

# EMAW Testimonials

## Collection for Inspiration

Michael Coyle – MN

2018



### “Suck It Up!” vs. “Lean on God and Persevere

I'm meeting with a man, roughly my age, married < 3 years, who's firstborn spent 172 days in the NICU and has life-long challenges to come. We were going through Book 1 Lesson 3. He's been “spun up” for a long time due to PTSD--it turns out parents of newborns facing their child's death every day suffer many of the same consequences as soldiers facing death every day in combat. Meeting once a week and having 20 minutes of homework is part of our plan for how he takes baby steps from “existential threat” (totally reactive) mode to more deliberate living now that (thank God!!) the existential threat is gone.

I could see the man slow down as we poured over the section on God's Word being primarily valuable for getting us through hard times. We talked about worldly wisdom on how to endure suffering: like “Walk it off” or “Suck it up”!

None of this worldly advice did him any good when he and his wife were agonizing over treatment decisions for their son day after day when he stopped breathing multiple times a day. Some people (family) actually told him these things while in the NICU. You can walk off a sprained ankle. You can't walk off an existential threat facing your only son.

We discussed how in Sunday School and confirmation nobody had ever mentioned that a reason to learn God's Word was to be able to persevere and endure through seasons of trial or hardship. Men do, of course, **\*long\*** to endure and persevere. But that longing is no guarantee that we will ...

I had a thought while working through this material: What was God saying to Jesus when he was in the garden sweating drops of blood? We discussed this and, while we agreed we didn't know what God was telling Him, we both agreed that we were pretty sure “suck it up” or “walk it off” wasn't likely to be the best counsel God had for His one and only Son! So perhaps we as men need something other than worldly wisdom to endure what Jesus did the way Jesus did.

Ultimately the man's reflections led him to question his own motives, the life he had constructed before his son's premature birth, and how God wants him to construct his life differently now that he has to reconstruct it. Both he and his wife are out of work, they were near bankruptcy, etc., so there is much to be rebuilt after they forsook all else to care for their son. It was wonderful to see how, despite the pain in this man's family tree, and in his present circumstances, God had brought him to a place where he was willing to “turn off his autopilot” and try to discern what God would have him build for the second half of his life, rather than return to what he'd been doing previously. A submitted man can be mightily used by God!

I have no greater joy than seeing God working--all else pales in comparison! His redemptive arc in a person's life is the most beautiful thing. I have, for a long while, felt that there was “nobody headed where I was headed.” To put it mildly: You guys have changed that! You're not only headed where I'm headed, you're putting a booster pack on my wings. Can't describe what a blessing that is to me! I hope this note in some small part encourages each of you and conveys my sincere gratitude for each of you. Thanks for the Spiritual Tailwind you have each been to me, Mike