

# Make Level Paths for Your Feet: Mental Illness and Evangelicalism in the lives of Cowper, Carey and Hauerwas

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, so as you go out from Katie's introduction, you may be wondering why I'm talking about this because I did Milton and do medieval stuff now and here I am talking about the 18th century mostly and mental illness.

So I just wanted to give a little brief background of why I'm talking about this. Part of what got me interested in studying the wisdom books in the Bible and literature that uses these is the theological issues surrounding suffering.

This came from very personal reasons for me. I have since high school had depression and I've known a number of people who've suffered from depression and other things.

And so growing up in an evangelical church, this was a very personal thing for me is being in a context where one was kind of expected to be joyful and one wasn't feeling it inside and what do you do with that?

And as I've given talks like this, other people have come and said, you know, I've experienced this too. And so it's personal for me. I'm not an expert in these three people and there's probably people here who know a lot more about them.

[ 1 : 25 ] So I'm happy to be supplemented. So I just wanted to start off with the problem we have.

Yeah, basically the problem. It's a rather long quote, but the quote is there was a study done at Baylor University. Am I loud enough for the people in the back?

No? No? No? No? Okay. So there was a study done in Baylor University where they took a sample group of 293 people and said, and checked whether their pastors and the members of their Christian community, they knew these people were diagnosed with mental illness.

And they checked whether their pastors and the Christian community acknowledged this. And they found that basically about a third of these people, 32%, that the churches they were a part of denied that this was mental illness.

They said the study found these church members were told the cause of their problem was solely spiritual in nature, such as personal sin, lack of faith, or demonic involvement. So this study, aside from the personal things I've experienced and probably some of you have experienced, this study gives sort of statistical proof that there is a problem for Christians talking about these things.

[ 2 : 55 ] And you may wonder why the, I called this talk Mental Illness and Evangelicalism. So why not Mental Illness and Christianity?

Well, one of the things I've found as I've talked about this is there are, of course, as you know, different streams of Christianity and different traditions. High church, low church, and a Baptist, things like this.

And each of these different traditions deals with mental illness in different ways and has different strengths and weaknesses. So I wanted to focus on evangelicalism today.

If I had a couple more days with you, I would go into all the medieval stuff. But unfortunately, I don't. So that's a little background on the topic. So I just wanted to give sort of the objective of the talk, or where it's going.

When James tells us that we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, unfortunately, a lot of Christians feeling threatened by issues surrounding mental illness, get this backward, and they want to be quick to speak and slow to listen, a little bit like Job's comforters.

[ 4 : 13 ] They want to contain the problem. So I just wanted to start by listening to the stories of these big groups of people. I deliberately let the first names out because in a couple of them we're dealing with a husband and wife team.

Well, actually, actually in, yeah, in a couple of them. And so first I wanted us to listen to these things. Then I wanted to look at some of the strengths and weaknesses we see in the evangelical tradition in dealing with mental illness, and then reflect on how we might process these things, which really go to the root of our psychology and our faith.

So that's the trajectory I'm taking. And we will start with William Carey. Today I'll be talking about William Carey and Dorothy Carey.

Dorothy Carey suffered from, it's always hard to diagnose these things retrospectively because we only have letters and scripts of information, but it seems to be some form of psychosis, and I'll get into that.

But for those of you who don't know who William Carey was, I normally know that we have a Carey Theological Seminary. He was the, he's called sort of the father of modern missions.

[ 5 : 33 ] One of his, and he's called that because in a time when Calvinist theology was sort of of the opinion, you know, you know, if God wants to convert the nations, he'll do it himself.

We don't have to participate in that. He, he insisted, no, we need to do missions work. One of the responses to some of his early calls for missions, Pastor John Ryland said in one of his early meetings, he says, young man, sit down.

When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine. Yeah. And, and so, so this idea that, you know, um, this sort of strong predestinarian idea that if God's going to convert the nations, he'll, he'll do it on his own time and we don't have to participate in this.

So William Carey was pushing against this. Um, he was himself of a Calvinist background as well, but, um, but a sort of moderated Calvinism through, through Jonathan Edwards.

Uh, so, and one of his, his sort of most famous quotes attached to him is, um, um, as you see, um, expect great things, attempt great things.

[ 6 : 44 ] This is from one of his sermons on missions. Um, later people added expect great things from God, attempt great things for God. Um, which, um, I mean, there's a whole debate over the rhetorical significance of why people would tack this onto the original quote.

But, um, but I mean, he was talking in a sermon, so that's, that's what he meant. Um, so this idea that, that when doing missions, we should, should, um, have high expectations and expect God to, to work through us.

So, so that's a little bit about his background. Going on to, to his, his character, because this sort of comes into play in how he interact, well, obviously comes into play in how he interacted with his wife.

Um, uh, he, he was a fairly, um, what I would call, um, entrepreneurial kind of person. Um, he, his, his mission trip to India was actually illegal.

Um, because the, the East India Company didn't want people going to India without a permit and they didn't want these missionaries there because they might jeopardize the trade going on.

[ 7 : 58 ] So, so he, he, he got there illegally. Uh, he, he, um, set up an indigo plantation, which, um, to, to fund his, his mission, which brought him in some trouble in England because people were saying, well, is he a profiteer?

Is he just trying to be a, you know, a businessman? He wasn't, but, but this was a new experiment and people were worried about this. Uh, he eventually set up a printing press for printing translations of the Bible.

Um, one of the more interesting stories is, is in India, they would, would, uh, sing these Indian ballads on street corners. And so these guys even made up Christian ballads and went and sang them on street corners.

Um, so, so that's kind of interesting. Eventually he became a professor at, at an English, English college there. So he kind of a jack of all trades, all sorts of things.

Um, very zealous, tireless, um, generally a fairly patient person. You can see that in, in his journals, but, but you do get the sense that, I mean, with all this stuff going on, he's maybe not as invested in his family as he might've been.

[ 9 : 07 ] So, and I mean, um, someone talks about his interaction with his children when they came to visit them, his children were apparently very sort of unruly and not, you know, basically, so, so, I mean, and, and we'll get into this with Dorothy, but, but the question of, did he sacrifice some of his family life for this?

So that, that is William Carey. And now we go on to Dorothy Carey, who is quite different. Um, she, she, she originally was, uh, reticent to go to India with him.

Um, eventually another member of the team, John Thomas, uh, a doctor, um, convinced her somehow that she should go.

Um, so, so even going, it was, she was convinced she, she wasn't sort of very zealous about this. Uh, she, she had a poor adjustment to the culture.

Um, in, in 14 years, she had seven children. So I, who, who knows, um, there's probably some postpartum type stuff going on there. Um, she lost three of those children.

[ 10 : 26 ] Um, one, two of them died in England and one in, in India. And, um, so, I mean, it's, it's really hard to, to know what causes these things. Um, but these may have been some factors.

Um, and in any case, she, it triggered a psychosis and sort of delusion and paranoia. And she, she became convinced that, um, that William was being, um, maritally unfaithful to her.

Um, and, and she, she should, she tried to, um, murder him at least twice. So, so there was a violent aspect to this. So, I just wanted to, to go on to how did, how did William Carey and the rest of the missionaries deal with this very difficult and painful situation pragmatically?

Um, uh, physically she ended up being confined in her room. Um, and we don't know much about that or the conditions of that. Um, I mean, in some ways, even reading this story, it's hard to know what one would have recommended because some of the asylums that were going on at this time were not great either.

So, at least they had her at home. Um, there's, uh, he, uh, William in, in his letters, um, eventually, I mean, because this goes on for about 12 years, eventually he, he seems to show sort of increasing detachment from her.

[ 11 : 59 ] Um, he, um, he often refers to her as a sort of distressing object. Um, the, the word object is his, um, you know, which is a little depersonalizing.

And, um, and he was able to get married five months after she died, um, which caused a little bit of scandal. And, um, I mean, there wasn't a scandal going on, but people thought he maybe shouldn't get married to be in so quickly.

Uh, there wasn't a lot of medical help sought for her. There, there was John Thomas, uh, who was a former doctor and it's from him. We have the account of her illness, the, the, the major account, but, um, well, they were in India in part illegally.

They couldn't go to the East India company doctor. Um, they, I mean, there were concerns about, about, um, well, the mission was precarious, so there were probably concerns there about, um, further complicating issues.

Um, there, there is, and, and this isn't, um, necessarily proven, but this, this is something that James Beck suggests. It was, uh, James Beck is, is Dorothy's biographer and, and William started this sort of, what we would now call an intentional community within the mission, which is, they'd sort of have everything in common and live as a family.

[ 13 : 25 ] Um, and there's, um, one can conjecture that this in one way was a way of sort of bringing community around Dorothy Carey, uh, to, to help her.

So, um, again, we're only going from letters and stuff, so we don't know the full story. So, so that was the, the pragmatic response, um, to Dorothy's illness.

Um, and, so the, the theological response, and, and here we get into some of the roots of the reasons we, we may have for not wanting to talk about these things now.

Um, one, one of them was, as I said, the mission was in a fragile condition, you know, not sure how it stood in terms of various bureaucracies.

And so, seeking public help for mental illness, um, publishing this, uh, you know, might, might bring more scandal to the mission, might make people question it.

[ 14 : 29 ] Um, there was already a fear in England that, um, that evangelicalism was driving people crazy. Uh, so, so, so, you know, even that, um, probably caused them to, to keep this under wraps.

Interestingly enough, um, um, um, Carey did, um, talk about it, and we don't have his letter, but we have his response to Andrew Fuller, who eventually came over to, to join him in missions.

And, and Andrew Fuller's wife also had some form of mental illness. So, there's an interesting tie-in there, um, and, you know, Fuller Theological Seminary. Um, so, uh, the, the second thing that, that was, was kind of a fear is, um, the compromise of the public witness of the gospel.

Um, does the fact that we have mental illness in our community show that the gospel is, is weaker and sufficient? And, and, and I have a quote, um, this is from John Thomas again.

Uh, it's talking about Dorothy Carey. If any person has hearkened to her for a moment, it was merely in consideration of her being a religious character and her making such solemn protestations of things utterly false and groundless.

[ 15 : 50 ] But long before we formed ourselves into a church, we all agreed that it was impossible to consider her as a member or as a religious character now. Um, so I, I find that kind of a sad quote.

I mean, the, the problem they're having, um, is, um, if she's making all these accusations and saying all these things that aren't true, um, you know, how, how's that going to affect the way we engage with the community?

But, but that last phrase, um, um, um, we all agreed that it was impossible to consider her as a member of a religious character now. Um, it's kind of sad that, that they sort of exclude her from, from the church body.

And, and yes, they're worried about proclaiming the gospel, but I think the gospel should have a place in the Christian body for these people. Um, I mean, the other thing that, that becomes problematic is just the critical reception of, of Dorothy.

And, um, the, I, I've paraphrased it, but you can find it in all sorts of biographies and it's sort of, you know, it's, it's hard enough to preach the gospel without a nagging wife is kind of the, um, the paraphrase of it.

[ 17 : 01 ] Basically the idea that, that Carrie is this kind of exalted saint and Dorothy is this sort of, um, um, um, at one point Thomas compares her to Lot's wife, you know, you know, so she, she evokes this sort of response of, you know, he had this terrible wife who was impeding things.

Um, so she's been treated a little bit poorly, um, in, in the critical reception. Uh, fortunately there are people like James Beck who, who wrote a whole biography on her.

Uh, so that's, oh yeah, I, I had another, uh, quote that, that I wanted to talk about here.

It's, um, regarding the, the sort of fear of that, that this might expose weakness in our community. It's, um, it's something from, from William Carey's journey journal.

It isn't, we don't know that it's necessarily talking about his, his response to her illness. Um, but he seems to have experienced some fallout.

[ 18 : 07 ] Fallout is where when you're taking care of a person with mental illness, you start sort of experiencing depression or, or symptoms caused by the, the difficult task of caring for them.

Um, and, and so Carrie, William Carey, when, when this stuff is beginning to start, he, he says in his journal, I sometimes walk in my garden and try to pray to God.

And if I pray at all, it is in the solitude of a walk. I thought my soul a little drawn out today, but soon gross darkness returned. Spoke a word or two to a Mohammedan or Muslim upon the things of God.

Um, but I feel as bad as they, so, so there's that sort of latent fear, you know, if, if mental illness and these bad feelings affect us as much as it affects the people we're preaching the gospel to, what are we preaching to them and why?

So there's, that's sort of, those are some of the fears and anxieties around talking about this from, from the life of William and Dorothy Carey. Um, and the, the, the, the end of this story is, is a very sad one.

[ 19 : 19 ] She had these episodes for 12 years and died and she, she wasn't cured. Um, it's, yeah, it's, it's very sad and this will see will be a theme in the stories I'm telling you and I'll tell you why at the end, but so, so, uh, fairly, fairly tragic story.

So having, having finished with the Careys, I, I now want to go on to, to William Cooper, who was, was a contemporary more or less of, of the Careys.

Um, he, basically he, he experienced a mental breakdown. Uh, he, he was, his uncle got him this position with the House of Lords, uh, as a clerk and, uh, the House of Lords was worried about how his uncle was worried about the people his uncle was hiring.

So they, they were going to do this investigation and talk to him and stuff. And, um, um, for whatever reason, this just terrified him, some sort of anxiety and caused a, a mental breakdown in him.

And, um, he, he tried to commit suicide a variety of ways and, um, and he was unsuccessful. And, um, uh, eventually he, he ended up, um, being entrusted to the care of Nathaniel Cotton at, at St. Elvin, Elvin's Asylum.

[ 20 : 54 ] The, um, Nathaniel Cotton is, I think, one of the sort of, someone really needs to write a biography or write more about him because he's sort of one of these unsung Christian heroes that I really like.

He, he founded this asylum. He, for, for the, for the time he had what, what one could call a fairly holistic view of mental health that, that one had to care for the body and the soul and the mind and all these things.

Um, he, he was a Christian. He, he was not, uh, pushy about his Christianity to, to his patients, but he'd, he would converse with them about theology, uh, Cooper records conversations he had about theology with, with Cotton.

And he'd also, um, he'd also leave Bibles lying around, um, you know, for people to read if they wanted to read them. And so, so he, you know, and in some ways, uh, Cooper's time at, at St. Elvin, Elvin's was one of the best times of his life.

It was very good for him. Uh, and St. Elvin's is important as well, because this is where, where Cooper's conversion happened.

[ 22 : 06 ] Uh, he was, uh, walking around and found this, found, found a Bible lying open to it. It was, I think it was Romans 325.

It was a, a passage on, on Christ's propitiation for sins. And, and he read it and, and he says, uh, his response to this was, immediately I received strength to believe it.

Immediately the full beams of the son of righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made. My pardon sealed in his blood and all the fullness and completeness of my justification.

In a moment I believed and received the gospel. My eyes filled with tears and my voice was choked with transport. And so, so he has this, this conversion experience and Nathaniel Cotton being a good caregiver at first wanted to make sure this was real and not a delusion because sometimes people can, can have religious delusions.

And so at first he, he wanted to see where this would go, but eventually he was convinced yes, yes, he converted. Yes, he's doing better. And, and he ended up leaving St. Elvin's.

[ 23 : 16 ] Uh, so that's, this is his conversion story. And, um, it would be really nice if, if it ended there.

Um, unfortunately it, it doesn't. And the, the, the rest of the story is much sadder and, and complicated.

Um, basically Cooper experienced various relapses of illness throughout his life. Um, he, he had a, a complicated friendship with John Newton.

Um, you would know him from the song Amazing Grace. Um, they actually co-wrote the book of only hymns together. I forgot to mention Cooper was a poet, uh, which is a little important.

But basically he had a complicated friendship with John Newton, um, because he, um, um, he, he wrote public poetry and he also wrote hymns.

[ 24 : 17 ] And I think Newton would have just liked him to write hymns. Um, at the same time, Newton was very supportive of him. Um, but there were some tensions to it. So, so it's very complex. Newton, I mean, yeah, Newton was very supportive and encouraging, but, but there's a complicated friendship there.

Um, and you actually have, following in the biographical streams of Cooper, you have the, the, the streams of competing biographies, which are the, the evangelical and the anti-evangelical.

And they actually stem from these things. There's the people who, who want to say, you know, Cooper was a poet and, uh, Newton's Calvinist theology destroyed him. And then there's the people who say, you know, no, Newton, you know, was great for him.

And that, and there's sort of this competing biographical thing going on from the beginning of Cooper. Uh, basically he, his, his mental illness manifested in, in sort of, um, um, well, well, he, he ended up believing that, that while God had grace and love for, for everybody, he was this special case that God had chosen to die irrevocably, uh, which caused a lot of torment as you, you might imagine.

Um, for the last 20, 20 years of his life, he, he couldn't go into a church and, and couldn't pray for a lot of that time. Um, and, and lest you think it's just, you know, he stopped wanting to go to church.

[ 25 : 48 ] I, I have some quotes here. Um, someone describes him, um, he, he, he wouldn't go to the bickering, uh, and someone said, when asked, he's often pointed at the church and said, well, I am banished from the house of God where I've known so much of his presence.

I cannot bear to sit down in the house of a friend. You know, so he, it isn't that he doesn't want to go to church. He thinks that, that he's predestined and God doesn't want him to go there.

Um, and also regarding, regarding, um, someone's advice that he should pray more. He says, um, there's not a man upon earth that might not be the better for it.

Myself only accepted. Prove to me that I have a right to pray and I will pray without ceasing. Yes. And praise too, even in the belly of this hell compared with which Jonas was a palace, a temple of the living God.

So he, he had this sort of idea in his mind that, that God had condemned him, that Christianity was true.

[ 26 : 53 ] God was there. Um, but somehow for whatever reason, God had, had condemned him and, and this couldn't be gotten out of his mind. And this was sort of, um, a fixation on, on disbelief.

And I, I wanted to show you because Cooper, Cooper is, is a poet and, and, um, not as famous as some, but relatively important.

He, he was a forerunner of the romantic poets. Um, Blake actually did, William Blake did the, the plates for one of his biographies. So, so he, he was, uh, he was an important poet and an important hymn writer.

So I wanted to just look at a few of his instances of poetry and, and how he dealt with, with these issues of faith and mental illness in there.

So this one is, it's from a long poem he wrote, um, called The Task. It's, it's from the third book. It's not actually called The Wounded Deer, but that's the image.

[ 27 : 58 ] And this is one of the, um, his more comforting moments in, in his engagement with Christianity. He says, I was a stricken deer that left the herd long since.

With many an arrow deep and fixed, my panting side was charged. When I withdrew to seek a tranquil death in distant shades, there was I found by one who had himself been hurt by the archers.

In his side he bore, and in his hands and feet, the cruel scars. With gentle force soliciting the darts, he drew them forth and healed and bade me live. But, um, so here, here we have him imagining himself as this deer wounded going off in the forest to die.

And there he finds someone else who has also been wounded by the world. And that is, is Christ who, who heals him.

Um, so, so that is, um, an instance of him getting great positive comfort from Christianity. Um, unfortunately, um, as his life went on, he got more and more depressed and more and more convinced, um, that God was against him.

[ 29 : 14 ] Um, and so you, you see, I, I, I've included a few, few poems. Uh, one, one is this lines on insanity.

It's some fragments that we have of his. He says, hatred and vengeance, money to no portion, scarce can endure delay of execution. Wait with impatient readiness to seize my soul in a moment.

Damned below Judas, more of horde than he was, who for a few pence sold his holy master. Twice betrayed, Jesus, me, the last delinquent, deems the profanest.

Man disavows and deity disowns me. Hell might afford my miseries as shelter. Therefore, hell keeps her ever hungry mouths, all bolted against me.

Um, and so you see, he, he says that, that even, even hell would be a comfort and God keeps him from that too. Um, which is very, he, he felt a lot of, um, empathy with, um, with, um, no, not empathy in the sense that he liked him, but with, with the plight of, well, with, with what happens to Satan in paradise lost, um, he's, he's damned.

[ 30 : 28 ] Uh, so, so this is, is quite bleak. Uh, we also have his, his last poem, um, which is one that in the poetic community, everybody loves because it's a wonderful romantic poem.

But in terms of, of the expression of Cooper's life, it, it's about basically a man drowning, um, and the people on the ship want to rescue him, but they have to sail to shore themselves and keep going.

And so he can't be rescued. Um, and in the last stanza, he compares himself to this drowning man. And no voice divine, the storm elate, no light propitious shone when snatched from all effectual aid, we perished each alone, but I beneath a rougher sea and whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

So he kind of conceives of himself as this person who, you know, he has friends who keep trying to help him and he's drowning alone, uh, which is a very, very heartbreaking image.

And so, and, and, um, yeah, and even the story of his death is, is very sad. Um, he, he became ill, um, basically he, he died of being worn out.

[ 31 : 43 ] Um, and he, um, the last words he spoke were someone offered him a cordial or medicine and he said, what can this signify?

Probably delirious. And that was the last thing he said. It wasn't sort of a, a good death in the sense that one might want a good death. So, so it's a very, very sad and tragic story.

And so, so the question, well, the question for us and for the people who knew him was, how do we make sense of this theologically?

Like he, he was a convinced evangelical Christian. He, um, he, um, he did a lot for the evangelical cause. So, so what, what do we do with this? And one of the, the best receptions of it is actually, uh, one of his friends, Samuel Great, Heed preached his, his funeral sermon.

Um, and, and there's actually quite, quite a bit of wisdom in, yeah, there's, there's quite a bit of wisdom in, in what Great Heed has to say.

[ 32 : 55 ] Because he's, he's trying to make sense of this in a community that, um, in the community that, um, where Cooper lived. So, so he can't really gloss over the, the difficult parts of his life.

Um, so, so he says in his opening, um, our dear departed friend possessed light, precious faith. And he's described Christian faith prior to this.

He felt and exemplified its sanctifying effects. Yet destitute of hope, respecting this life and that which was to come. He might naturally be thought by others, as he deemed himself, of all men, the most miserable.



How shall we, in such an instance, vindicate the ways of God to men? Shall I conduct you into the labyrinth without a clue to guide you through it? Or shall facts, the most interesting facts, be suppressed lest they should be abused?

By no means. Falsehood alone needs to send the light. Wisdom is justified of all her children. And, and this, this seems to me a really sensible approach that we can learn from.

[ 33 : 53 ] Is, I mean, he's basically saying, do we want to cover over talking about this? And, and he says, no, this happened. And God is still in control of the world. And, and we have to talk about things truthfully.

And, and, and that strikes me as, as a really, um, good response. And, and we can learn from it today. We have to talk about these things. We, we can't paper them over.

Um, we shouldn't suppress them lest they should be abused. But, but telling the truth is a good thing. And bringing the truth, bringing the truth of the things we experience into the, the truth of Christ.

And, and letting that be transformed. So, so I, I like that opening. Another good thing that great he does. He has, um, his sermon text is Isaiah 58.

Or 55, 8 to 9. For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth. So are my ways higher than your ways.

[ 34 : 53 ] And my thoughts than your thoughts. Um, the, the passage chosen focuses on the mystery of what happened. God's ways are higher than our ways.

And we can't always make sense of that. Um, one of the most ingenious things, there's lots of ingenious things it does. But one of the most ingenious things the book of Job does.

Is it never answers Job. He never gets an answer. You know, he, God is there. God is good. God cares about him. Um, he gets to talk to God. But, you know, God never comes out and says, this is why you suffered.

Or, or look at how, how it built your character. Or whatever. He, he just doesn't say that. There's, there's a mystery there. And, and I think in, in picking this text on, on mystery, um, great heat is very wise.

Um, in, in saying, you know, this is a mystery that, that we might not understand this side of heaven. And the other great thing, and this is often a hard learned lesson for evangelicals.

[ 35 : 59 ] But, um, basically it's that, that feelings do not determine our faith. Um, and this is a long quote. It's a three-piece quote. But I'll read it and then we'll discuss it.

Um, he says, uh, Ought we to conclude when we lose our comforts, or our feelings of comfort, that Christ has therefore lost his power to save? Was it for these that we were accepted of God?

If not, why, why must we be rejected when they are removed? Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him, seeing he liveth to make intercession for them. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Him that cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out. When, therefore, you can derive neither comfort nor hope from your present feelings, and when all past enjoyment only enhances your present distress, recollect that the promises of God in Christ can suffer no change, that his power and grace are susceptible of no decay, that to be deterred by your changeable feelings from seeking and trusting in Christ is to place them in the room of his revealed word.

So, so, so, and I say this is a hard learned lesson for evangelicals because particularly in the evangelical movement, there was a focus on the emotive response to God, the, the warming of the heart, but, but what happens when you have someone like Cooper who's heart, who's a convinced Christian, but whose heart doesn't seem to be very warm for the last half of his life?

[ 37 : 25 ] And, and, and so, so I think that, that advice that, you know, Christ's work is effective regardless of how we feel, regardless of our mental state, you know, I, I think that's, that's a very important thing he's, he's giving to us there and we should, should learn from it.

So, so that brings us to, to the end of, of William Cooper. And, and he's a very interesting, many faceted person. So, if you get a chance to, do, do look at him in some of his poetry.

So, I want to move on and I'm just going to touch on, on Harawas more briefly, in part because he's written a wonderful autobiography you can read to get the less brief version.

But I'll give you enough facts to, to help you here. Basically, I don't know how many of you are familiar with Stanley Harawas, but he's a rather eclectic modern theologian.

The best way of describing him is something like an Anabaptist evangelical Anglo-Catholic. So, he's, and I mean, when I say, lump him in with these evangelicals.

[ 38 : 45 ] Yeah, I mean, and, and he does, it's bizarre. But, but anyway, when I lump him in with these, he, he is someone that, that a lot of evangelicals engage, engage in his work with.

And, and I mean, he, he shares, he started in, in a fairly liberal theological, liberal theological school and got really sick of that and his whole life's work has kind of been dismantling that liberal theology.

So, a lot of evangelicals have, have found really good things in his work. But, he, he just came out with a autobiography last year.

And one of the things that came out in this biography is the extended story of, of his first wife who, who had bipolar disorder. And, basically, she, she had various delusions.

She, she, she blamed Stanley for her illness. So, she thought if she just married the right person, she wouldn't have all these problems. She kept trying to affair, to have affairs with his friends.

[ 39 : 56 ] So, you know, and having affairs is something that, that often happens in manic states for, for people with bipolar. Certain kinds of bipolar.

So, and, and eventually she, eventually she left him. Because, she, yeah, I mean, she, she blamed him.

And, and, and, and in her late 50s, she, she died alone in her apartment of heart failure. And, and her illness never really left.

And, and they did, they, they were, you know, in touch with doctors and psychiatrists. And, and she was on various medications. And, and still, you know, nothing, nothing was a quick fix, as is often the case in, in these things.

And, reflecting on that story, which, which is a profoundly sad story. But, it's worth, it's worth reading. It, it forced Stanley Harawas to, to ask how, how to make sense of this, how to make sense of his, his first wife's life.

[ 41 : 07 ] And, and, and the, the question he asks is, what possibly can be said about a life so lived? And, and he says, I am a Christian theologian.

People assume I am supposed to be able to answer that question. I have no idea how to answer that question. If anything, what I've learned over the years as a Christian theologian is that none of us should try to answer such questions.

Our humanity demands that we ask them. But, if we are wise, we should then remain silent. And, and then he goes on to talk a bit about his, his book, Naming the Silences.

The argument of that book against the Odysseys. The Odyssey, if any of you are friends of Paradise Lost, is the question of how can God be good when there's evil in the world?

How can he be good and all powerful? So, the argument of that book against the Odysseys was hard learned. When Christianity is assumed to be an answer that makes the world intelligible, it reflects an accommodated church committed to assuring Christians that the way things are is the way things have to be.

[ 42 : 17 ] Such answers cannot help but turn Christianity into an explanation. For me, learning to be a Christian has meant learning to live without answers. Indeed, to learn to live in this way is what makes being a Christian so wonderful.

Faith is but a name for learning how to go on without knowing the answers. That is to put the matter too simply. But, at least such a claim might suggest why I find that being a Christian makes life so interesting.

So, I think that's sort of along the same lines of what Great Heed was saying in focusing on the mystery. You know, it's right to ask this question.

We don't know how many answers we'll get. It's the same thing that Job kind of does. And so, that's...

And I found his assessment. And he assesses the situation in various places throughout his book. But it is helpful, particularly when you're dealing with issues that won't go away.

[ 43 : 18 ] One of the things he had to learn is he... You know, he got to a point where it wasn't a question of how do we fix this. It's how do we ensure that she has the least number of episodes per year.

You know, and yes, I mean, it's right to throw everything one has at it medically and theologically and emotionally. But still, sometimes fixes don't happen.

And sometimes you get into a place where you do have to learn to live without answers. And so, he's saying that's what faith helps him do.

And I think that's a good point. So, we've had here basically three really depressing stories. Well, quite honestly.

We have Dorothy Carey, who's, you know, who lived for 12 years in psychosis and died uncured. We have Cooper, who died convinced that God hated him.

[ 44 : 21 ] Although, I mean, one of the things is in both the funeral sermons preached for him, the people are very clear. It's great that Cooper is in heaven because now he's not depressed. And that is a wonderful point as well.

But, I mean, as far as his earthly life went, he died convinced that God hated him.

And, again, for Anne Hauerwas, she died alone in her apartment. You know, and it's just really, really difficult stories to make sense of.

And so, what do we do with this? And I've actually deliberately chosen these stories because we like the other kind of stories better. We like the stories where we get up at the microphone and say, these bad things happened, but God got me through it, and now everything's okay.

It's harder to hear these stories. And I just wanted to now look at these stories and the way they end from sort of a biblical lens and look at what we might make of it.

[ 45 : 33 ] So, basically, these are more modern stories, relatively modern stories. But they're not, of course, the first stories to end sadly.

If you know the biblical book of Lamentations, taken as a book, it ends on, But you, O Lord, reign forever. Your throne endures to all generations. Why do you forget us forever?

Why do you forsake us for so many days? Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored. Renew our days as a bold. Unless you have utterly rejected us and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

I mean, that kind of sounds like the sort of thing Cooper might say. But this is the end of Lamentations. It's not a terribly happy ending.

And if we look at Psalm 88, by the way, there's a wonderful book on faith and mental illness by Catherine Green McCraight.

[ 46 : 35 ] And it takes its title from this psalm. It's called Darkness is My Only Companion. But the end of the psalm. But I, O Lord, cry to you. In the morning my prayer comes before you.

O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up. I suffer your terrors. I am helpless. Your wrath has swept over me.

Your dreadful assaults destroy me. They surround me like a flood all day long. They close in on me together. You have caused my beloved and my friends to shun me. My companions have become darkness.

And this is how it ends. My companions have become darkness. And granted, it's not the normal way a psalm ends. But we have this psalm ending this way.

And so we have these testimonies. And we see that they fit in with certain parts of the Bible that also end within their context, sadly.

[ 47 : 36 ] But I wanted to point out the Bible, of course, itself, and the Christian story does not end, sadly. There's hope at the end. There's the marriage feast with Christ.

And I think, doctrinally, we need to insist on that, that the end of Christianity is hopeful. But there is a place between times, between Eden, and between Revelation, where we can have these stories that end sadly.

And there may not be an immediate resolution. They will be resolved at the end of time. We may or may not know answers about them. But we do have these spaces for things like Psalm 88, where someone and my companions have become darkness.

And I wanted to end using another Carrie. His name is Philip Carrie. He's an Augustine scholar, actually.

But he's recently written a book for lay people called Good News for Anxious Christians. And there's one I highly recommend. But I wanted to use, he has a wonderful chapter on Job and suffering.

[ 48 : 48 ] And he says, he's talking about the fear of talking about suffering in Christian communities.

He says, it's not just a few isolated Bible verses that can trap Christians in the cruel idea that suffering is not an acceptable part of the Christian life. There's something about the whole direction of the biblical witness to God's goodness that is easy to misunderstand.

If you're part of a consumer culture of instant gratification that doesn't know how to wait for what it wants. The Bible is full of promises pointing toward a future of rejoicing which is yet to come, but which we are to anticipate now.

It's like we're at the rehearsal dinner rather than the wedding supper. For some people, there's a dark night of affliction between now and the wedding day. It's that dark night that consumerist spirituality has no time for.

And I wanted to end there because we've been talking about evangelicals. But if we ask ourselves, is mental illness necessarily treated better in the consumerist culture outside the church?

[ 49 : 57 ] And the answer is, by and large, no. I mean, it's not efficient. We set up programs and like to have programs to tell ourselves we're doing something.

But there's still things we'd rather not deal with because it sort of destroys the efficiency and the comfort of the world we live in. And this is why I entitled this slide, Becoming a Church Hopeful Enough to Permit Suffering and Mourning.

And there's lots of people out there in the world who also are treated poorly because they have mental illness because the consumer culture doesn't have time for that.

And I guess I wonder what it would be to be a church that was hopeful enough in the end of the story that we could open a space and say, hey, we're not threatened by this.

I mean, permitting suffering, it's an observed phrase because I don't mean let people suffer.

[ 50 : 57 ] I mean permitting talking about it. But what if we as a church were to open spaces where we say, the world has no time to deal with this, but we have hope at the end of time.

And we're going to open spaces where we can talk about mental illness because we have enough hope. And even if you don't get through it in this life, there's the next one.

So that's sort of my ending challenge is just imagining and thinking about what it would be like to be a church, whether we're talking about St. John's or among your Christian friends, who has a strong enough faith and hope that you cannot be threatened by mental illness, not be threatened by awkwardness, not be threatened by suffering, not be threatened by mourning.

So I'll end with that sort of challenge to you and take questions.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Yes. Just because I can't stand the silence any longer.

[ 52 : 16 ] This was most interesting. I couldn't agree with you more about the way the Christian church has dealt with mental illness. And you gave us three examples here of people who really demonstrated the tremendous alienation they felt from the world around them.

Paranoid overtones in at least two of them. But of course Dorothy was in physical danger, and I don't think we need to place all of that in a bag called her mental state.

You know, members of Carrie's beginning community were regularly attacked by groups of Indians and so on, and I think his first cause of her was murdered, if I recall.

So there was a real... She was really very animated. She had not decided that the world couldn't accept her. But Cooper, I mean, this is just so terribly tragic.

What went through my mind is that the people who have a physical illness, which we have a tendency to treat differently in our society as well as in our history, also do not properly fit the Christian community, nor are we as inclusive as we could be about that kind of thing.

[ 53 : 38 ] I think, in my experience working in psychiatry, not as a psychiatrist, is that it's hard for the community to know how to be helpful or even to be inclusive of a person who may have paranoid tendencies.

In one case there, you had a homicidal, and in one case suicidal. So we don't know how to deal with that kind of person. We feel inept, we feel inadequate, and the fix-it side of our culture and our personality works against our learning how to be more of the kind of person that they need us to be in the congregation or in the life of the church.

And I would really like to hear you comment on that. Well, I mean, I agree with everything you have said. But, you know, and yeah, you're quite right.

As a lot of people, this isn't a matter of, you know, malignance or hardness of heart. It's just not knowing what one does. And Harawas also talks about this when he was working with a group who were working with people with Down syndrome.

And he talks about how this, he was walking down the hall, and this child came up and jumped into his arms, you know, very playful.

[ 55 : 07 ] And he talks about how awkward that was. And I think, I tell that story because I think there is always going to be the space of awkwardness.

You know, I mean, it happens when we have relations of people from cultures different than ours. It happens, you know, anything different we encounter where there's going to be a sort of awkwardness there.

And I think we're afraid of that awkwardness because, as you say, we don't know what to do. But if we have enough faith that God knows what to do, even when we don't, we can permit that awkwardness and say, you know, I have no idea what to do, but I'm going to spend time finding out, even if it feels awkward or wrong.

So in some ways, there needs to be an experimental side to this. And it also needs to be talked about. I mean, it needs to be talked about with people who have done this longer.

Yeah? I think one of the most profound things that Solzhenitsyn ever said was that in a totalitarian society, I think there's a parallel here. In a totalitarian society, it's illegal to be unhappy.

[ 56 : 22 ] And that is a, I think that's what we found. And do you think this, therefore, consumerist spirituality is also one-dimensional and rather aggressive?

Here is the way you're supposed to be. Is that what you found here? Yeah, that's, you know, I'd agree. Okay, I'll say I agree with it in one sense, although I don't think it's all just sort of a conspiratorial plot to do this.

I mean, part of it is a deep, deep fear. And in consumerist spirituality, we want to pretend we'll live forever. I mean, the thing we don't talk about is death. And basically, anything that threatens that, we're going to need to push down and not talk about because we don't have a way of dealing with that.

So, I mean, yes, it becomes a tyranny, but it starts in a survival response, I think. You know, and yes, I really like that quote and would like to get the citation from you at the end, yeah.

Simon. I had a question about, I mean, my first reaction listening to a lot of these stories was what should we do, right? And I think the lady also explained that.

[ 57 : 38 ] The fix-it mentality, right? And it strikes me that there's a place for that, but there's also, it's also the wrong response in some ways. And I'm wondering what you think the place of the kind of pragmatic response, you know, for a lot of evangelicals is.

Should we, when should we ask the question of, how can we help you? And when should we just sit and listen and try and understand the mystery or try and understand these things? When, when you say, when should we ask the question, how can we help you?

What do you, do you mean? I guess I'm just wondering what, the natural response when we hear these stories is we want to do something, right? As a church, as individuals. And I'm wondering, it strikes me that that's not the appropriate response sometimes.

And I'm wondering, when is it the right response? When is the right response? When there is something helpful pragmatically that can be done without violating the personhood of the person you're talking to.

What I mean by that is, I mean, when I encounter people with depression or mental illness, when I encounter it in myself, you know, I have sort of an approach, throw everything you've got at it.

[ 58 : 49 ] Which basically is, yeah, talk to the psychiatrist, talk to psychologists, you know, encourage people to get on medication, you know, if people have trouble, you know, getting to appointments, I'll offer to drive them, or whatever.

You know, but say, specify, with always the caveat, that if absolutely none of this works, I'm still here, I love you, and God loves you.

And I really think that, because, I mean, because, I mean, we should seek help whenever we can, you know. Granted, I mean, that takes time and patience, because, like some people, really, you know, have problems with medication, have problems with psychiatrists, you know, and so there's a certain amount of time and patience there, and listening, and in some ways, that depends on the person you're talking to, but really saying, you know, even if none of this works, I'm here, is really important.

I'm really glad I came today, I usually go to the nine-hook service, but I'm really glad I came, and I hadn't planned to say this, but there actually is something, practically at St. John's, that was designed to be a place where people can quietly be themselves in the presence of God, in a quiet setting, and that is a service that we call Keeping Company with God.

Okay. It's twice a month on Monday evening, and several of us put it together, not that it's a place for necessarily, just people who are mentally ill, or people who are suffering, but it is a quiet service with prayers, and a small homily, where people can come, and be who they are, quietly, just in it, and have people, in a service context, keep company with them, as they keep company with God.

[ 61 : 00 ] So it is a service that is designed, I mean, you can go, I mean, there was a man once, who came once, a man in his 60s came, tried to help service left, I never knew his name, that was fine, but it's a service where you can come, and be completely anonymous, but you can come, and what is hopefully witness to you in the Holy Spirit, is that God loves you, and the community of St. John's loves you.

And we have prayers on Sunday morning, people come to prayer stations, but several of us thought, what do we have during the week, that, and this is a quote from a poem I just read recently, that witnesses and lives out God's unwearying constancy.

And I think we, the thing that we do poorest in our culture, for people who are caregivers, for people with relatives with dementia, people who have chronic illness, people who never get the job they want, people who's for things, who carry burdens on their lives, how do we live like Christ, for the things that don't get better.

And this service is a place where, which is not, you can be, you can come, it's a quiet service, you can have a wonderful day, you don't come away, hopefully, you know, feeling down, but you come to be, to be in the presence of God, in a way which is, which I think speaks too much, in what you're saying, our desire is to be present, in the Holy Spirit, in whatever place people are in that day, and to share something of God's unwearying constancy.

Well, it's really good to hear that. I actually haven't been, I've often noticed those in the bulletin, and looked at them, and almost come out a few times, you know, so I'm really glad to hear that, that's what's happening there, and that's great, yeah.

[ 62 : 53 ] Thank you. I think one of the great things, about the Job story, is that we have a revelation, of light's triumph of the darkness, you know, I think this was for some of God, in Christ's life too, and he was constantly surrounded, by darkness, even in the storms, you talk about living in India, you know, and people who have done, mission work in India, say it's just incredible, what goes on there, you know, how they, people who come against, whatever they are, you know, spiritual people, who come against, that Christian attempts, and physically, you know, blast anybody in the way, and I think it's very real, that the spiritual, there's an evil spirituality too, which encroaches, on the time, that I, and I, I would like to know, what kind of prayer, prayer life, these people had, especially Calvary, no, did they have, did they leave any evidence, of a prayer life, or?

In his, in his earlier life, and in, in parts of his later life, yes, I mean, it, very, I mean, as that quote I read here, he says, I would if I thought, God would permit it, kind of thing, you know, so, so when, when he could, he, he did have a, a very active prayer life, and I mean, he would also, when he was with Newton, I mean, they'd have, have worship services, and prayer meetings, regularly.

Newton's a good example, of trying to, light over darkness, you know, Newton's like, yeah, well, and there was that sort of, that, well, that, that was part of the kinship, between them, is that, you know, both of them had, suffered darkness, and, you know, yeah, yeah.

I think, one of the things, that people don't realize, I suffer from your question, sometimes, but I, but I think, the more I hear about it, I probably am on the mild end, rather than the, the other end of it, but, if I'm not really diligent, I can get very, stuck in it, and, and it's hard to, to use tricks, that I know, to get me out, but I think, what happens is, that, as a Christian, everybody wants you to admit, that you're a sinner, well, to a depressed mind, if you latch onto that, that's all you see, even when you're, in an up kind of, mood, it keeps coming back, and you think, oh, I can't feel good, because, I have to remember, I'm a sinner, and so, for a person, who suffers from depression, that's really, really, I think, terrifying, because, you just, to think, and, to think of God, as a loving God, and to be a sinner, at the same time, in that kind of, brain, without sunshine, yeah, and, you've lost it, like it's really hard, to, to pick yourself up, and then you get afraid, that if you feel, start feeling good, about yourself, then you're kidding yourself, and other people, are looking at you, thinking you're ignoring, the part that you're a sinner, but you're not, you just like to put it, on a shelf for a while, because it's, you know,

I can see how they got, to the point, where they thought, God just, wasn't going to help them, he couldn't, because they were, lost to him, so I think that's, the key, in the listening part, like if you, if you have family, and friends, they usually listen, but if you don't, have that kind of, support system, then you're, you're one of those people, who are out there, and people don't want to listen, because you're pretty negative, sometimes, and, yeah, yeah, no, and I think that's, you know, that's what makes it, it's so, mental illness, so insidious, for, for, for, Christians experiencing this, is it will very often, appropriate, theological things, which is why, at least, my own experience, of dealing with that, is, is I, like to read the Bible, in community, with wise people, you know, so that I can't fixate, on those, those verses, and so that I see, that there's, there's something, more going on there, I mean, this, this is something that,



[ 67 : 01 ] I don't know if you know, Spencer, but in his fairy queen, there's a character, called despair, and, and he does this, this stuff, where he'll take, you know, theological doctrines, and, and use them, to drive people, to commit suicide, you know, and, and, well, there's lots of examples, of this, Martin Luther's, another example, he felt, probably had, obsessive compulsive disorder, felt like he needed, to confess, day in, and day out, and he latched, onto this, and I mean, it's, it's difficult, talking about things, like that, especially since, when you're talking, to people, who don't experience, these things, they'd say, well, well, what could be wrong, with confessing, what could be wrong, with praying, but if you do it, obsessively, you know, forever and ever, it becomes something, that's, that's not healthy, and, and same, with fixating on, on sin, I mean, if you said, if you said that, to a group of, a lot of Christians, will say, you know, we never talk about sin, you know, if, and it's true, in broader culture, we don't, but, so I mean, we have to use, theological care, and wisdom, as we, we guide people, in that, yeah, yeah, well, do you think, the great sermon, on the death of Cooper, could have been improved, if he had pointed out, that the church of the day, may have contributed, significantly, to his distress, by supporting the notion, that God could arbitrarily, down to help, someone who longed, to respond to him, this is, is, the, the actual, the, actually, the, the biographical, over, over, over, over, over, over, over, over, over, is, is, people say, well, look,

Calvinism will make you crazy, because, and, and, and I think, I, I think, basically, I, I would have to say, to that, depending on, on what, kind of mental illness, you're dealing with, you know, there are better and worse, theological traditions, to be engaged in, for, for instance, a good example of this, is, charismatic Christianity, this can, seeing visions, can, can very easily, play into, to people having, delusions, so, do, do I want to, crucify Calvinism, and, and I want to say, no, because there, there are, wise Calvinists out there, but, but again, this is, this is where, where, probably some wisdom, could have been shown, and, and some, some nuance, but,

I mean, yeah, so, so, what I'm getting at is, it's a complicated issue, and, and, just getting rid of the doctrine, is not necessarily, always the solution, I, I wanted to, to highlight that, because, you know, especially with mental illness, people will latch onto, all sorts of doctrines, like, for instance, in, in religion, it's sin, but, but even if, if you're, you're not religious, well, say, with obsessive compulsive disorder, you'll be worried about germs, should we then stop talking about germs, you know, or are we just going to find something else, so, so, so, in some ways, I, I want to be careful, just about saying that, that a certain theology will, but, but I mean, yeah, there's that, I'm, I, I'm waffling here, but, yeah.

I suppose one of the problems, for other, for people that do not suffer from mental illness, is, that it's invisible, then, you know, you, I can't see, that you, have a group of depression, somebody has one arm, I can see it, you know, I can help them, or any other kind of thing, but in St. John's, we have, lots of help, for people that have, various different things, we have grief, shared, worst care, health amendment, or people that, suffer from, pornographic, or sessions, we have, you know, various things like that, living waters, for people who are in, relational things, would there, would it be helpful, for churches, to have, some type of, group, for people that suffer, from mental illness, could, join together, I mean, I don't know, that would be helpful, because if you get, all these people that have got, you know, mental illness together, would that be helpful,

I don't know, I would actually answer, with an, absolute resounding yes, there's actually, someone in, in Burnaby, I don't know, if you've heard of her, but, her name is Maria Bergen, she, she has suffered, throughout her life, from, from bipolar, severe bipolar, and she started this, this group, through her church, called, called Living Room, and, and it's, basically a group, that I think they meet, well, they organize it, various ways, but, but they meet, I think, monthly, and, they, they, do sort of, Bible study, have, have someone, share about their experience, of, of mental illness, and, and reflecting on, the scripture, and, they have sort of, sharing groups, I don't know the exact format, but this seems to, have been really, really good, I've talked, talked to Maria, and, well, and I mean, people are catching on, so I think there's like, you know, seven or eight groups, worldwide now, just from this little thing, starting in Burnaby, and, and it's growing, so, if anybody here, at St. John's, is in charge, of setting up, things like that, it would be wonderful, if we could have a living room, group here,

[ 73 : 21 ] I, yeah, I think that was, all the time we had, I'm trying to be as good, as Bill is at this, but I forgot, when I introduced Carl, to mention next week's speaker, who's the most attractive man, in this room, so, Shem will be talking about, the lost world of Genesis 1, hope you can come for that, let's thank Carl briefly, one last time.

Thank you.