

The Hidden Blessings God Brings Through Your Pain

More than any other time in the history of this country we are focused on building our own kingdoms rather than God's kingdom. We see it everywhere we look in politics, business, television, movies, social media, even in our churches.

We are focused on being the best, on reaching our pinnacles of success and are convinced that God is the one who will get us there.

I Am Ashamed

I hesitate to talk about this lest you think I'm pointing fingers at you. If it applies to you then I am, but I also have a lot more fingers pointed back at me.

I am ashamed of my prayer life. I am ashamed that the things I pray about all seem to focus on what I think is best for me, my family and my existence in this world.

Even when I pray for others, I pray what I think is best, as if it is all up to me: "Lord, heal them. Lord, prosper them. Lord, deliver them." These are all great prayers to pray for sure, but what if we need to learn a lesson that can only be learned through suffering? What is God's will then?

The Purpose of Testing

Remember Job? God told Satan that Job was "the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil" (Job 1:8, NLT).

Then Satan retorted, "You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" (Job 1:10b-11).

Satan was essentially saying, "Of course Job loves you, because he has never known a moment of struggle or suffering." So God gave the devil permission to test Job.

Suffering Brings Greatness

Then every trial and test imaginable was thrown at Job, who already had a kingdom of his own that God Himself had helped him build. Why would God allow Satan to test him rather than bless him more?

"God already knew Job loved Him ... The suffering was allowed to bring Job to a level of greatness," Timothy Keller writes in *Walking With God through Pain and Suffering*. "We should love God for Himself alone, not for the benefits He brings."

This is hard for an American Christian to grasp unless he or she has been through a time of hardship and suffering. During a time of testing or difficult circumstances, we may at first be angry with God for the losses we've suffered.

I mean if we are obeying Him, then He's supposed to bless us, right? The problem comes when our definition of blessing doesn't align with God's. To God, a lesson learned is one of the greatest blessings He can give us, and some lessons are only learned by going through the fire.

Grace and Mercy

It's in suffering that we learn about the grace and mercy of God best. Even though we may be angry with Him and not understand why He doesn't step in and save us in the way we'd like to be saved, we are still given the opportunity to move closer to Him.

God knew that Job was a good servant of His, but not the great one he would be when he stopped serving just for the stuff that God gave him. God wanted Job to love Him for who He was, not what Job got as a result of that.

God's goal in allowing Satan to test Job was that Job love God for God alone and nothing else. The only way for Job to learn that was through loss, through suffering.

Walking Out of Hell

I'm going to be gut-level honest here, this scares me spitless. To think about God sifting me and withholding His power, protection and well, the trappings of this life, is really scary.

That I serve at the will of the God of the universe in every single thing I do is foremost on my mind. But just like you, I've built my own little kingdom here on earth. I have a house, cars, furniture, a business and people I love.

I know all of this is given with, by and through God's hand. Still if there is a part of it that He did not help me build, it needs to go ... now. I can't even serve Him without His help and blessings. I am powerless without Him.

I've learned the truth that God and God alone is my strength by going through the sufferings and trials of my life, including gaining a tremendous amount of weight and being on the brink of death.

I've learned that the only way to walk out of any discouraging and overwhelming difficulty is to follow His voice step by step out of that hell and into the abundance of who He is.

My Kingdoms Must Fall

The biggest thing I've learned, though, is I cannot be a builder of my own kingdoms. My wants are selfish no matter what they are. I can justify them as God-centered, but I've learned that unless they come from Him first, unless He breathes on them and fans them into flames, they are still just hay and stubble.

I don't ever want to be someone who has the name of God

plastered on an empty vessel with no Holy Ghost fire and power inside. Everything I've done that is of no use in His kingdom I ask that He now burn up completely and leave only the gold, the things that matter.

I lay down any vestige of self-centeredness. I ask forgiveness for always wanting more of You, God, when I already have You poured into every part of me that's available. I only need to empty more of myself in order to have all of You.

I Lay It All Down

I serve at the will of the God of the universe. My goal is to help build whatever section of wall He wants me to construct for His kingdom. My legacy, my history, my testimony can be nothing more or nothing less than that.

Today, God, today, I once again lay down my self, my desires, my will. No matter what, I ask that my kingdoms fall in order for Yours to stand.

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