“Have you gone through all of this for nothing? Is it all really for nothing?”
Gal. 3:4 (CEV)

PAIN CAN BE USED FOR A GOOD PURPOSE

1. I CAN USE MY PAIN ________________________________
   “We were crushed and overwhelmed...and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us...and he did help us!” 2 Cor. 1:8-10 (LB)
   “I am glad...not because it hurt you but because the pain turned you to God.” 2 Cor. 7:9 (LB)

2. I CAN USE MY PAIN ________________________________
   “By helping each other with your troubles, you truly obey the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:2

3. I CAN USE MY PAIN ________________________________
   “Now, isn't it wonderful all the ways in which this distress has goaded you closer to God? You're more alive, more concerned, more sensitive, more reverent, more human, more passionate, more responsible. Looked at from any angle, you've come out of this with purity of heart.” 2 Cor. 7:11 (MSG)
   “For this reason we never become discouraged. Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day. And these temporary troubles we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever.” 2 Cor. 4:16-18 (TEV)
4. I CAN USE MY PAIN

“God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. Then, when others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. You can be sure that the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer.” 2 Cor. 1:4-6 (NLT)

5. I CAN USE MY PAIN

“I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.” Phil. 1:12 (NLT)

“In everything we do we try to show that we are true servants of God. We patiently endure suffering and hardship and trouble of every kind.” 2 Cor. 6:4 (LB)

HELPING OTHERS
NEVER WASTE YOUR PAIN  
Getting Through What You’re Going Through – Part 7  
Rick Warren  
September 14-15, 2013

This is the last week that we’re doing in this series Getting Through Whatever You’re Going Through. And I want us to look at how to never waste your pain.

We know that God has five purposes for your life. We’ve talked about this for years and years and years. These five purposes are repeated over and over in Scripture. They are reinforced, they are re-emphasized – they are repeated over and over. God has five purposes for your life.

One, we know that God wants you to know and love him. You were planned for his pleasure. That’s called worship, when you know and love God.

We know that God wants you to learn to love other people. That’s the second purpose of life. You were put on this planet to learn to love. Learn to love God and learn to love others. One is called worship and one is called fellowship.

Then the Bible says we are put on this planet to grow up spiritually, to be like Christ. God’s goal is that you become like Jesus – not God, but become godly in character. You were created to become like Christ.

Then the fourth purpose, we know that you were put on this planet to practice serving. This is preparation for eternity. You’re going to serve God in heaven. God wants you to practice now. The way you practice now is you serve God by serving other people. You can’t serve God directly here because you can’t even see him. The only way you can serve God on earth is by serving other people. The Bible calls that your ministry. That’s the fourth purpose of life. Worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry.

The fifth purpose of your life is you were made for a mission. God has a life message that he wants to communicate through you. Nobody else can share your life message. God wants to use you to say something to this world.

We all know those – those five purposes that God has for our lives. But what most people don’t know is that God uses pain to fulfill those purposes in your life. He uses pain. But you have to cooperate with God for that to happen in your life. Sadly most people don’t do this.

Most people waste their suffering. Most people waste their pain. Most people don’t profit from their problems. They don’t harvest their hurts. They don’t advance from their adversity. Most people don’t learn from their losses, they don’t improve from their injuries. Most people never gain from their pain.

So tonight what I want us to do, and this weekend, is to look at how to gain from your pain. How God wants to use whatever pain you’re going through – emotional, physical, financial, relational, spiritual, in any area of your life, how God wants to use the pain in your life to move you toward his purposes for your life.
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And he doesn’t want you to waste it.

This is what Paul’s talking about in the book of Galatians. Chapter 3, verse 4 he says this “Have you gone through all this for nothing? Is it really all for nothing?”

As I look at that verse I just want to ask you to answer this in your mind. I’m not asking you to publicly answer it. Have you grown from your pain? Or have you wasted your pain. Are you further down the road to where God wants you to be? Or have you just had pain in your life and it never made any difference.

Maybe you say, I don’t know how to learn. I don’t know how to grow. I don’t know how to develop from my pain.

It’s not too late to learn. So let’s look at what God wants to do in your life as we wrap up this series.

Pain can be used for all five of God’s purposes in your life. You might write these down.

1. The first thing I know is this: I can use my pain to draw closer to God.

I can use my pain to draw closer to God. When anything bad happens in your life you have a choice. You can either run to God or you can run away from God.

We, by nature, instinctively turn to God in pain. Whenever there is a massive tragedy – a bomb explodes, there’s a fire, a flood, a terrorist attack – people go, Oh! God! The first person they cry out to is to God. Because by instinct we know that we should turn to God.

Some people turn away from God in this.

When Matthew died, now several months back, it forced me to go deeper with God than I’ve ever had to go in my entire life. I’ve always spent time with God every day. I’ve had a quiet time for most of my life, where I sit down and I spend time talking to God, reading his Word, listening to him, and talking to him in prayer.

But I want you to know in the last several months I’m a changed person. Because I wasn’t spending a quiet time with God every day – I was spending hours, hours and hours with God every day. Just listening, thinking, meditating, praying, reading the Word, reading good Scriptures, reading good books and things like that. Because I wanted my pain to draw me closer to God not further away from him.

How do you do that? How do you draw close to God in your pain?

You tell him how you feel. You cry out to God. You argue with God. You trust God. You do all of the steps we’ve talked about in the last seven weeks. In shock, you express your shock to God. In sorrow, you cry out in your sorrow to God. In struggle, you argue with God. In
surrender, you let go and you trust God. You take all of these steps. You can worship at every stage of the development.

This is what our family has been doing now for several months. We’re doing what Paul did in 2 Corinthians 1. Paul says this “We were crushed and overwhelmed... and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us... and he did help us!”

Circle the phrase “but that was good.” Paul says wait a minute, we were crushed, we were overwhelmed, we were in over our heads, we were ready to give up, we were discouraged, we were defeated, we were dying. But he says, that was good.

Why? Because it drew us closer to God rather than away from God.

One of the things my family did in the last several months is we did a surrender retreat together. We went over to Rancho Capistrano and had Jamin Gaugin, who’s on staff as the spiritual director of our retreat center, and had him lead us in a retreat of surrender. Why? Because we wanted to be drawn closer to God.

Last night I was speaking to the Women of Faith Conference at the Honda Center. While I was up there I heard a story about a guy who came to Christ on 9/11, the actual day, 9/11.

And I just got to thinking, how many people do you know have come to Christ out of pain? Maybe you did. Maybe there was a divorce, a death, a disaster, a distraction, a difficulty, a disappointment. God says one of the things I can use this for in your life is I will draw you closer to me if you let it. Many of you could say pain turned me to Christ.

And 2 Corinthians 7:9 Paul says this: “I am glad... [about the pain these people went through] not because it hurt you but because the pain turned you to God.”

That’s the first purpose. I can let pain draw me closer to God.

2. The second purpose: I can use my pain to draw closer to others.

Not just to God but to other people. And this is the purpose of fellowship. If you allow it, pain will deepen your love. Your love for other people. It will mature your love. Suffering sensitizes you. Suffering deepens you. Suffering transforms you. I’ve seen the most stubborn, self-centered, selfish, hard bitten men turned into real lovers after a major tragedy in their lives. God says I can use pain to draw you not only closer to me but to draw you closer to other people.

The odds aren’t good for couples who lose a child. In fact, nearly one third of all marriages where a child dies, like in the case of my family, nearly one third of all those marriages ends in divorce once a child is lost. But I have to say that Kay and I are closer today than we were four, five months ago. Closer today. I am more in love with my wife than I have ever been in my life. I won’t go any further because I don’t want to embarrass her. I asked Kay today as I was preparing this message, why do you think we’re closer today than ever before? She said,
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because you’re so nice to me now! That might be part of it. But I think there are a couple of reasons and we’d actually agree on this.

After Matthew died, we knew the statistics that a crisis, a death, particularly the death of a child often splits up a family. We said we’re not going to let that happen. We intentionally worked at strengthening our marriage over the last months. Intentionally worked at cultivating it, deepening it.

We’ve been married now thirty-eight years but we said, we’re going to make this the best year of our marriage.

I think another thing we did is we gave each other a lot of grace. One of the things was we did not judge each other’s feelings. Because when you’re going through pain, your feelings go up and down and go all over, sideways. You think strange thoughts and weird thoughts and have all kinds of emotions. We just decided no emotion is a bad emotion. Kay would say, I’m going to tell this to you. She would tell it and I would sit there nonjudgmentally and then say, that makes sense. There is no wrong feeling. Feelings are not right or wrong. Feelings are just feelings.

How many arguments have you had in your marriage because you tried to convince your spouse their feeling was unreasonable? So many of our arguments in marriage end up because we’re trying to talk each other out of feelings. Don’t! Don’t do it! Feelings are just feelings. They’re neither right nor wrong. They’re just feelings.

So by showing grace to each other, that brought us closer together.

Remember a few weeks ago I talked about that there are four levels of fellowship. And they go deeper and deeper. We talked about how in your small group, the shallowest level of fellowship is the fellowship of sharing. How’s your day? How are you doing? What’s going on in your life? How is everything going? That’s the fellowship of sharing. That’s okay; it’s just not very deep.

To go a little bit deeper in fellowship you go to the fellowship of studying, where you study the Word of God together. To go a little bit deeper than that you go to the fellowship of serving. If you’ve ever had your small group go on a PEACE trip together you know how much that binds you together. It’s when you’re serving together, you go deeper than studying or sharing.

But the deepest level of all is the fellowship of suffering. The fellowship of suffering. The only way you get to the fellowship of suffering is by being willing to be vulnerable. Take the risk of being vulnerable and share what you’re feeling.

Galatians 6:2 says this, “By helping each other with your troubles, you truly obey the law of Christ.” What is the law of Christ? Love your neighbor as yourself. When you help each other in your pain, when you help each other in your suffering, when you help each other in your troubles, when you enter into the fellowship of suffering, he says then you’re obeying the greatest commandment – love your neighbor as yourself.
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I just want to say to you that pain, if you will allow it, will teach you how to really love. Love is far more than chocolates and roses and valentines. Real love changes bedpans. Real love works.

The third purpose of pain … I can use it to draw closer to God, I can use it to draw closer with others,

3. God says I can use pain to become more like Jesus.

I can use pain to become more like Jesus. In other words, pain is always an opportunity to grow in character. To grow in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. These nine qualities. How do you learn them? You learn them in tough times. You learn love in unlovely situations. You learn joy in grief situations. You learn peace in chaos. You learn patience having to wait. You learn these things in the exact opposite situations. I can choose to let pain make me more like Jesus. Again, it’s a choice.

Some people, pain makes them bitter. Some people let pain make them better. Some people let pain be a stepping stone to progress. Others let pain be a stumbling block to failure. It’s a choice.

Proverbs 20:30, “Sometime it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways.”

Anybody want to give a testimony on that verse? Sometimes it takes a painful situation to make us change our ways!

The fact is, and I said this a couple weeks ago, God’s number one purpose in your life is to make you like Jesus. If God’s going to make you like Jesus – loving like Jesus, thinking like Jesus, being kind like Jesus, being truthful like Jesus, having the character, the integrity, the generosity, the humility of Jesus – if God’s going to make you like Jesus he’s going to take you through the things that Jesus went through.

Were there times when Jesus was lonely? Yes. Are there times that you will be lonely? Yes. Were there times when Jesus was misunderstood? Yes. Will there be times when you will be misunderstood? Yes. Were there times when Jesus was criticized, maligned and judged? Yes. Same for you. Were there times when Jesus was so tired and fatigued he felt like he couldn’t go on another day? Yes. Were there times when Jesus was tempted? Yes.

What makes you think God’s going to spare you? He didn’t spare his own Son so why would he spare you? He did not spare Jesus from pain. And if God is going to make me like Christ then he’s going to take me through the same kind of things that Jesus went through.

The Bible says this in Hebrews 5:8, “Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.” The Bible says Jesus learned obedience from suffering. Jesus learned to do the right thing in spite of the fact that it wasn’t the easy thing to do. How are you going to learn to do the right thing in spite of the fact it’s not the easy thing to do? The same way. Though suffering.

Hebrews 5:9 “Suffering made Jesus perfect, and now he can save forever all who obey him.”
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You say, suffering made just perfect – I thought he was perfect! The word “perfect” here literally means “complete.” It’s saying, it completed Jesus by going through suffering.

There are some things, the only way you will learn them is through pain. Do you agree with that? Some things you only through the pain.

Paul compliments the way the Corinthians, the believers in the city of Corinth in Greece, had handled the pain in their lives. 2 Corinthians 7:11, “Isn’t it wonderful [Paul says] all the ways in which this distress [they’d been going through a tough time] has goaded you closer to God? You’re more alive, you’re more concerned, you’re more sensitive, you’re more reverent, you’re more human, you’re more passionate, you’re more responsible. Looked at from any angle, you’ve come out of this with purity of heart.”

Notice: Paul’s talking to a group of people who had just gone through the wringer. Their life had just been hell on earth. They’d gone through amazing persecution, amazing suffering, amazing pain. And he says there are seven things that have come out of this. You’re more alive, you are more concerned, you’re more sensitive, more relevant, more human, more passionate, more responsible. He lists these seven qualities.

Wouldn’t you like to have those in your life? Wouldn’t you like to be more alive? Wouldn’t you like to be more compassionate, more passionate, more sensitive, more responsible? Then you need to ask God to use the pain in your life for good. And choose to cooperate with him.

The fact is, pain transforms us. It never leaves us where we started. It will either be better or bitter, as I said. It won’t leave you where it picks you up. It will take you to another place.

Listen very closely to what I’m about to say. I want you to win in life. I want you to succeed in life. I want your life to have meaning and significance. I want your life to be all that God wants it to be.

The secret of every winner – whether it’s winning in business, winning in sports, winning in love, winning in relationships, winning financially, spiritually or any other way – the secret of every single winner is one word: it is the word “resilience.” Resilience. It is the ability to bounce back.


There are problems, pains, pressures, difficulties in everybody’s life. The difference between winners and losers is that winners get back up. It’s the only difference. The only difference between a winner and a loser is resiliency. Losers stay down.

I’ll never let another man hurt me! Dumb idea. Because you shut yourself off from hurt, you’ve just shut yourself off to love, and you will live a loveless life the rest of your life. I will never let another employer hurt me! I will never let another whatever hurt me. You build a wall and you
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fill the moat and you pull up the drawbridge and you build a prison, a self-imposed prison that your heart stays in and you become a little clod of a person. That’s what a loser does.

Winners have resilience. Winners keep on keeping on. Winners keep going. Winners get knocked down but they get back up. Winners have the same problems losers do; they just have resilience.

I think, more than any other quality, I want you to develop resilience in your life. Because life is tough. Everybody agree with that? It’s tough. You can let it beat you down and you can get down and stay down the rest of your life and you may as well die. God might as well take you on home right now because you’re not going to live, you’re going to exist.

But if you have resilience, you learn from your losses, you profit from your pain, you gain from the pain, you advance from your adversity. All of these things happen when you have resilience.

How do I get resilience? You need to do what Paul did.

I’m want to read you three passages. They aren’t on your outline; they’re going to be on the screen. Three passages of Paul that show that he was probably the most resilient person who ever lived.

2 Corinthians 11:23-28; let me read it to you. It says this. This is Paul’s personal testimony: “I’ve been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times I was whipped with thirty-nine lashes. [Think about that. Five times thirty-nine. That’s how many scars he had on his back.] Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and day adrift at sea… I’ve faced dangers from flooded rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from angry crowds [mobs]. I’ve faced danger in the cities, and in deserts and even on stormy seas. I’ve faced dangers from people who claim to be Christians but aren’t. I’ve lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. [This was a guy who wrote most of the Bible we read – the New Testament] I’ve often been hungry and thirsty. I’ve often gone without food. I’ve often shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Besides all this, I’ve had the daily burdens of all the churches I’ve started.”

And you think you’ve had a bad day! If anybody has a right to complain, it’s Paul. That laundry list of the terrible things that have happened in his life, while he’s trying to serve God, by the way.

Here’s another verse not on your outline. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, “We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don’t give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. [I’m knocked down but I’m not knocked out, he’s saying] Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.”

That’s what I call a resilient person. He says no matter what happens, I’m the energizer bunny; I
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keep on ticking.

What was the secret of Paul’s resistance, his resilience, his determination, his ability to bounce back no matter how bad things happened in his life? The answer is right here. It’s perspective. It’s the way he looked at things. He looked at life not from a worldly view but from a godly view. Not from a contemporary view but from an eternal perspective. He looked at his life in light of eternity realizing that this life is just preparation for the next. And no matter how hard the problem is, it’s just temporary but the rewards in eternity are going to go on forever.

You can handle unbelievable pain if you see a purpose in it. If you don’t see a purpose in it you’re not going to be resilient. But if you see a purpose in it and you see God’s hand – God is using this to draw me closer to him; God is using this to teach me to love other people; God is using this to make me more like Christ… then you get resilience.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, this is on your outline. “For this reason [in other words because I have this eternal perspective] we never become discouraged. Even though our physical being is gradually decaying, yet our spiritual being is renewed day after day. And these temporary troubles we suffer [that laundry list I just read] will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen, lasts forever.”

He says I don’t look at my problems, I don’t look at my pain, I don’t look at my difficulty. I look beyond that to the reward that’s going to be in heaven.

Jesus did the same thing. The Bible says “Jesus endured the cross because he was looking forward to his reward.” The Bible says in Hebrews 11, “Moses endured suffering because he had his eyes on the prize, on the reward in heaven.”

I don’t know what’s discouraging you this day. It may be a physical problem, it may be a financial problem, it may be a relational problem. There are some things that are prolonged pain in your life, and it just seems that they’re not going away. I call this the how long test. Lord, how long? How long is this going to go on? You see no end in sight for this problem. You see no end in sight for this pain. You don’t see any solution on the horizon. You’re in the tunnel and you can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel. You are discouraged and you feel like giving up.

But before we go to the last two purposes, I want to stop and pray for you. If you’re going through physical pain or financial or emotional or relational or any other kind of difficulty that you say I’m tempted to be discouraged. I’m tempted to give up. We’re going to pray for you. I’ve asked a special guest to pray for you. It’s somebody who I’ve watched deal with chronic illness and pain for much of her life. It is my daughter Amy.

Amy: Lord, I’m so humbled at the opportunity to take my precious brothers and sisters to you. God, it’s an awesome privilege to stand in the gap. Lord, I just want to start off first and ask for what we all want, for what we so desperately wait for Lord, and that’s deliverance.
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Lord, I ask right now that you would deliver people from their pain, from illness, from loneliness, from loss, from mental illness, from struggle. Lord I know that with this many people standing, there are many more who are still sitting. I’m the kind of person who stays seated, so I know that there are those in here who are too tired, too weak, too downtrodden, they’ve given up, they don’t care. Who cares if I stand up, nothings changing. But Lord you are aware. You’re sitting there with your arm around them, holding them. I pray Lord, that in this moment that you would give them peace, knowing that you are carrying them in the moments when they just can’t walk another step. Lord you are our Abba. You are our Father. You want your kids to ask good things of you. So we ask for this good thing Lord. We ask for deliverance. We’re your kids and we trust you. Lord, we ask in faith because you are who you say you are. You can be trusted. We can’t even ask this without knowing that you are healer. And you make all things new. Lord, as we wait for your answer would you give us strength? Would you help us to run the race of endurance and not give up? Lord you Word says the same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to us. So you’re not asking us to do this just on blind faith. Lord, you want to empower us to walk in this truth. So Lord, help us to cling to that, that you will empower us as we step out in faith. Lord be close. I know what it’s like to show up, to smile, to put on a happy face, take a shower, to be somewhere, but to go home and cry because it’s all too hard. Lord you know the lonely tears, you know the moments where we crawl in bed and ask God just to take it all away. Lord thank that you’re the kind of God who weeps with those who weep, that you’re close to the brokenhearted. That you’re a man of sorrows well acquainted with grief; that Jesus, when you were here you didn’t spend your time with the well or the well to do, or the religious or the rich. You spent your time with those who were hurting, who were lonely, who were outcasts, who were sick, who were forgotten. What a reminder that God, you truly love and care for those who are hurting. Lord, help us to see you. Give us eyes to see you. Expand our minds and our understanding of you Lord because sometimes that is the only thing that carries us. To know God that you are real and you are powerful and you’re making all things new and you’ll bring good out of everything to those who love you and who are called according to your purposes. Lord help us to not be bitter. It’s so easy to look on other people’s lives and think it looks simple and easy. It’s a natural thing to become bitter and angry at what other people’s lives look so basic. Lord help us be compassionate not bitter. Turn the pain into something much more powerful, something that breaks down walls. That loves those who are unlovable. Tenderize us Father. And Lord, we just ask that you would bring beauty from the ashes. Only you God can do that. We hold on to you, Jesus, when it feels like there’s nothing else to hold on to. Give my precious brothers and sisters the ability to take another step tomorrow, to trust you Lord for that day. Even if it’s moment by moment Lord, we hold on to you. In your precious name we pray. Amen.

Let me quickly give you the last two purposes of pain in your life.

God says if I choose then I can choose to let pain draw me closer to God. I have and I want you to do it too.

God says I can choose to let pain draw me closer to other people. I can let it deepen my love, get my eyes off myself and on to others. I have and I hope you will too.
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God says if I want to I can choose to become more like Jesus Christ, growing in character. Jesus learned obedience through suffering. Jesus was made perfect through suffering.

4. **I can use my pain to help others.**

This is the purpose of service. This is called redemptive suffering. It’s suffering for the benefit of others. It is the highest and best use of your pain.

Follow me on this: If you’re going to be in pain because we live in a broken world and everybody has pain. We all have pain. Nobody lives a pain-free life. If you’re going to have pain and you know you’re going to have it, why not at least get some credit for it? You don’t get credit for your pain by mumbling, moaning, complaining. You don’t get credit for your pain by pulling yourself into a self-centered person and ignoring the needs of other people. You don’t get credit for your pain by feeling sorry for yourself and having a pity party.

You get credit for your pain by using it to help other people who are in the same kind of pain. God says that is the highest and best use and you will be richly rewarded for it. Rather than focusing on my hurt, my feeling, how I feel bad, I refocus it and I refocus on the pain of others.

Right after Matthew died I just decided that I was going to use social media to encourage other people in pain. I began Tweeting and facebooking and instgramming and all the other ones, LinkedIn and stuff like that. Why? Because I wanted to redeem my pain. I didn’t want to waste my pain. I wanted to use it. I wanted to use it to help other people.

We began this series with 2 Corinthians 1, and I’m going to end with it too. 2 Corinthians 1:4-6, “God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. [Bam! There it is.] God comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. Then, when others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. You can be sure that the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer.”

This is common sense 101. Who can better help a struggling veteran than somebody who’s been a veteran? Who could better help parents of a special needs child than somebody who has been a parent of a special needs child? Who can better help somebody struggling with a chronic illness than somebody who is struggling with a chronic illness? They understand. Who could better help someone who has been molested or raped than someone who has been molested or raped?

Don’t waste your hurt. Don’t hide your hurt. Let God heal it, and let God recycle it, and let God use it, and let God utilize it, and let God bless other people. Don’t waste any pain in your life. I can use it to help others.

5. **I can use my pain to witness to the world.**
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I can use my pain to witness to the world. When you start talking about witnessing or evangelism everybody gets uptight. The one thing about believers and nonbelievers that they have in common, they’re both nervous about evangelism. Evangelism comes from the Greek word that means good news. All it is is sharing good news. The highest form of witnessing is witnessing in your pain. I can use my pain to witness to the world.

God knows the exact opposite is true to what we think is true. We think that the world is impressed by our prosperity and how we handle prosperity. So we want to show off our prosperity. That doesn’t impress the world.

The world is impressed with how we handle adversity. Not prosperity – adversity. We think that our successes give us credibility. God says no, your suffering gives you credibility. We think that fame earns respect. God says, what actually earns respect is faithfulness in tough times.

I could stand up here right now and I could tell you my banner list of achievements in my lifetime. I got this award, this award, this award, blah, blah, blah! You’d be going, goody for you. Ain’t that grand. I’m not you. It would not draw us closer together. It would not make you more like Christ. It wouldn’t serve you. And you would not even be impressed.

But when I stand up here and I tell you about the hell that I’ve gone through after my son took his life after struggling with mental illness for twenty-seven years, that touches you. And you’re listening. And it’s a witness.

What I’m saying is your weaknesses will actually gain a hearing more than your strengths. That’s the exact opposite of what everything in the world and culture has taught you. You think I have to be successful to be heard as a Christian. I have to be rich to be heard as a Christian. I have to be famous to be heard as a Christian.

No. You have to be authentic in pain. And when you’re authentic in pain you will have more people listening to you than you can possibly imagine. Because when I started sharing about my pain they came out of the woodwork. And you would not believe how many lives I’ve been able to just talk with that I would never have had any connection to in any other way. Because pain humanizes. Pain sympathizes. Pain causes you to have credibility with people.

So I use my pain to witness to the world.

Again, I keep going back to Paul because he was the pro at this. He had the most pain and God used him to bless the world by writing half of the New Testament. Paul says this in Philippians 1:12, “I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me [and what is everything that’s happened? All the shipwrecks and beatings, the going without food, the hunger, all of the hit with rods, put in prison, all that stuff that I read to you] here has helped to spread the Good News.”

That’s pretty amazing. Everything that has happened. I would say that is true in my life. Everything that has happened to me has helped spread the good news. Paul says I use my pain as
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a model for my message. God wants you to use your pain as a model for your message, as a platform for your life message. God says the thing that you regret the most, that you hate the most, you despise the most, the thing that you wished had never happened in your life, those most painful things, he says I want to use that in your life to touch other people in pain. But you’ve got to be honest to yourself, honest to God and then honest with others. And you’ve got to be vulnerable.

Paul says I use my pain as a model for my message. 2 Corinthians 6:4, “In everything we do [Paul says] we try to show that we are true servants of God. [He says, I’m using my message, my model of the message through the pain] In everything we do we try to show that we are true servants of God. [How?] We patiently endure suffering and hardship and trouble of every kind.”

I said this this week on Twitter: Your deepest life message will come out of your deepest pain.

This is real witnessing. It’s Christlike witnessing. It’s what Jesus did for you. What is the greatest witness of God’s love? The greatest witness of God’s love is not what Jesus said. It’s not what Jesus did. The greatest witness of God’s love is not the Sermon on the Mount; it’s not that sermons he preached. The greatest witness of God’s love is not the miracles that Jesus did.

The greatest witness of God’s love is the suffering of Jesus. This is how much I love you. I love you so much it hurts.

So the bottom line is this. You’re going to have pain in your life. I wish I could stop it. I can’t. You’re going to have pain in your life. You can either use it for good or you can waste it. Please don’t waste it.

What we’re talking about here is purpose driven pain. Pain that causes me to worship, to fellowship, to disciple, to minister, to evangelize. Pain that causes me to know Christ, to love Christ, to grow in Christ, to share Christ, to serve Christ. Pain that has a purpose. You’re going to have pain. You may as well use it for good.

Notice on your outline, I left a line there. It says Helping Others. Write down the four most painful experiences in your life. Then go back over this lesson and look at how God could use that instance in each of these five areas.

Then the second thing I want you to write down is the names of people who are going through those similar things right now. And you just discovered your ministry. You just discovered your life message. And you just discovered purpose driven pain.

In recovery we call this the twelfth step – that you don’t get well until you’re helping somebody else. When are you recovered from anything? You’re not recovered until you’re helping somebody else. And if you never help somebody else you will never recover from your pain. It’s the only way you get out of it. God has wired it that it’s when I give it way… It was when Job prayed for his friends that God helped Job.
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So do this on a personal level and then do it a family level, if you have a family. You might say, what’s been the pain in our family? Every family has family hurts. And talk about them as a family and say how could we help other families in the same situation that we’re in? Then we ought to look at it as a church. The name Saddleback – S.A.D.D.L.E.B.A.C.K. – each one of those letters represents a value. The first value at Saddleback is the S in Saddleback. And it stands for this: Saddleback is second chance grace place. It’s a place where people can start over. It’s a place here people who’ve really messed up can begin again. It’s a place where people in pain can find new hope. Let’s bow our heads.

Prayer

Father, we’ve gone through this series and we’ve treaded some deep waters. We’ve looked at shock and sorrow and struggle and surrender and sanctification and now service. We see how you don’t want to just waste the pain that happens in our lives. You want us to use it.

Would you pray this prayer in your heart? Say, dear Jesus Christ, use the pain in my life to draw me closer to you. Say Jesus Christ, use the pain in my life to teach me how to really love and draw closer to others. Say Jesus Christ, use the pain in my life to make me more like you. And Jesus, use the pain in my life to serve others, to serve God by serving others. And Jesus Christ, use the pain in my life as a witness to the world that you can be counted on, that you’re a good God, that you give us strength even in the most difficult of times.

If you’ve never opened your life to Jesus Christ, say Jesus Christ come into my life right now and begin the healing process. I want to follow you. I want to learn to love you and trust you. I invite you into my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.