



## DON'T WASTE YOUR PAIN

### 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**The Big Picture:** How does the Lord want us to respond when we come face-to-face with our pain, suffering, and trials? What is He trying to teach us through our difficulties? What is happening?

**1. Pain is not bad.** Paul said, *"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me,"* (Philippians 4:11-13).

#### 2. Characteristics of Pain -

- a. **Pain is universal** - It is everywhere and can affect any area of our lives.
- b. **Pain visits everyone** - Because we live in a fallen world, trouble comes to all of us, even believers, no matter our financial or educational status.
- c. **Pain is a pain** - The pain can be physical, emotional, or relational, but whatever the source, it hurts.
- d. **Pain sometimes comes suddenly** - Life could be going on as usual when an accident or a negative report from the doctor leaves us unexpectedly devastated.
- e. **Times of pain may be prolonged** - Sometimes the emotional or physical pain continues for years.
- f. **Pain may be intense** - We may hurt so badly that even those who try to bring comfort feel our pain.
- g. **Pain is often beyond our control** - We may feel helpless and have no answer for why God would allow us to go through it.

#### 3. The Questions We Ask About Pain -

- a. **Why?** Even Jesus asked this question when He was hanging on the cross, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46). The Lord is compassionate toward our pain and understands our limited perspective and confusion, but He also knows the good He intends to accomplish through our adversity because He sees the future. Sometimes He reveals His purpose to us, but often we will not understand until we are in heaven. In the meantime, we can trust Him, knowing He always works for our best.
- b. **Who Caused This?**
  - i. **Me** - God has established the principle of sowing and reaping. You reap what you sow.
  - ii. **Satan** - He hates God's people. The book of Job reveals that he could be causing our distress.
  - iii. **God** - The Lord is sovereign and controls all adversity in our lives. That's why it's important to remember how much He loves us. If He allows us to go through pain, suffering, or loss, then He has something good He wants to accomplish in us. When the apostle Paul understood that his "thorn in the flesh" was designed to keep him humble and dependent on Christ, he was able to say, *"Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me,"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

**4. Responses to Pain** - Blame, escape, denial, and self-pity. Seek the Lord.

**5. Principles to Help Us Through Adversity** - If we're confident of the Lord's love for us and understand how He uses adversity in our lives, we will be able to trust Him and respond in a way that benefits us.

- a. **Pain is one of God's most effective tools for strengthening our faith.** If we focus on the ways He is working within us and enabling us to endure affliction, our trust in Him will grow even if our circumstances stay the same.
- b. **The Lord allows adversity to help us, not to hurt us.** God's purpose for allowing pain is to achieve something good. He may be trying to correct us or produce godly character in us. In the case of the apostle Paul, God protected him from pride and taught him to depend on Christ (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- c. **God is always with us.** We may not feel His presence, but He has promised to never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).
- d. **Adversity can be a precious gift from the Lord.** Pain and hardship are the instruments He often uses to correct our thinking, turn us around, and guide us onto His path.

# LifeGroup Worksheet

AUGUST 23, 2020

**1. Reflect** - *How has God been working in your life? How has He provided, comforted, answered, reconciled, or guided you? Be open to sharing both your successes and struggles.*

**2. Review** - LifeNotes on the opposite side.

**3. Read** - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 *carefully several times, both with your group and alone.*

**4. Engage and Explore** - *Try to answer at least one question.*

- What do people tend to brag about? If you were tempted to brag, what would it be about?
- What basic truths about God do you find in this passage?
- Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-30. How does this picture of Christ-following strike you? Where has Paul grown in ways you need to consider?
- In verse 2 Corinthians 11:30, Paul brags about the things that show his weakness. Why does he do that?
- What values does God hold to in this passage? How do they conflict with yours? Others? Society?

**5. Connect** - *How this passage applies to you and your relationship to Jesus and others. How is the Holy Spirit speaking to you through this passage? Try to answer at least one question.*

- How does this passage help you to accept pain as a growth edge? Or not?
- The responses to pain are: Blame, Escape, Denial, Self-pity, or Seeking the Lord. What do you do? What did your family teach you about pain and how to deal with it?
- Think about the pain and adversity you have faced. What can you share about the most helpful practice, process, or activity, that has impacted your life?
- How can pain and adversity be one of God's most effective tools for strengthening our faith?
- How did Paul, in this passage, trust God to meet his every need? In what specific area of your life is God calling you to give up trying to run things yourself and trust completely in His love and power?
- What mental adjustment would help you the most with dealing with your pain?
- How can you make sure you do not waste your pain? How can this group help? Where do you need prayer?

**6. Silent Meditation** - *You may want to move away from the group to a quiet spot. Silently read the scripture several more times. Write down the words/passage you want to focus on this week and how you plan to apply God's truth to your life. What is God saying and what will you do?*

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**7. Share** - *Key insights with your group from question #6.*

**8. Close in Prayer** - *Try using different prayer models found in the LifeGroup Leader Handbook.*

**Read Together to Close the Session:**

<sup>11</sup> *Actually, I don't have a sense of needing anything personally. I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances.* <sup>12</sup> *I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty.* <sup>13</sup> *Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am, (Philippians 4:11-13).*