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### Reason 6: In Times of Crisis, We Find One Another

No one would choose pain and suffering. But when there is no choice, there remains some consolation.

**Dr. Paul Brand:** I also observed that people handled pain in a different kind of way and that families would work together with each other when one of the members of the family was stricken with severe sickness or accident or pain. And it bothered me that the wards in our hospital were always filled with wandering relatives, people who weren't there, who were visitors, but they'd come in carrying a pot of food or something that they'd cooked outside and they'd brought it for their family member.

And at night family members would often sleep under the bed, the patient would sleep on the bed, and a family member would introduce themselves in the ward. And I just thought this was unsanitary and not a very good thing to do. But I soon learned that...I had come to India to teach, but I was learning about the way in which people help each other. And I found I was prescribing much less of conventional pain medication, because people didn't need it. Some post-operative patient would be sleeping in bed and he'd wake and kind of groan, and instantly his wife or sister or somebody would get up from under the bed and put their hand on the hurting spot and perhaps stroke it a little bit and speak a few words, and the patient would go back to sleep. And that was their pain medication.

India's leprosy wards are only one of many places people in pain find one another. Disasters and times of crisis also have a way of bringing us together. Hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, riots, illnesses, and accidents all have a way of getting our attention. Suddenly we remember our own mortality and that people are more important than things.

Those who in a season of suffering have found comfort in others have sometimes said, “I wouldn’t trade that time for the world.” How can they say such a thing? Because it is in our pain that we often meet one another in ways we never want to forget.

**Dr. Paul Brand:** And I think a lot of people feel that when they visit a sick person, or a person who is in pain, they’ve got to keep talking, or they’ve got to read Scripture, or they’ve got to pray. And all these things are good. But when Philip Yancey was writing his book *Where Is God When It Hurts?* that was the time that I first met my coauthor Philip Yancey, but this was his book, not my book. He concludes in the book *Where Is God When It Hurts?* about talking about the significance of a presence, that if a person demonstrates affection and love by just being with you...and he talks about the person who’s been sick, who was sick in bed and in a very serious condition. And was asked by Philip, “What was the thing that helped you most while you were feeling so ill and so full of pain?” And she answered, “It was when so and so—her aunt or relative—came and just sat down beside me knitting. She came and just did her knitting, but she was there, and she would respond to a question or break into conversation sometimes. But a presence, and I believe that the metaphor of the body of Christ is a very significant one, and it depends upon the willingness of every member to share with every other member. And I think people shouldn’t be afraid of visiting somebody who is sick. You don’t need to do anything, you need just to be there as a presence.

How can a good God allow suffering? One part of the answer may be that sometimes it takes pain to find what is most important in life.