

## Twisting The Truth – Session 4: Facing Forward

### Series Background

The CTU (Changing Truth Unit) gains a new member and works to train Agent Bender to become a valuable member of the group.

Each session in this series begins with Agent Bender learning new ways to succeed in giving the world new ways to think about what has always been God's will.

Andy Stanley follows that with a 30-minute teaching about what the truth has always been and what it always will be.

Session 1 – The Source of Deception  
Session 2 – All is Not as it Seems  
Session 3 – Says Who?  
Session 4 – Facing Forward  
Session 5 – It's Only Physical  
Session 6 – It's No Mistake

You know how amazingly weird it is — moments of clarity followed suddenly by moments of insanity. We may know the right thing to do, yet we go out and do the exact opposite. Why is that? Is something wrong with us?

Or could it be there is an invisible world impacting our visible world? Is there something we cannot see influencing everything we can see?

The Bible's answer is that, yes, there is an unseen world affecting our lives. It is all around us. It impacts every single thing we do, everything about us. It affects all our relationships. It influences our thinking, our attitudes, and our decision-making. It colors our perspectives on finances, on morality, and on how we do business. And it can actually be life-threatening — physically, emotionally, and relationally.

### Background

*God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to our conscience, but shouts in our pains,” wrote C.S. Lewis; “it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”*

Experiencing pain and suffering, more than anything else, brings us face to face with God. When the bottom drops out and things go terribly wrong, our inclination is to look upward. And the question we usually ask is this: *Why, God? Why me? Why him? Why her when she is so young? Why now? Why this? Why would you let it happen again?*

Knowing the answers will not make the pain go away. But we feel that if somehow we can make sense out of what has happened, if we can just see that this is leading to something good, we will find it easier to endure the pain and loss and suffering. *There must be some purpose to my pain.*

So we immediately try to piece things together. What did I do to cause this? If only I had paid closer attention ... worked harder ... been a better friend ... a better husband ... a better parent. Somehow, we have to connect the dots.

### Discussion Starter

What is something that has happened to you in the past few weeks that has caused you pain?

### Video Overview

In Romans 8, Paul takes through the history of human suffering. He connects three big dots — “in the beginning,” “in the meantime,” and “in the end.”

*In the beginning* Paul reminds us that sin entered the world, bringing death and God's

judgment. Ever since humankind's first sin, the world has been cursed; sin reigns and continues to have its ruinous way. “The creation was subjected to frustration” (Romans 8:20), Paul tells us, with that word *frustration* implying depravity and perversion.

Therefore “creation itself” is in “bondage to decay” (Romans 8:21). We are all under this bondage. We have been set up for struggle.

When suffering and difficulties come your way, it is not just a breakdown in your personal well-being; it is a reflection of *the whole world being broken*. It is not simply that your family or marriage or career or health is broken; *everything around us has always been broken*. We are *born* broken.

That is why things go wrong, our plans do not work out, and expectations are not met. The world is in a broken state, and none of us is exempt. Under that burden, “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8:22). For the present — “in the meantime” — we groan from daily experiencing the effects of sin and decay.

*In the end* - Paul also points us toward the future — “in the end.” He tells us, “Creation itself will be *liberated* ... and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). As believers in Christ, this soon-coming future will mean “our adoption as sons” and “*redemption*” — not just of our souls, but “of our bodies (Romans 8:23).

Therefore Paul can say, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

*In the meantime* ... Our present experience can be filled with hope. “We hope for what we do not

yet have,” Paul say, which means “we wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:25). We can lean forward eagerly, awaiting the ultimate redemption of our bodies, when our salvation is complete.

To get us through, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26). It is normal to feel weak and frustrated, “but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26). God fully understands our situation, and his Spirit is praying for us “in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:27).

### Discussion Questions

1. Why do we tend to believe the twist that the reason for our pain can be found in past events or present circumstances?
2. When have you tried to do this only to end up frustrated? That is, when have you experienced pain, or watched as others experienced pain that seemed to have no purpose?
3. According to Romans 8:18, we are to hold our present suffering in light of a more hopeful future. But how has the pain in your life affected your present relationship with God? Has it made you more dependent on God? Or has it pushed you away and made you more independent? How have you seen suffering affect the faith of those around you?
4. In the beginning, God created a paradise; however, when we rebelled in sin, death, and decay entered the world. How does “the beginning” relate to your understanding of the pain you have experienced?
5. Romans 8:26 – 27 addresses the Spirit’s work in our weakness. How does the Spirit help us “in the meantime”? How does God provide help for us during times of suffering?
6. How does knowing what lies ahead in “the end times” affect your present suffering?

### Mileposts

- We live with a broken world that is in bondage to sin, death, and decay – all as a result of humanity’s first rebellion against God.
- In this life we cannot escape the effects of sin, death, and decay. In many ways, life on this earth will always be a downward spiral.
- But we can look forward in hope to a future when we will experience complete liberation and salvation. Meanwhile, God helps us in our weakness as we wait eagerly for what is ahead.

### Moving Forward

For now, God promises us his presence, his comfort, and the prayers of the Holy Spirit on our behalf. But there lies a future when God will bring a complete end to all human pain and suffering. Paul speaks in Romans 8 about a future so glorious that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing” with it. He talks about the “hope” we can have as we “wait patiently” for these things. How much are you hoping for such things in your eternal future? How patiently are you waiting for them? How real is your hope? Write an assessment of your heart and mind on these issues.

### Changing Your Mind

Meditating on the following verses from Romans 8 can help us keep an “in the end” focus – while “in the meantime” we rely on the Holy Spirit’s help – as we encounter suffering because of what happened to humanity “in the beginning.”

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us ... The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

*Romans 8:18 and 26*

### Preparation for Session 5

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:13. Satan has done much to twist sex in our culture. Paul mentions “sexual immorality” here. From what you know of the Bible, how do you think Paul would define this term? Do you believe the Bible’s definition is the same as your definition for “sexual immorality”? In pointing us away from sexual immorality in this verse, toward what truth does Paul point us?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:18. What basic response does Paul say we should have toward sexual immorality? Is sexual sin in a category all its own? Why? What is different about it?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20. What perspective on our bodies does Paul teach in these verses? How would you explain this in your own words?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:15 – 16. Referring again to sexual immorality, Paul points out what is most wrong about it. What is that? What does this explanation mean to you?
- In the last phrase of 1 Corinthians 6:16, Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24 which was written in reference to the creation of Adam and Eve and their marriage. In your understanding, what does this “oneness” in marriage include?