

N U R T U R E  
**F A I T H**  
with  
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March 4, 2018

You Should Be Here

**READ:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (Common English Bible)

*“Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about people who have died so that you won’t mourn like others who don’t have any hope.”*

**REFLECT:**

*You Should Be Here* is a piano-driven country ballad, co-written by Ashley Gorley and Cole Swindell, and recorded by Swindell about the death of Swindell’s father. In September 2013, Swindell was out on tour after signing a record deal. During his tour, Swindell was informed that his father had died unexpectedly – and tragically – when a truck he was working on fell on him. Though the song is deeply personal to Swindell, the lyrics are not so specific that those who haven’t lost a parent will feel left out. Each one of us have experienced those moments when everything seems perfect except for the absence of a loved one. This track recovers those moments, releases the deep emotions of loss and articulates with candor, “You should be here, standing with your arm around me here.”

It is this particular moment – remembering a loved one who has died – that the apostle Paul addresses in his first letter to the Christian community in Thessalonica. With deeply emotive language, Paul expresses genuine love and concern for these new Christian believers. Paul then provides a heartfelt, pastoral response to the deep grief that has cast a shadow over them as they remember those who have died: “Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about people who have died so that you won’t mourn like others who don’t have any hope.” At first glance, it would appear that Paul is suggesting that if we have enough faith in the promises of God, we will not mourn the death of a father, mother, or any other loved one. In fact, this is not what is suggested by Paul. A second glance is necessary.

A deeper look at this one sentence of scripture reveals something quite different. Paul understands that grief and mourning are important. The presence of deep grief is testimony that the one who has died made a difference in our lives. Mourning is indicative that the world is a better place because that person was born, lived, and positively touched others. Paul values mourning as part of the human experience. What Paul is saying is that the Christian community is not to mourn “like others who don’t have any hope.” Mourn, yes. But mourn differently. Paul is asking for a distinctively Christian-type of mourning that acknowledges that because of Jesus Christ, the one who has died is not separated from us forever. In the resurrection, we will be together again. Mingled with our grief is the certain knowledge that there will be a heavenly reunion with our loved ones.

In a particularly expressive lyric Cole Swindell captures my own longing for my father when I am walking on the beach: “You’d be loving this, you’d be freaking out, you’d be smiling, yeah I know you’d be all about what’s going on right here right now. God, I wish somehow you could be here. Oh, you should be here.” My father loved the ocean and walks on the beach. I walk to the beach from my office on occasion and wish my father was right there by my side, “standing with your arm around me here.” But grief doesn’t consume me. That is because I mourn differently. Because of Jesus Christ, I now anticipate that day in the future when my father’s arm will be around me once again.

**RESPOND:**

1. How has this scripture or meditation spoken to you?

2. What insight can you apply to your life this week?

3. What one specific act do you intend to take, an attitude to change, a person to see, or prayer to pray?

**PRAY:**

*Lord, thank you for sending your son to embody your love, to defeat death, and to give us the promise of the resurrection for ourselves and those we love. Amen.*