

Ministry Community
April 2005; "Hardship in Leadership"

Message:

My sabbatical was a very challenging time in many ways....

However, through it I have come to understand more deeply the purpose of hardships and suffering and trials, and I think this is a huge area for us as leaders for many reasons, so I want to take some time with you on this tonight.

Central Truth: Suffering and hardship can bring about a greater anointing in leadership.

As we understand this and experience this, it can radically affect our perspective toward difficulties that we may go through, and hopefully lead to us coming through those hardships clinging more tightly to Jesus.

Leaders often have to go through more difficulty and suffering than others because through the suffering will come greater anointing and greater ministry to others.

My prayer is that we as leaders and we as a church could have a very biblical understanding of suffering and hardship so that our response glorifies God and so that we can help others who are hurting, because God has called us to be a healing center for hurting people.

Suffering and Hardship:

1. Refines us.

Mal 3:1-4

2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. 3 "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.
NAS

1 Peter 1:6-8

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Helps us become more like Jesus. God uses it to show us areas that we need to yield to Him. Surfaces sin and selfishness and pride and un-Christlike areas.

2. Matures us.

James 1:2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Ex. Certain butterfly that has to go through the struggle to get its wings

3. Prunes us to bear more fruit.

John 15:1-2

15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Pruning is painful but it hurts so good.

4. Drives us to greater dependence on God.

2 Cor 1:8-10

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead

TS If we do depend more on Him through our weakness, then:

5. Releases God's supernatural power.

2 Cor 12:7-10

7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This is only when we allow the weakness to increase our dependence on God.

Notice that Paul got to the point (not overnight) where he actually rejoiced in and welcomed his hardships. Wow. Because he had seen so often the benefit of the hardships that now on the front in (instead of the back end) of them, he could rejoice because he knew what would come about on the back end.

6. Increases our ministry to others.

2 Cor 1:3-7

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

“Wounded Healers”

Wilkerson letter: back story of his daughter

7. Deepens our eternal perspective.

Rom 8:18-21

18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We long for heaven more when we suffer on earth, and this is not necessarily an escape longing.

8. Shows us that God alone is enough.

Hab 3:17-19

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. 19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

Here is the ultimate!!!

Corrie Ten Boon

When all is reduced or taken away, there is still God, and He is enough.

Job: The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord

Anything anyone wants to add?

I have some tracts coming out that will address this even further: Life is Tough ...
Embrace Your Weakness

Brother Yun, a Christian who has been through incredible torture and persecution in China, says, "Don't pray for the persecution to stop! We shouldn't pray for a lighter load to carry, but a stronger back to endure! Then the world will see that God is with us, empowering us to live in a way that reflects His love and power" (The Heavenly Man, p. 287).

----- if time:

What do we do? Cling to Jesus, get support from others.

How to Ministry to others who are hurting:

- a. Listen without judgment.
- b. Don't give pat answers. Ex. Kayda Lawry
- c. Point them to the Word.
- d. Pray for them with compassion.

2 Cor. 1:8-11

- e. Connect them with others who can help. Ex. Nancy and Jason