

# Letter from the Editor



by BRANDON PETERSON

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Dear *JBC* reader,

“Fauna died, and her sister Flora has been rehomed.” The update came from our local arboretum. Flora and Fauna were mute swans that lived in the arboretum pond. They had been there for years. Our young daughter loved to see them every time we went and talked about them endlessly. Going to the arboretum meant going to see Flora and Fauna. They were beautiful, and now they are gone. Perhaps it’s a small thing. After all, swans aren’t people. Even so, the news introduced unexpected conversations with our daughter. You see, these outings had become more than recreation—they were pockets of goodness, beauty we could count on. The news brought unwanted change.

Change and loss hit everything, including what we enjoy and assume won’t change—at least not now. These simple pleasures and places of beauty give us glimpses of heaven, and when they are gone, it is a stark reminder that heaven is not here. We feel it more deeply than we expect, and the world seems “off” somehow. What once brought us joy and pleasure are now memories. How *does* a father explain this to his little girl when he is still figuring it out himself? We know God’s beauty cannot change, but the earthly reminders of it can (Mal 3:6). We also know that as the world changes in big and small ways, God holds us close and promises never to leave or forsake us (Josh 1:5). But no matter what our age, we still feel the rift between how our hearts know the world should be and how it is.

In this issue, we gain glimpses of some of the many changes we might experience in our lifetimes: grief, hardships, attacks on our humanity, struggles with setting limits, an inhospitable culture, and chaos all around. But we will also see specific ways that God works to bring strength in weakness, dignity to our humanity, clarity in saying no, hearts that welcome others in, and a reminder that he is with us in every storm.

In our first article, “Content with Weakness: Paul’s Paradoxical Proposal,” Mike Emler considers the apostle Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 12 on his thorn in the flesh and what it means for Christ’s grace to be sufficient in our weakness. Emler reflects on his own challenges in the past year and reminds us that when we are most weak, we know the power of Jesus most fully. This truth transforms the way we bear hardships of all kinds.

Next, Eamon Wilson offers a thought-provoking piece on three dehumanizing cultural messages that are growing in influence. Wilson reflects on how these trends pervade our churches, and he provides direction for pastors and counselors on how to respond.

From twenty-first century cultural strife, we move to the benefits of an ancient practice—hospitality. In contrast to counseling, which takes place in a structured, more formal setting, sharing a meal in your home creates opportunities for a guest to experience the gospel personally. In his article, “Hospitality: Every Christian’s Calling,” pastor Paul Jeon examines the biblical call to hospitality, common misconceptions about it, and the ample opportunities to practice it within the church.

We are happy to have two toolbox articles in this issue. The first is “Help for Those Who Can’t Say No” by Todd Stryd. He offers a decision-making framework rooted in the fear of the Lord that gives clarity to the common struggle to discern when to say no to others. Through a counseling transcript, Stryd shows us what a conversation with a counselee could look like.

The second toolbox is from Lauren Whitman. She introduces us to the biblical metaphor of *chaos*, traces the theme throughout Scripture, and considers how Jesus brings an end to chaos. She uses a case study to show how the metaphor can be brought into the counseling room.

Michael Gembola's "Book Notes" returns in this issue with reviews on books about celebrity pastors, the seven deadly sins, trauma care, multiethnic biblical commentary, honoring aging parents, and a theology of humanity, among others.

Whatever changes have found you lately, may this issue remind you afresh of the One who meets us with his unchanging love.

On behalf of the *JBC* editorial team,

Brandon Peterson

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