

COPING WITH OUR PAIN

Words from a pastor friend: *“It’s in the middle of the suffering and pain that have shaped our lives that we either become our truest self or our most false self.”*

Pain and suffering will lead to transformation. It can lead to wholeness. (But if you’re not careful, it could lead to bitterness too.)

From *New Light on Depression* by Harold G. Koenig and David B. Biebel:

“...the Scriptures are clear that God is going somewhere in our lives, remaking us into the image of Christ....Anything that is being remade experiences some degree of distress, but the craftsman works with the end in mind. ...Depression is one tool (though not the only one) that God, the master craftsman, employs to make us into people he can use.”

In the *Price of Success*, J.B. Phillips wrote:

“It seems to me that, for the [religious person] anyway, the undoubted evil of this form of suffering can be turned into good by learning a deeper trust in the real and living God....in this painful experience we are stripped of our pride and pious imaginings. Temporarily at least we have no one who can understand what we are going through. We are alone in this bewildering world and our only hope is in God, not probably the God who has satisfied us in past years or the God whom we imagined for our comfort, but the Spirit behind all creation. It is to know more deeply this real true God that we are permitted to go through the pains and humiliations of mental pain.”

Jesus told a parable about a prodigal son who had asked his father for his inheritance, left home, and squandered it. The son ended up facing hardship and ultimately returned to his home. Despite that, his father eagerly welcomed him back. *“...while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him...”*

If the father, who represents God in this story, loved his son that much, what pain he must have felt at the loss of this son! And what pain God must feel many times over us as well when we do things that are wrong – things that hurt him! When someone loves deeply, he hurts deeply as well. Our God is a compassionate God. He feels with us.

- So, what should we do with our pain?

The following scripture has always encouraged me. God will not let us suffer with our pain forever. Here's what he did for me:

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:1-3)