

Foreword

Our world is not as it should be. We all have moments when we find the world to be different than we imagined it would be. Sometimes these moments of discovery are mere shadows flitting past us on an otherwise sunny day when we hear of misfortune that is distant and remote. Other times, these moments roar in like a tsunami, as when death, divorce, sexual assault, a random act of violence, or a medical diagnosis turns our sunny lives into a nightmare.

How do we bear up under the weight of such profound disappointment? How do we face loss? How do we answer the horror of inexplicable evil?

This book is a compass that helps us find our way out of confusion, and Sarah Sumner a reliable guide to show us how us to navigate difficult terrain until we reach a place of beauty that we didn't know was there before.

I first met Sarah as a graduate student at Azusa Pacific University. I went to study theology because I wanted to know more about the God I love, but also because I wanted to understand the deep injustices I experienced from the hands of church leaders. As a young girl, I watched my pastor's marriage fall apart because of an extramarital affair. When I was a teenager, my church community shunned me and my brother because

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of our parents' divorce. When I was a college student, a youth pastor raped me. I wanted to understand the spiritual failures of these leaders, so that I could learn how to teach leaders to have integrity and honor.

When I entered seminary, I was a gutted girl, hollowed out by trauma. But my professor, Dr. Sumner, taught me to consider the overlooked limits of evil. Evil is indeed evil (there's no sense in denying or minimizing it), yet God providentially overcomes evil with good. In Sarah's book, we see this brilliantly in Jesus. Every story of Jesus turns evil on its head and proves again that love is stronger than death.

As my mentor, Sarah Sumner helped me grapple with my own failings. We all have ways of filling those empty places left by injustice. Some people silently slide into the comfortable pseudo-safety of slothful ease. Some brim with eruptive rage. Some, in resignation, turn to the Numbing Things (e.g., alcohol, drugs, fast-track sex, false religion, big money, overachievement). I chose to protect myself with flinty indifference. As happened to Sarah, my parents' divorce led me to an eating disorder that consumed more than a decade of my life. My life, back then, did not overflow with the soft, strong love of God, because I would not admit my anger. Sarah's wisdom gave me confidence, validated my grief, and offered me very needed space to be angry.

In this book, Dr. Sumner will help you, too. What you have here in your hands is strong medicine that is sweet, not bitter. Godly anger does demand that we lay down our vain excuses and accusations, yet it also gives us power to dare mighty things and triumph in ways we never thought possible. One of my favorite lines is when Sarah speaks of "the reality that some things can't be done for the sake of the kingdom apart from the gift of Jesus' anger."

A Hasidic rabbi once taught this simple prayer: "Let me not die while I am still alive." The stories about Jesus in this book reach deep into the places long devastated and shine light on wounds we have

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long misunderstood and tried to run from. When Jesus swoops in, the demons flee. Hear the good news: Jesus' anger ushers in God's upside-down kingdom that turns the world right side up.

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