

## Suffering Reveals What Is in Our Hearts

*Our Daily Bread University*  
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### Reason 2: Suffering Reveals What Is in Our Hearts

Suffering often occurs at the hand of others. But it has a way of revealing what is in our own hearts. As gold and silver are refined by fire, and as coal needs time and pressure to become a diamond, the human heart is revealed and developed by enduring the pressure and heat of time and circumstance.

**Jimmy De Young** [at Caprice Diamond Factory, Tiberias]: We're watching a diamond being polished. This wheel is revolving at three thousand revolutions a minute. It's covered with olive oil and diamond dust which will be used to beautify this diamond—like this half-karat diamond which has already been polished. We're located here at Caprice Diamond Factory on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in Tiberias, Israel. The diamond business is the number-one export industry in Israel. In fact, Israel cuts 60 percent of all diamonds in the world. But you know the polishing of the stone, the diamond, is the last step in the process. It begins as they mine the raw diamond, from one of the mines on the continent of Africa, Australia, South America, or Siberia. Then they import the diamonds here to Israel.

Then comes the most meticulous step in the entire process, the cutting of the diamond. One slip of the mallet can mean the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars. After the proper cut, the diamond is brought to the polishing stone. Here the final brilliance of the diamond emerges, the finished stone ready for setting into a beautiful piece of jewelry.

Like diamonds, human character also forms with pressure and time, cutting, grinding, and polishing.

**R. Douglas Geivett:** Isn't it interesting that people respond to suffering in different ways? Some people respond with more faith in God when it's over or even when it's happening. Other people

respond with anger and bitterness toward God and maybe even atheism. They might finally decide that God doesn't even exist. How do you explain these different responses? I don't think the answer to that question is philosophical, really. I think it has to do with spirituality and the nature of the soul and how we have ordered our lives up to the point where we begin to suffer.

**Gerry E. Breshears:** I think of people like hot chocolate with whipped cream on it. When you look at the cup and it's covered up with whipped cream, you don't know what's in that cup until somebody bumps the cup and you see what slops out. In a similar kind of way, we can't tell what's in people's hearts until their cup is bumped. And I think that's what suffering does mean at times. It bumps our cup, and we either show the grace of God or we show the hatefulness of sin.

**Walter Russell:** A few years back my wife and I lost our second child, a little boy named Christopher. And he was eighteen months old, and in perfect health, and died one night in his sleep. My wife and I weren't actually there, our little four-year-old daughter found him, and it was an unbelievable experience for us in terms of kind of an end of adolescence and the period when you think all things are good and wonderful in life, and bad things don't happen to you. And really the beginning of understanding that there is suffering in life. But for me in particular it revealed that I had some really...some bad views and bad values about life. And losing our little boy, Christopher, really revealed what was in my heart, that I valued degrees, and professional advancement, more than I valued a relationship. And losing then that relationship—that was driven home to me. And it was [as] if my heart was opened up and I looked within and I saw this black abyss, and I probably would never have come to that insight without the advantage of gut-wrenching, painful, difficult suffering in life.

**Dr. Paul Brand:** At the time when you are face to face with a patient, and the door is shut, that patient will take off the mask that they have created for themselves all their lives. They like to appear to people as somebody who is in control, somebody who has done pretty well. And they like to be admired, and they like to dress well and use make-up. And what you see and what you hear, what the average person sees and hears is a mask. It's a built-up personality. And everybody does it, I do it, I'm sure you do it. But there comes a time, and it often is a time of pain and with the pain comes fear of what it may mean. And one of the things that it means is that it's a sign that something's terminal, and at that

time a person is willing to strip off, not just their clothes to be physically examined, but their mental and spiritual mask. And to ask the real questions. But the pain is indeed a revealer of the secrets of the heart.

**Jimmy De Young** [at Yad Vashem]: This is another of the memorials here at Yad Vashem, a cattle car that was actually used to take Jewish people to the death camps at Auschwitz. This box car normally would carry thirty head of cattle, but it has been reported that as many as three hundred Jewish people would be packed into a cattle car like this to be taken to their death.

**Mart De Haan:** But again, it could be asked, how could a good God allow this kind of suffering? As those who contemplate this memorial at Yad Vashem will tell, another part of the answer is that those who reflect upon suffering are brought to the edge of eternity.