

Pain Management – Making the Most of Your Pain

Welcome to Harvest Community Church

Series: 10X

Text: Genesis 50:20, Psalm 34:19

~ Gary Wilkerson – If the Lord did not permit troubles in our life, that would represent the worst form of rejection. It would mean that God is saying, “I have no special work for this believer, no plans for their life being set apart as a testimony. Therefore, I don’t need to produce anything in them. Let them remain untrained, untutored, an adult with a child’s mind. Let them not abound in grace. Let them not learn through affliction so that they might teach others. Let them just exist and die in their childishness.”

Joseph was about 17 years old when his brothers sold him into slavery, and he was 30 years old when the vision that God had given Him, that He would become a great leader, was finally fulfilled. The years in between were filled with a lot of painful experiences: the betrayal of his brothers, being sold into slavery, being falsely accused of rape by his master’s wife, and then being thrown into prison, and seemingly forgotten. Even the people that he helped and promised to help him forgot about him as their life turned for the better.

As Joseph trusted God, and responded to his suffering in faith and humility, God used his painful circumstances to mold and shape him for his destiny. God didn’t cause his suffering, but He used it to prepare him for something much greater. God works the same way in all of our lives. Not through the same set of circumstances and pain, but through our own unique trials that prepare us for a greater work of glory.

Those who are 10X understand that God shapes and molds us through painful and difficult circumstances and situations. The old hymn writer said – “Through many dangers, trials and snares I have already come, Twas grace that brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home”.

~ Josh McDonnell – “Every Problem introduces a person to themselves.”

Every time we encounter a painful experience, we get to know ourselves a little better, more importantly we get to know God even better.

Key Questions – How do you usually respond to bad experiences? Do you explode in anger? Do you detach yourself from life and people? Do you ignore it? Do you fall into self-pity? Are you paralyzed and unable to find a way through? Do you blame others for mistakes that you made?

Pain can stop us dead in our tracks or it can cause us to make decisions that we would rather not have to face because they make us uncomfortable. Pain helps us face who we are and where we are. **Jonah 2:1-4** What we do with our painful experiences will define who we become. Some people manage negative and painful experiences well with determination and strength, while some struggle.

~ Cheryl McGuinness – Wife of the pilot on the AA Airlines flight that was the first to crash into the world trade center on 9/11 - “As unfair, unreasonable, and impossible as it seems, we still have work to do after tragedy occurs. We still have roles to fill. We still have responsibilities to family and others. The stuff of life may pause for a while, but it doesn’t stop. Fair or not, that is reality.”

Every experience we have is an opportunity for growth. God never intended for the difficult things in life to end us or to harm us but to add increase into our life for His glory. What separates those who are 10X from others who just barely survive is how they face, deal with and manage their pain. Many of life’s greatest gains have come out of the middle of their pain.

Things to Know About Painful Experiences

- Everyone has them. Everyone at some point has painful, difficult, strange and hard trials. There are no exceptions to this. If we look at the lives of those that we admire and the ones that God has worked through the most, when we peel back curtain, we will see a life that has navigated many difficult and painful experiences. Some that almost took them out. Everyone has battle scars and wounds from living life that Jesus has healed. Those who are 10X understand that painful life experiences are common to everyone, they are not some sort of strange anomaly in their life.

1 Peter 4:12-13, 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (NKJV & NLT)

Nobody gets to escape bad experiences. Most of us want to avoid bad experiences but the truth is even when we do everything right, they still have a way of finding us. No matter who you are, where you live, how successful you are, what you do or what your background is, we all have to deal with bad experiences.

~ Some days you are the pigeon, other days you are the statue.

- No one likes them. No one likes pain. Pain hurts. If you do there is something wrong with the way that you are wired. As you mature you learn to embrace pain, and to make pain work for you. We must also realize and deal with the fact that God has a greater purpose when He allows some pain to come into our lives. Remember, there is a purpose that is greater than the pain. God never allows any experience in our life to be wasted and neither should we. Those who manage their pain well enjoy talking about it when it is over. They have a war story to tell. A story of God’s faithfulness, provision, and survival and lessons learned. They have bragging rights. As Christians we call this a testimony.
- Few people make a bad experience a God experience. This is one of the things that sets those who are 10X apart from others. Life’s difficulties do not allow us to stay the same. They always change us. We will be moved. The question is will we go forwards or backwards. Will we get better or will we get bitter. When hard times come, and they will, many people do not respond well.

- Faithful and successful people often point to the hardest, most difficult times in their lives as a major point of growth in their journey. When life handed them lemons, they didn't suck on them, they added water and sugar. They made the best out of a bad situation. The only hand that you can play is the one that you have been dealt. That was not of your making. Those who are 10X understand that all that you can do is the best that you can do with God's help and the rest is up to Him. Our job is to be faithful; His job is to bring the increase. We don't have to compare ourselves to others. Best is best. **1 Corinthians. 3:6-8,**
Matthew 13:8 (NLT)

All of us have a pain file. All of us have our share of failures, struggles, temptations, and negative and even traumatic experiences. All of these are common to people. Some of us will experience many of these and some few. All of these experiences can be used by God to unlock the potential that God has placed inside of us.

- The pain of inexperience - All of us have areas of immaturity. We have to learn patience and earn the respect of others all while learning as we go. It is ok to start out immature, the lessons of immaturity help us to not stay that way. **1 Corinthians 13:11**
- The pain of incompetence - This is where we discover our strengths and weakness and come to grips with them. It causes us to reevaluate our giftings and abilities honestly. This is where we tighten up the areas of our life that we need to and let go of dreams and desires that God never place in our wheelhouse.
- The pain of disappointment - There are many things in life that we want, and we realize that we will never get. Life is full of disappointments. Sometimes God allows us to lose things only to give us something even better. This is where we learn to pray and live like Jesus did- "Not My will, but Yours be done".
- The pain of disillusionment - All of us have met people that we looked forward to meeting and realized they were not who we thought they were. There are times we get what we wanted and when we did, things were not what we thought they would. They were harder than we imagined and brought with them an entirely different set of troubles and challenges.
- The pain of failure - We tried things, and they didn't work out. We did our best and the best wasn't good enough. These are times we made mistakes that could have been avoided. There were personal sins and troubles of our own making. **Matthew 26:73-75**
- The pain of betrayal - These are the times we are let down by people that either we suspected or would least expect. These are personal shots that people say, "don't take it personal." **Luke 22:47-48** At some point all of will face our Judas. The most painful betrayals are those that pretend to love you while they stab you in the back. These experiences make us careful about who we trust and allow close to us. There is a reason that Judas, while one of the twelve, was never in Jesus inner circle.

- The pain of loss - It could be a financial loss. The loss of a friendship. The death of a dream or a divorce. It could be the actual death of a spouse, child, or close friend. It is in these times that we realize that God is our comforter, our peace and an ever-present help in times of trouble.
- The pain of delay. This is the pain of not getting what you want when you want it. Joseph spent thirteen years in slavery and in prison before he received the promise in the dream. This pain keeps us from getting what we are not ready for and what is not ready for you. It took Moses forty years to prepare for over forty years of his call. Joseph wasn't ready at 17 to lead a nation in preparation for a famine and then lead them through it. He was ready to lead preparation at 30 and then at 37 he had gained the skills, respect, and influence to lead through it. God prepared him and then he was able to prove and earn the respect of others for the next seven years. Many times, it is painful to not get what you have been promised but it is much more painful to get what you have been promised if you are not ready for it.
- The pain of conflict - Life has conflicts. Churches split. Families fracture, children rebel, business partners part ways and husbands and wives have intense fellowship. The pain of conflict teaches us to communicate better, to set boundaries. It teaches us when to be silent and when we need to confront and how to be good at it. Conflict teaches us that there are times to walk away and times when walking away is not wise and we must tenaciously stand our ground. Conflict helps us to see the high ground. It also allows us to confront our lower, fleshly nature that sometimes desires to take the low road.
- The pain of bad health - These times are eye openers. They allow us to know that we are human. That life is fragile and precious. They help us to make lifestyle changes that promote better stewardship of our bodies, time and emotions.
- The pain of change - All of us like the comfort of the familiar. Change stretches us, challenges us and gets us out of our comfort zone. Change for change's sake is not wise. But every time God wants to do something new it will require us to challenge the status quo in our lives. A new car is great, a new phone or computer is wonderful, but all of these takes getting used to and a new set of skills.
- The pain of relationship losses. There are times in life that people move on from us or we must move on from them. One of the difficult things to learn is that not everyone will be with you for your entire journey. For some, God has a different assignment. For others, they have no interest in growth. Some people are unreliable. This teaches us to cherish every season with the people we care about. It teaches us to value those who are going the distance with us. It helps us to have compassion for those who do not have the strength to go on. It teaches us to live in forgiveness towards those who have failed us or let us down.

- The pain of hard decisions - There are times in life that we must choose. We learn that wanting to make everyone happy and making tough decisions are incompatible tasks. You can't make everyone happy all the time. These painful experiences help us to realize that our call isn't to make people happy but to please God. It also teaches us the value of clear and kind communication. These times also help us to develop tough skin while maintaining a tender heart.
- The pain of not being number one - This teaches us humility. David and Moses tended sheep before they led people. Paul was a prominent apostle, yet he spent time in jail. Daniel was used mightily by God, but he was never a king. Joseph helped save the country, yet he always played second fiddle to Pharaoh.
- The pain of getting what you want. While there is always joy in achievement and the advancement, there are always tradeoffs. With great blessing comes great responsibility. People depend on us. When you get to the top there are things you must do to stay there. Sometimes the work is harder even though it is rewarding.

Managing our pain and turning it into a win and gain

- 1) The way we respond to our pain is more important than the weight of our pain. Often, when we experience pain, it consumes us and attempts to control our response. We need to make the choice, like Joseph, to see our pain from the perspective of faith and humble ourselves before God and allow Him to have His way in us. When you look at those used mightily by God what sets them apart is their response and how they dealt with difficult situations. They were not grumblers and complainers. They did not blame God or curse Him. Sometimes they did question Him. Even when wronged, they stayed humble and had a good attitude. Joseph in his deepest trials continued to walk by faith and to stay humble before God. God always lifts up those who humble themselves before God even in their times of pain. Those who trust God take a positive life stance. This is a set of attitudes, assumptions, and expectations people hold about themselves, other people and the world in general. They choose to be optimistic, cheerful, friendly, generous and brave as opposed to pessimistic, gloomy, cranky, reserved, timid and stingy. We cannot control much of what happens to us, but we can control our attitude and how we will cope. Life is full of good and bad. Some of the good and some of the bad will find us – that's life. (That's life That's what all the people say. You're riding high in April, shot down in May But I know I'm gonna change that tune When I'm back on top, back on top in June I said that's life And as funny as it may seem Some people get their kicks Stomping on a dream But I don't let it, let it get me down Cause this fine old world, it keeps spinnin' around)

- 2) We must refuse to allow the intensity and frequency of our pain to keep us from seeing the activity of God in our pain.
Wherever Joseph went, as a slave in Potiphar's house, in prison, or before Pharaoh, God was with him, and gave him extraordinary favor. In spite of his pain, God's hand was upon him, and he experienced promotion and doors of opportunity even in the midst of his painful experiences. The intensity of his pain did not prevent him from seeing the activity of God. – for many of us the only thing we can focus on is pain. Joseph kept his focus on God's purpose. Just because you are in pain does not mean that you are not in God's will. As a matter of fact, you are probably right in the middle of His plan.
- 3) Those who are 10X understand that pain is temporary. **2 Corinthians 4:17 (NKJV, AMP, NLT)** Our temporary pain and discomfort is producing in us something that is far better, far reaching and far longer than the pain we experience. The Bible calls it an exceeding weight of glory. Our pain adds a gravitas and a weightiness to our lives. We stop majoring in the minor leagues and the minor things in life and understand what matters to the glory of God.
- 4) Those who are 10X learn to mourn the losses and the pain and then continue on in the strength of the Lord. **Psalms 121:2-3, 1 Kings 19:4-8** Only God can strengthen us and equip us to move past our pain. This helps us to go faster and further than was ever possible on our own. This is a lesson we need to learn, especially after we have had significant victories or success.
- 5) It is out of our painful experiences that we realize that God's grace is all that we need. That it is sufficient and more than enough, especially when we realize that all we can do on our own is never enough. **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**
- 6) Painful experiences help to make us flexible. This is called rubber band faith. Able to be stretched and molded without breaking. It is the painful experiences that open us up to God's ways and timing. They teach us to not be ridged and unyielding. These times remind us that God is not looking for our perfection but for our surrender.
- 7) Managing our pain is about managing our expectations. **Psalms 33:20-22** Our hope and expectations are in the Lord not in the outcome of things, in the Lord. When we know that we can trust God we understand that He is working all things for our good. Even when the things we are walking through are not good. **Romans 8:28** This allows us to understand that there is value in our bad experiences. Where there is no struggle there is no progress. You don't stub your toe if you are standing still. Facing difficulties is inevitable, learning from them is optional. It is a small step from "why me" to "woe is me."
- 8) Painful experiences build in us endurance and perseverance. They give us physical, emotional and Spiritual stamina. **Hebrews 10:36** Our painful experiences help us to thrive and enjoy the blessings and promise of God over our lives.

This is the end of our series 10X. May we all have grown because of it.