

A Pain Free Life

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of persevering through pain, staying committed, and maintaining godly boldness in the face of adversity.

Duration: 45:06

Scripture: Ruth 1:15

Topics: "Motherhood", "Healing Restoration"

Description

This sermon acknowledges the pain many mothers face and encourages them to find hope and strength in God. It emphasizes that a life without pain is not possible, but through pain, we can draw closer to God and experience His healing and restoration. The sermon highlights the stories of women like Hannah, Ruth, Esther, Abigail, and Rahab who persevered, stayed committed, maintained boldness, protected their homes, and did not allow past pain to hinder future blessings.

Transcript

It is Mother's Day weekend, as you know, if you haven't bought those roses yet. That's what you're going to do after the service, right? But I just want to obviously publicly acknowledge all the moms and thank them for what they do and how they keep everything together. And I wanted to just preach this message for you and not only thank you, but maybe help give you some hope as well.

The title of the message tonight is A Life Without Pain or a Pain-Free Life. I was going back and forth on the sermon title. And that's not possible, is it? Because you're thinking, wait a minute, where are you going with this one? Not on this side of heaven.

There is not a pain-free life. It's not a life without pain. And I'm hopefully going to close on this when the sermon's over.

But for now, let's just talk about a few different things in regard to pain. And I've seen moms tend to receive the most pain. And the reason is they give and they give and they give.

And then when certain things don't work out, they can take that sometimes more personally than the fathers. They're giving and they're giving of themselves. And the pain is great and we can't ignore it.

And probably one of the most recent examples of pain I saw was when I had the privilege of giving a memorial service for a one-year-old that died in Leona Valley two weeks ago. We had this service. And

that's not easy.

It's not easy to bury a child. And some of you know that. And what do you say at a point like that? The pain's unbearable.

You don't just get over it. It's something you live with for the rest of your life. And I emailed her this week and checked in with her husband and they're thankful for the church of course and want to hopefully start attending the services.

But I asked if I could read something that was in the handout at the memorial service. And it was actually difficult to read. Right before the service started, the husband came up and said, I don't think I'm going to be able to read this.

Can you? And I'm like, oh sure, no problem. And then I start to read it. It's real brief and I didn't know if I could get through that.

But I think it's important because it'll kind of bring this whole point in of pain. I don't know. I think it was written by the mother.

I'm not sure. But it reads like this. There's not a day that passes that I don't sit and cry and look to heaven for a reason why.

Couldn't he have waited another year or two until you were older and I had more time with you? I told you. Not done yet. Forgive me, Lord.

I then say all these thoughts are wrong. There had to be a reason and I know I must be strong. You're in the arms of Jesus now and I know that you'll be fine.

But I wish with all my heart that those arms could be mine. It was a grieving mom and dealing with the pain of that. And it's life.

I wish I could offer solutions and this and just checklists. But you can't. The thing about pain is you got to go through it.

You have to go through it. I'm going to look at four examples, five examples actually on women who went through pain and how they persevered. But I want to encourage the men as well.

This is not just a Mother's Day sermon. You can glean a lot of important principles from this. And men, I want to remind you that you either comfort them in pain or you add to it.

Those are your choices. You either comfort them in their pain or you add to it. Unfortunately, men have been on the adding to it side way too long and burdening our wives and moms to such a degree that they are feeling the stress.

That's why I think a lot of medication has skyrocketed and we're running to something instead of running to God. Our spouse is a picture of being made like us. Bone of bone and flesh of my flesh, Adam said, and companionship is linked with covenant.

The two shall become one flesh. And we have to remember that. When we come together, husbands and wives, we are one flesh.

It's one. So when you're hurting her, you're hurting yourself. It's the pain that the husband is supposed to take away and often they add to it.

And I was reading a book this week entitled Leadership Pain, The Classroom for Growth. And if you're in ministry, it's a good book, but he prepares you for pain in ministry. It's coming and it comes often and it's really the classroom for growth.

And he said this, the pain isn't the enemy. The inability or unwillingness to face the pain is a far greater danger. Now obviously in the case of this mom or anybody who's lost a child, it isn't really, the context isn't dealing with that.

The pain he's talking about here is when others hurt us and there's pain and we have to address something and we don't. You ever think it'll just improve itself? That'll fix itself. And a couple weeks go by and say, Lord, I hope that fixes itself.

And a month goes by and it's clear it's not fixing itself. And many times because we don't address the pain, the damage is even greater by the inability or unwillingness to address it. So the first woman I want to look at is Hannah.

Some of you might not know who Hannah was and I really loved her story. It's in 1 Samuel 1 if you want to read that tonight, 1 Samuel 1. And the first point is persevere through pain, persevere through pain. Hannah's pain was that she never bore a child.

And men, you can't relate, but trust me, and this isn't just a couple weeks or a couple months or a couple years, this is a long time of her not having a child and the pain of that and persevering through that pain. Because see, here's the thing, you have to remember about pain. It's a catchy little phrase, I've said it many times before, but I want you to really remember this.

Pain makes you better or it makes you bitter. You're going to choose. I'm going to choose.

Do we become better or do we become bitter and that bitterness, when that bitterness begins to overtake us, it's not pretty. Let me read Hannah's vow in 1 Samuel 1.8, I'm sorry, 1 Samuel 8. Then Elkanah, her husband, said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat and why is your heart grieved? That's a lot of pain. When you're not eating and you're weeping, this isn't a crying, like hand me a tissue.

This is, have you ever just uncontrollable weeping and that travail of the soul? And it's a weeping that can't be easily taken away. And he says, am I not better to you than ten sons? So Hannah rose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli, the priest, was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord.

And she was in bitterness of soul and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on my affliction on your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant but will give your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life and no razor shall come upon his head. Now if we had time I could talk about the Nazarite vow and no wine or razor coming on his head.

It was basically, Nazarite vow was being set apart for God. And it's a wonderful thing to be set apart for God. But the first thing we can glean from this is always take it to the Lord.

And she was in bitterness of soul and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. I wish that was the case for most people. But you know how this normally reads? And she was in bitterness of soul and she got mad at God and drove to the liquor store.

But that's, we just, and I've dealt with being mad at God in this area because pain, when it comes in, it has to go somewhere. You know, so that's why you take it to God and you say, He knows your pain. He bore, Christ bore our pain on the cross, that anguish.

So when you take it to Him, it's a loving Father who understands. This is an all-sufficient Savior that I talk about all the time. Not just a half a Savior, not He's asleep half the time, not you might be able to find Him.

He's there. He's an ever-present help. And you take that anguish to Him because here's when you take it to Him, God starts to rebuild your heart and strengthen you as you're praying and weeping.

And He's mending and mentoring and all these things you're taking to Him, but you don't take it to Him and you get bitter and you get angry and you get so mad. I just, I heard a testimony of a lady this week, I was hoping I'd reach out to help her. But she was a, she's a lesbian and suicidal and she, a lot of the pain being molested from her father.

And she is so mad at God. She's so mad at God. How could you, that monster? And that's, if she would've took that to the God who can heal her, she wouldn't be suicidal.

She wouldn't be in this spot. And that's why pain is dangerous. If you take it in the wrong direction, before divorce happens, pain happens.

When spouses get bitter and resentful and mad, and that pain drives them further away from God. So no matter what you're going through, let that pain drive you to the Lord. It can, in a believer's life it can, in an unbeliever's life, what a wonderful thing about pain is, a wonderful gift, is it can drive you to the cross.

Because you finally say, enough, surrender, God, I can't take anymore. I'm surrendering this to you, the pain is too great. Have you ever kept doing something or being in a cycle and you're saying, I'm going to lose my mind if this does not change.

I'm going to, the pain is too great. But Hannah persevered and she was waiting a long time. When he says, talks about this, well if I had time to read it, I think maidservants and different things, it's not a good concept, glad we don't have that today.

But her husband could have other children through other wives. And she saw all these children and the blessings of those children and she was weeping of heart, why not me, God, why not me? Why not? And take the why's to God too. I've asked him, why God, why, why, why? And sometimes there's no answer.

And so she was bitter many, many years. But she persevered and she took it to God and said, if you give me a child, that's boldness, if you give me a child, a male child, I will vow to you that I will give him to you all the days of my life. And that man became one of the most strongest prophets in all of Israel by the name of Samuel.

This guy would walk into a city and the people would be scared. Samuel, are you here in peace? Yes, yes. Why? Because he carried the anointing of God.

Because she persevered in doing what was right. You know, I don't know why I put this in it. Right before, probably an hour and a half ago, I wrote this, do we always need to put our own self-interest first? I mean, let's just be honest.

Is it always about us? Well, me this and me this and me... Sometimes I want to look at those who are considering divorce and say, can you look in the eyes of your children? Just look in the eyes of your kids. Why is it always about you and always about me? My feelings, what I want, I just want to be happy. Now I don't want to minimize any of that.

I think it's good to be happy and God wants to bless us. And yeah, we do have to be concerned about our own mental state, but sometimes you've got to put self-interest in the trash can to stay committed to what God wants to do and put others first. The second point is stay committed during the pain.

Stay committed during the pain, because here's what will happen often. Once we go... Do you know a lot of people have drifted from God as a result of pain? They leave that first love. I can't believe you let me go and they fall away or they get mad at God.

And like I told the mom that was mad at God at the memorial, and she had so many questions, I said, it's okay. It's okay. It's human nature.

Lord, I can't understand this. Take it to Him. Take it to Him.

He can rebuild. He can strengthen. When the Bible talks about the peace that surpasses all understanding, when do you think that peace comes? When you're in the midst, often, of something dramatic.

That's why people often say, I can't believe if it wasn't for God's grace, I felt tremendous peace through that. Stay committed during the pain. What about Ruth? My people are your people.

If you know the story of Ruth, I would encourage you to read it. It's a foreshadowing of Christ. Often people would say it's a Kingsman Redeemer.

Boaz was able to purchase the Kingsman Redeemer. She lost her husband and the next family member would be able to marry her, and he was her Kingsman Redeemer. He redeemed her.

But before this happened, she lost her husband. And her mother-in-law lost her husband. And they're saying, we've got to leave this land.

We've got to go to a different place. And I'll pick up in Ruth 1.15. And she, Naomi, which was the mother-in-law, said, look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Return after your sister.

But Ruth said, entreat me not to leave you. In other words, I'm not going to leave you. Or turn back from following after you.

For wherever you go, I will go. And wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God will be my God.

Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me. That's a serious commitment.

You know when I heard this? September 2002. Did I get that right? This is actually the vow that Morgan chose at her wedding. It was powerful to say, I'm going where you're going.

I'm dying where you're dying. Where you go, I will go. My people be your people.

And that covenant, that contract of keeping the two together. Stay committed during the pain. See, the commitment doesn't break when it's easy.

The commitment breaks during the pain. And you guys might say, oh, you and Morgan probably have it easy. 14 years has not always been easy.

There's been pain. There's been pain of probably wanting to break this covenant from time to time. Because that's the answer sometimes, right? Here comes the pain.

I'm out of here. Let me break. And I don't want to minimize pain.

Please, I hope you don't take away from this that Shane just thinks I should be in pain all my life. No, I pray against pain. I want to relieve pain.

I hope that God takes pain from us. But don't give up. Don't give up.

Look up. That's one of the important things. As you go through pain, you stay committed to the vows you've made in marriage, but you also stay committed to things you told God.

God loves commitment. Now, let me reiterate, there are times when you don't have to stay in abusive relationships. You can take time and separate.

And I'm going to get emails on either side of that one. But I think you can remove yourself, not divorcing, you're removing yourself from a difficult environment that where maybe your safety, your children's safety, there's maybe drug use and abuse, and you step away from that pain to let God work. But here's what happened.

They step away and they go to plan B. Wait a minute, you're not even divorced. You're married. You're dating somebody else.

Oh, yeah, the pain. They're helping relieve that pain. No, they're not.

They're not helping you relieve that pain. You're getting stuck. What do they call that? Rebound.

You're rebounding. Not healthy. Anytime, if they do step away for a season so God can work in their marriage, don't have a plan B. There's no backup plans.

Turn off your phones. It's a good reminder. Maybe that was mine.

But God honors commitment. God honors commitment. Here's what happened.

Pain challenges our commitment. I'm out of here. That's what we say, right? I'm out of here.

You know why most people leave the church? Any church or this church too? Well, they don't like the preaching. That's number one. No, I'm kidding.

Pain. Pain. Pain is why a lot of people leave the church.

Or, of course, they're not being fed. That has a valid point. Sometimes it doesn't.

I often say to people, if a chef is cooking food and nine people are growing and one's not, it might not be the food or the chef. It might be the person that's not growing. And that excuse works sometimes.

But a lot of times, it's because pain. Somebody hurt me, so I'm leaving. There's a couple people now that left here, and they say, because I didn't say hi to them.

Wow. And that causes me pain. So I'm like, really? I didn't even know you were, you know.

But there's pain we carry. And I'll talk to people, and if we left, if you leave a church for pain, me and Morgan would have left the first week. We wouldn't be here.

We would have left the second week and the third week and the fourth week. And they go, well, you're the pastor. You have to.

No, no, no, no, no. True to some degree. But God's teaching us you got to deal with it.

You got to deal with the pain. You got to deal with the pain. And many people, and what we see is they go from church to church to church and never grow, because they never deal with the pain.

A lot of what Christian maturity is is you're growing in the pain, and you're maturing. You're zipping it up, and you're confronting lovingly, and you're growing. But people go from church, I got hurt, I got hurt, I got hurt.

Yes, people will hurt you. If you're coming, if you're leaving church, if you're leaving actually your relationship with God because of people, you're focused on the wrong thing. People will hurt you.

God never will. God never will. And actually, God loves commitment.

Blessed is the man who swears to his own hurt. God loves a committed person who keeps their word. Commitment, God will bless that.

But we don't see the blessing right now. We see it as painful, and I'm out of here. And God wants us, I believe, in many, many areas to stay committed.

And thank God Ruth stayed committed, because from her came the lineage of Christ. Can you believe that? If she would have just went back because of the pain, and it's too great, she would have missed being, I don't know if she was great, great, great grandfather, but grandmother, but she was in that lineage. Number three, maintain godly boldness through pain.

Maintain godly boldness through pain. The reason I bring this up is because pain often makes us timid. You know what the definition of timidity is, right? Lack of courage.

Lack of fear. So here comes pain, I'm no longer bold. And that's why people can stay in abusive relationships, because they're timid, they're hurt.

And they can't be bold because the pain pushes them down. Esther, of course, you know the story of Esther. If you don't, I would encourage you to read it.

She was a Jew, and her people were tricked by Haman. And this decree went out to kill the Jews, and Mordecai said, you need to speak to the king. And she says, I can't do that.

You can't just go in and speak to the king, you could die. And he says, well, if you don't do something, we're all going to die, and God might bring some other salvation through some other means. And it's a famous verse that we use a lot is, if I perish, I perish.

Esther said, if I perish, I perish, I will go before the king, I will stop this wicked plan, and if I perish, I perish. And she was in a lot of pain. She just learned that her people are going to be annihilated.

It's like if you just heard ISIS is coming in three days to your house, you think you're not going to be in any pain, in any fear? And what she did, she maintained godly boldness and pain. She didn't cower down. Because often, here's what the good thing about pain is, pain can increase your boldness.

Because if you can stay bold in pain, you can stay bold anywhere. You can tell the atheists that that's not right. You can stand up for God.

If you can stand up through pain, you can stand up in any type of adversity. Because pain is the great leveler. It puts us all on the same page.

And that's what many people are scared. They don't want to feel the pain. But you must maintain godly boldness through pain.

Basically, we need to do what is right even when we don't feel like it. So when you're going through that pain, make sure to maintain godly boldness. The fourth point, protect your home spiritually, even in the midst of pain.

What happens a lot, it's a Mother's Day message, I know, and they're good at this. A lot of moms are good at this. They'll protect their home spiritually, even if their husband is a deadbeat.

Just a, yeah, I'll leave it at that. Just, and they'll protect their home. This is a perfect example, Abigail, 1 Samuel 25.

Let me just read the commentary from a good article, Five Strong Women of the Bible. Abigail protected her family spiritually in the midst of pain. Abigail was the wife of a wicked and self-centered man named Nabal.

David, who had been anointed king, but had not yet taken office, sent servants to kindly ask Nabal to show hospitality to him and his servants. David's servants had been companions and protectors of Nabal's shepherds. So you have David is protecting this guy's shepherds out in the wilderness, and they just sent some people to him to ask for provision.

Well, what did Nabal do? His response was that David was lazy and presumptuous. Not good. Nabal was a very, pride will make you say stupid things.

Pride will, he was prideful and arrogant and rich. She said, oh, David's just lazy and presumptuous. I'm not giving him anything.

Bad idea, because then you'll die as a result of doing that to David. But he was so prideful and arrogant. David, who was traveling with his men after the burial of Samuel, was angered at Nabal's reply.

So David prepared his men for a fight. So Abigail, here comes Abigail. She heard what transpired between her husband and the servants of David.

And she said, oh my word, we're doomed. Our whole family is going to be destroyed. So what did she do? She loaded up a feast of food and went to meet David along the way.

She had hoped that her actions would calm David so that he would spare her family from death. David agreed to spare the family for Abigail's sake. Nabal thinking himself to be someone special because he told David to take a hike through a big party for himself.

He was drunk and unable to protect himself or his family. The next morning, Abigail told Nabal that she had taken an offering to David, and by doing so, turned back the king and his 400 soldiers. Nabal was so shocked that the Bible says his heart died within him and became a stone, and within 10 days, he was dead.

So you have this woman, Abigail, who says, I'm going to protect my family, even when my husband is drunk and not doing anything for my family. I'm going to protect, and God honored that. Guess who ended up marrying David? Abigail.

So in this pain, instead of cowering back, she said, I'm going to protect my family spiritually. And that might be a good word for some of you, that no matter if your husband or the other spouse, it's the other way, if they're arrogant and addicted or they're causing demise, you can still bring that covering, that spiritual covering to your home and bring protection there. It's a wonderful thing.

The fifth point, don't allow past pain to prevent future blessing. This is huge because we can beat up ourselves many times, can't we? And I'm going to throw one woman in here. You might say, why are you throwing her in there? Well, Rahab, the harlot, I'm going to use her as an example.

Here's why. She did not allow past pain to prevent future blessing. Rahab means open or wide, and Joshua means Yahweh God is my salvation.

And it's almost like God brought Joshua into that land. This is one of the first cities they conquered, and Rahab the harlot was there. And the reason I wanted to bring her up is I think a lot of people are living with a lot of regret, men too, and women, and they're living with that regret.

And regret, let me remind you that regret should push you to the cross, push you to God. You can't just get rid of that pain because that pain will serve a purpose. And I like a friend of ours, I can send it to you, Jackie Sill wrote something.

I just caught the first, it's a blog she wrote, just the first paragraph the other day, and I said, this is perfect. She said, we need to allow ourselves to feel the same searing pain of regret without fearing that we won't recover. See, the pain of regret is powerful because it makes you say, I'm not doing that again, but then God can rebuild and recover your life.

Because the truth is we can acknowledge wrong, feel horrible, and recover. So what the enemy wants to do is you feel the pain of regret, and then you feel, I'm never going to recover. I'm going to stay in this spot of failure and never move forward.

That's the lie. That's the lie, because you feel the pain of regret. You say, I feel this horrible for what I did.

But then you say, I'm going to recover and learn from that and become a better person. That's what Rahab the harlot did. She was, her past, but then she said, I know that you guys fear God.

And Hebrew says, by faith. By faith, Rahab hid the spies and gained favor with God, by faith, regardless of her past. So let me read that, Joshua 2.8. Now before the spies laid down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, I know that the Lord has given you the land and the tear of you has fallen on all of us.

And all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt. See, that's not a fairy tale.

This is all true. They knew that God delivered the children of Israel and it created shockwaves across the land. And that they killed the two kings of the Ammonites.

They were utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted. So you see this big nation of Israel coming out of Egypt.

God dries up the sea, they part over, they kill these strong kings, and they're coming towards the city to take it. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house and give me a true token. And spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sister, and all that I have, and deliver our lives from death.

So she put all this into practice. She was bold. She protected her home.

And she didn't look back on who she was, but on who she was going to become. And that's a lot of times the enemy wants to keep us in that pain of regret. And God can take a mess and make a miracle.

I'm gonna say that a few times. God can take a mess and make a miracle. Because what you do with the mess, many times the mess will get us in a spot to where now God can work.

So you take, this is a mess. What's the new phrase now, hot mess? I'm a hot mess, I've never said that, I'm not gonna ever say it. But women, I guess, can get away with that.

And that mess can become a miracle if you take it to the one who can rebuild. See, that's, a lot of times, are you seeing the point of pain now? Sometimes to, can you imagine, I mean, really think about a life without pain. And let's not miss this point.

Jesus came from Rahab's lineage. Does that just blow your mind? Why not mention Rebecca and Sarah and all these great, but Rahab, the harlot? Jesus came from her. I'm just speechless.

And it makes me wonder, did Joshua really need to spy out the land? I mean, they just conquered the entire Egyptian army, God did. They conquered all these, they're just, they're not, I don't know if they really need to spy out the land. But was God maybe trying to save Rahab and her family because she had faith in God? God brought Joshua and Rahab together to save that family.

And I wanted to stop, I put this in here yesterday. God will often send people in our path when we need rescuing. God will often send people in your path when you need rescuing.

But there's a flip side to this, and he'll send us to rescue others. He'll send us to rescue others. But many times, we don't position ourselves very well.

And I want to just throw out a few ideas and get involved in the community somehow. That's one reason I like coaching Little League Baseball. Believe it or not, not all those parents are Christians, or the kids.

And you're staying involved in the community. So you can pray, you can be, you might be that person who rescues, but you've got to be out there. What about prisons? When you give, you receive.

There's people in prison we can go and visit. Or you, many times, there's, when I went and visited somebody in San Diego, I mentioned it before. I was the only visitor that he's had in eight months.

And his mom and dad can't get down there, their ailments. And just, his dad, I think, is bedridden. So we have some of the women going there and helping, too.

And the men, we should step up and see if they need anything. Mow the lawn, take out trash, do, you know? And that's what we have to be out in the community to rescue people. What about the hospital homes? We still need more helpers.

We still need more helpers. I just stopped by Thursday, and it, you have to give to receive. And when I go to give, I also receive.

I think I saw you signed in there, too, Michael, and gave a Bible study with John Washington. But I went into one of the ladies, her name's, I don't know if I should say the name, because somebody's confidential, but she can't talk. And she was having a panic attack and couldn't get the nurses.

And I could tell, this shame, don't have a panic attack, too. So I just, God, just prayed with her. And praying, and I look at her, and she's fine.

I'm like, thank God. You know, I get the nurses, and they're around her later. But I left there kind of like, that was, you know, that's scary.

You know, their little button's not working, and she can't breathe through the trach. And it's hard, but you have to go and be a blessing. God will use you to rescue somebody, but you gotta go out.

You know, it's another area that people, they might find it odd, but I like to stop in AA meetings sometimes. Because people have overcome alcohol, but they haven't overcome the enemy. They're suicidal, they're depressed.

And if you can just go there and say, hey, let me, can I pray with you afterwards? Let me give you some hope. And the reason I go is not only to be a blessing, but to receive. Because I remember, I hear stories of where one drink can take me back.

When you hear the horror stories of what people went through. And it works both ways. I can go and offer hope, but then I can remember that I don't wanna, I can't go back to that lifestyle.

And those who are addicted, you know, those who are not, thank God. Cuz you get drunk off the first drink. Those who are addicted, or the first pill, or the first, whatever the addiction is, the first thing is what catches you because it's an open door.

You open the door to temptation. So when I go there, I can relate to these people and say, hey, here's how you get through this. Let me tell you about the higher power, who he really is.

Or they allow you three, four minutes. You can say, listen, all this stuff is biblical, all this stuff is spiritual. The only hope is in full surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you can go there and be examples of that, but then you also receive by ministering to these people. So you're just being out in the community, Al-Anon, what about that group? It's for families who, they don't know what to do with their 22-year-old on heroin. And these people, I've talked to parents like that.

And they're a mess. They can't get sleep, because they know their child is possibly going to die. So who's reaching out to them? Probably the best person to reach out to them is who's had the prodigal son come home, folks, these people are everywhere, everywhere.

If you want to help, just email us, I'll point you in ten different directions. We get marriage counseling, we get heroin addiction, we get alcohol, we get drug addiction, we get infidelity. There's every, needs are out there, but we don't have enough people.

The church is much bigger now with two campuses, but we still don't have enough people. And that's where we have to go out. I believe Joshua did not have to go in to spy out that land, personally, that city.

I believe that God helped to save that family, Rahab, and brought Christ through that lineage. So let me just encourage you, get involved in the community, these prisons, whether it's AA or hospital homes. And people say, they tell me like I don't know, those aren't spiritual programs.

No kidding. That's why you're there. You're bringing the, thank God for Celebrate Recovery, and that's normally where I point people to.

But the reason, you're bringing that to that group. Hello, you're the spirit inside, living in you, the light, giving hope. But I'm gonna read, I referenced that book earlier, Leadership Pain.

I'm gonna read a quick excerpt and close on this. And all of us that wanting, we want life without pain, don't we? But let me read this. The author says, I grew up in India where I saw thousands of lepers.

You know what a leper is? It's not a leopard, it's, because my kids don't know. It's leprosy, people, Jesus would heal these people often. They were often missing noses, ears, fingers, and toes.

But not because the flesh rots away, that's a common misconception. Various body parts become severely damaged because they don't sense the warning signs of pain and stay away from the danger. It's like you're flipping the pancakes, but you don't realize your finger's on the flame.

You don't feel that pain. And there's a doctor by the name of Dr. Paul Brand worked with lepers in India and in the United States. And many of you know, Phil Piaci, in his book, The Gift of Pain, told about this story.

Can you imagine a four year old, her name is Tanya, four year old Tanya. When her mother brought Tanya to the National Leprosy Hospital in Louisiana, Dr. Brand immediately noticed that the little girl appeared totally calm as he removed her blood stained bandages and examined her dislocated ankle. As the doctor gently moved her foot to assess the extent of the damage, Tanya appeared bored.

She felt no pain at all. Her mother explained that she first realized Tanya's problem when she was only 18 months old. She had let her daughter in a playpen for a few minutes.

When she returned, she saw Tanya finger painting with large red swirls on the sheets. She hadn't remembered giving her any paint. When she got closer, she screamed with horror.

Tanya had bitten off the end of her finger and was using her blood as paint. When her mother screamed, the little girl looked up with streaks of blood on her teeth. Tanya suffers from a rare genetic malady called congenital indifference to pain, a condition very similar to leprosy.

In every other way, she's a very healthy little girl, but feels no pain at all. Seven years later, Tanya's mother called Dr. Brand to tell him that the little girl had lost both legs to amputation, as well as most of her fingers. Her elbows were constantly dislocated.

She had ulcers on her hands and on her legs. She had chewed her tongue so badly that it was swollen and lacerated. Years earlier, Tanya's father left because he could not handle the stress of raising her.

He called her a monster. Dr. Brand observed that Tanya was no monster, only an extreme example of life without pain. That puts pain in perspective, doesn't it? I don't know about you, but that's life without pain.

Is that what we want for our kids? Of course, we want to protect them and shelter them, but when he falls on his bike and gets hurt, I want him to know he can't run into that pole again. Pain is there for a reason, but you have to take your pain to the father. Could it be that God is using pain to draw you to him? But Shane, I know him.

But is your pain pushing you away or is it drawing you to him? Because I know most people I know, the pain is not being used to draw them to more of God, more of his word, more of prayer, more of fasting, more of worship. The more I seek you, the more I find you. God, I have to find you.

This pain can propel you to the cross if you let it. So moms, dads, whoever out there, the pain that many of you are feeling, I know that you're feeling pain from the past. But allow that to drive you to the prayer closet.

On my calendar, I try to put some of the memorial services that I do every year so I can touch base with the families. And I email the family that has moved away that lost their 22-year-old daughter to heroin overdose. And we did the memorial service a few years back.

Some of you remember, and I just pray that they're using that pain to draw them. Because that pain doesn't leave. That pain will not leave.

You will live with regret for the rest of your life. I should have been a better mother. I should have been a better father.

And you can't live like that. You're just the shepherd. You do all that you can do.

And you turn it over to God and you don't allow that pain to debilitate you. You allow that pain to draw you closer to God. Now you know why some people can weep during worship.

Now you know why some people just love the Lord, because he's holding them like a father. That's why looking back, I tell a lot of people, I wouldn't change a lot of... I don't like my past, but I wouldn't change a lot of it because now I know him as a shepherd. I know him as father, as forgiving me of many sins.

If it wasn't for the grace of God, I would not be up here. I wouldn't have kids. So if it's going to cost me that, I'll go through what I had to go through to have that relationship with him.

So let pain serve its purpose. It has a purpose. Pain has a purpose.

Let me end on that and just pray. And during worship, I just pray because I know people close to us that are holding on to pain. In my own family, they're holding on to pain, and it's causing... they're causing their life to fall apart.

They're not running to God. They're not running to the cross. They're allowing bitterness and resentment.

And, God, how could you? God, how could you? Instead of saying, God, I need you, big difference, big difference. One is the heart fighting God, the other is the heart being open to God. And that's where real change takes place.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/32/SID32100.mp3>

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/OHZQmF0EAzU.mp4>

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