, take it easy and take a break, but the most important exchange is His yoke for ours.

Commitment Prayer

Jesus, I’m tired, and I cannot bear the weight of life, I pray that you give me your yoke.

Amen

Day 7 - Grief in an Ideal World

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG) - “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

We are at the end of this week’s devotion, wrestling through the emotion of grief across a spectrum of our working lives. Someday this life will end, and we will get the eternal rest we deserve. Our grief will come to an end, and every anxiety, trauma and stress you accumulated will be gone. I have been through so many emotions I cannot even imagine how it would feel to exist without them. Jesus will renew and redeem everything, including our work.

It would be boring to do nothing, so I bet even when I’m retired, I would not stop. Some of us have an image of heaven with 24 x 7 of just one or two activities. I refuse to believe that because the promise we were offered says that it is beyond our imagination. Every aspect of our work will be renewed, and I cannot wait to see how I can contribute to the new earth minus all the negative emotions we experienced here on earth.

I urge you to look to the future and manage your grief today. Imagine a place that’s coming soon where you will perform your duties with freedom, joy and love. I had an old poster from my time at Facebook, that read, “What would you do if you weren’t afraid” - that’s a glimpse of the future of work for the righteous.

As we close our weekly devotion, I urge you to take two minutes and think about everything we learnt about managing grief as a Christian and look hopefully to an unimaginable future that we will build together.

Jesus, thank you for my work, it has been a blessing that I can fulfil your purpose. As you prepare me for a great eternal life I ask that you help me be hopeful while here on earth. I cannot wait to reach you and experience eternal life without any anxieties and grief.

Amen

Introduction - Pradhan Thandra:

Pradhan Thandra is a multi-disciplinary designer and creative strategist with experience ranging from designing products, leading projects, conducting research and coaching. He studied Theology followed by Advertising & Design. His work experience spans across public health, advertising and research & design consulting. From his early days in learning & development to designing products & services, empathy has been at the core of his process, a common thread that helped generate effective solutions and ideas.

Pradhan's recent projects have been a mix of ethnographic and design research. His work addresses various demographics, from highly urbanised settings like Berlin, New York, and Mumbai to rural communities within India. He has worked with Saatchi & Saatchi, Facebook, Animal Advertising and Vihara Innovation Network with clients like GSK's Theraflu, Share The Meal, Uber India and Red Bull. During his experience he has been nominated at Cannes Future Lions, The Webby's, Communication Arts and in addition to winning a ONE Show award and D&AD New Blood pencil.