

life groups

NLC Life Group Through the Bible Study

Week of May 21, 2017

Sermon: Did You Know?—The Problem with Pain



NEW LIFE
CHURCH

Life Group Schedule

15 MIN Eat, Meet & Greet

15 MIN Ice Breaker Game: **Whose Story is it?** This icebreaker game lets you hear some fun, fascinating, and surprising stories. Pass out paper and pen and have everyone take a few minutes to write a personal experience. (The stranger, the better!) Fold the papers and put them in a basket, bag or box. Have three people at a time sit in front of the group. The leader randomly picks a slip of paper and hands it to the three people. Each member of the trio reads the paper aloud and then adds some details to the story. The group guesses if the story really belongs to one of the three and, if so, to which one.

OPENING PRAYER

45–60 MIN **Did You Know?—The Problem With Pain**

JOHN 8:32 “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

- The truth can’t set us free until we **KNOW** the truth.
- We all face pain in our lives, whether physical, marital, emotional (a loss, a disappointment, a discouragement), relational (strained friendships, family issues, broken trust), parenting (a child you don’t know how to lead, a child that is away from God), spiritual (an unfulfilled desire, an unanswered prayer).

JOHN 16:33 (NIV) “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

- Jesus may have told his disciples this, because he didn’t want them to think that their lives would always be comfortable, that decisions would always be easy, that they would always feel God’s presence. He made it clear that there would be some pain in their life!
 - › To “take heart” meant to “gain courage.” Jesus said we will not be insulated from pain, but we can overcome it.
- John 15:1-5 could open our eyes to the way we view pain. We would never advocate that God is always the source of our pain. Often the source of our pain is that we are on this side of Heaven in a world full of hurt.

READ **JOHN 15:1-5 (NIV)**

- God cuts off the branches that bear no fruit, but God **PRUNES** the branches that do bear fruit, so that they will be even more fruitful. It’s often our assumption that when we are pruned that it’s because we are unfruitful. Pain is not always punishment. Rather it’s God’s pruning.

PRUNING DOES NOT KILL THE PLANT

- If you don't know much about plants and you see someone start clipping away on a plant it's like, "What are you doing? Don't hurt the plant!" We do the same thing when we go through pain. "God what are you doing?" But God is not trying to kill you!

PRUNING IS NECESSARY FOR GROWTH

- We prune plants and trees, because we want them to grow. We want them to bear better fruit. We are also called to bear fruit in our lives. God also wants us to learn and grow.

PRUNING ELIMINATES UNWANTED GROWTH

- Often plants have branches growing in the wrong direction. They can rub against other branches and block good sunlight. We can get out there, too. Pruning brings us back to reality. Pruning cuts all the junk out of our lives, exposing and refining our character.

PRUNING HAPPENS AT THE PROPER TIME

- Most of the time, we prune plants in the dormant season to minimize disease. Because God is all-knowing (omniscient), His timing is perfect. He has divine knowledge, knowing what you need when you need it.

PRUNING IMPROVES STRENGTH AND HEALTH

1 PETER 5:10 (NLT) "So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation."

- When we receive revelation from the Holy Spirit about how to walk through pain, it helps us be firmly planted, steadfast, immovable men and women of God. No matter what comes our way, as long as we remain in Him, He will remain in us. And if God is all you have, you have all you need!
- "The distance between where I am and where God wants me to be might be my willingness and ability to tolerate pain."—Craig Groeschel

3 Problems With Pain

1. The Problem With Pain Is Its PRESENCE

- Pain comes, whether we like it or not, accept it or not, or learn from it or not. As hard as it is, it is important to let that reality sink in. Some of us don't handle pain that well.
- The author of Hebrews is concerned regarding the people's

reaction to the discipline of God—specifically with pain.

READ HEBREWS 12:5-8 (NIV)

- The word “chasten” means to convict, correct, bring to the light, or expose.
- The word “discipline” means to teach or to train.
- The Greek word “Padeia” means the training up of a child, teaching, preparation for life, an instruction.
- Our tendency is to try to eliminate pain from our lives, but it’s not possible.
 - › When we are in physical pain we often take a pain reliever. Pain relievers can be anything that distracts us from the pain—including unhealthy relationships, success, alcoholism, even social media. We have the natural ability to make anything our drug. Just to relieve pain, because we actually prefer to be distracted than deal with it.
 - › When we have emotional pain. Emotional pain, we also turn to pain relievers, coping mechanisms, addictions, alcohol, drugs, food, or pornography.
 - › Addictions are our attempt to be in control, but in the end they control us—including sports, hobbies, shopping!

2. The Problem With Pain Is Its PROCESS.

- Some of you are in the middle of the process of pain. And it’s not fun. The process of pain can strengthen us and refines us.

1 PETER 1:6-7 (NLT) “So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold.”

PS. 66:10 (NIV) “For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.”

- There is no pain-free spiritual growth plan, just like there is no exercise plan that doesn’t cause physical pain. Championship teams are disciplined teams. In fact, most players want to kill their coach during two-a-days, but they carry their coach on their shoulders when they win a championship!
- Many Christians say, “I want to go deeper,” but deeper is a relative term. What most people mean when they say that is that they want more head knowledge about the Bible.
 - › Going deeper is not always just another teaching on the Holy Spirit or a more intellectual bible study.
 - › Often, “going deeper” means going through the process of pain.

JAMES 1:2 (NIV) “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because the testing of your faith produces perseverance; and perseverance must finish its work so that you will be mature and complete not lacking anything.”

- Pain is a maturing process. In the midst of it, God is shaping you.

3. The Problem With Pain Is Its PURPOSE

HEBREWS 12:11 (NLT) “No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.”

- God ALWAYS sees the bigger picture. He always teaches us for a greater purpose—His purpose.

PAIN TEACHES US WHAT OUR COMFORTS CAN’T.

- In fact, the biggest lovers of people are sometimes the ones that have been hated the most. The most compassionate people are usually people who have experienced great loss.
- Sometimes the biggest givers are the ones that grew up with nothing. The most loving people are those that have experienced a lot of hate. Because of pain they’ve experienced first hand, they are able to relate and identify with other people’s struggles.
- God’s grace is so big and his purposes are so wonderful that he can take the pain you’ve experienced and use it for good.

ROMANS 8:28 (NIV) “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those that love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

- David and Saul. David was anointed to be king while Saul was still king. Saul—an insecure leader—was intimidated by David. He literally wanted to kill David, so David went on the run, hiding in caves. This painful process taught David lessons that he would have never learned otherwise. David wrote the majority of the psalms. The words in some of the passages are filled with deep meaning and revelatory language. Because he had been through it. David’s greatest leadership lessons were not learned when he was king but while he was running for his life. God prepared him to be king while he was in pain.
- Those of you addicted to alcohol may not have the faith to see it now, but you are going to be set free. Some time later you find yourself encouraging someone to quit drinking, and they will be receptive to you, because you get them. Your encouragement will have power and anointing.
- You might be digging your family into a massive hole of debt with your spending addiction. Or maybe you’re addicted to pleasing

people—you're at the mercy of other people's opinions of you. It's like idolatry. But when you are working in your divine purpose, you don't have time to care what other people think about you!

- Single people—maybe you are addicted to a relationship. Or maybe you date a different person every month. Maybe you need to quit running away from God's purposes, and then let God lead you to that special someone He has purposed for you to spend the rest of your life with.

HEBREWS 5:8 (NLT) “Even though Jesus was God's Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.”

- Where do we turn when we experience pain? To the one who can relate—Jesus, the one who experienced the ultimate pain.
- If you are in emotional pain, Jesus can relate. He dropped tears of blood in the garden of Gethsemane because of what he was about to endure.
- If you are in relational pain, Jesus has been there. Friends deserted him. Judas betrayed him. Peter, one of his closest disciples, denied him.
- If you are in physical pain, he's been there, with a crown of thorns on his head, nails through his hands and feet, and a spear through his side.
- If you are in spiritual pain, Jesus took the weight of sin and death, even though he was without sin. Our only hope is to turn to Jesus!
- If Jesus is all we have, Jesus is all we need.

Q1. So what is your pain right now? Is it an unanswered prayer? Is it an issue you can't get over? Is it an enemy in your life who you need to forgive? Is God bringing something to the surface? Is he wanting to pull something out of you? Speak to you? Sharpen you?

TAKE PRAYER REQUESTS & PRAY OVER NEEDS

ANNOUNCEMENTS