

Suffering Takes Us to the Edge of Eternity

Our Daily Bread University
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Reason 3: Suffering Takes Us to the Edge of Eternity

Those who find themselves and their eternal God through suffering have not wasted their pain.

Dr. Paul Brand: I have many times had the opportunity of observing patients who are dying, and even more often have had patients who were not dying but who interpreted their original symptoms as being something that might kill them. And therefore they have come to me in fear of death, even though the condition itself wasn't all that serious. And I have found many times, even amongst Christians, of course, especially among Christians, that this has turned their thoughts to God, and they've perhaps thought seriously about their own eternal destiny for the first time. Seriously. Even though they may have thought of themselves as Christians before, the real ultimate questions—Where am I headed?—come afresh and much stronger because they are afraid of death which has been initiated by the pain that they suffer. There's no doubt about this.

And I'm sure, from time to time, God has initiated some condition which has prompted this. More often, I think it's something which has happened and God has used it in order to turn their thoughts to Him.

Michael Blackler: This disease in my life is for a time, and my faith tells me that, you know, this is the whole preparation for what lies ahead.

Those who in their pain discover their spiritual need of God are the people the Bible calls, "the poor in spirit." They are the ones who will discover to their own unending joy why Jesus said,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

[see Matthew 5:1–12; Romans 8:18–19].

Michael Blackler: If this life was all there was, and I had received news like I've gotten the last ten days, I would be really sad, you know, that, I can understand people without hope, you know, they go, they get busier and they try to fill their lives with all kinds of activities, and what it does is instead of making them full, it makes them more empty. I could not even begin to imagine what it must be like to receive news like mine and not have God involved with it. It would be so tragic to come to your end of your life and to say, There's nothing eternal. There's nothing left to...it's just what I've done and accomplished, humanly speaking.

Psalm 73:24–26 (NKJV)

The writer of Psalm 73 struggled with pain and suffering and the injustices of life until he found an eternal perspective. He then found the courage to say:

“You will guide me with Your counsel,

And afterward receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but You?

And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.

My flesh and my heart fail;

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”