

Don't Waste
the Pain
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February 3, 2014, I wrote a CEO Forum devotional entitled *"Don't Waste the Pain"*. Two weeks later, on February 17, 2014, we lost our daughter Misty. For those of you that have lost children you understand there is no greater pain – it is pain that incapacitates you, it affects every area of your life, it is pain that never goes away, and is always there, always.

I had heard that many marriages break up after losing a child. The morning after, in the mist of our pain, Karen and I decided that this was going to bring us closer to God and closer to each other, and both have happened. For the next few months we spent most of our days and nights on the couch watching movies so we wouldn't have to think. Eventually the normality of life starts to creep in and over time life does become more normal except for the pain of the loss, that never goes away.

Understanding the death of Misty is way beyond me. The only way I can deal with it is through faith, knowing that nothing happens to us that first does not go through the hands of God; a God that loves us and wants only the best for us. *HIS WAYS ARE NOT OUR WAYS, but what are His ways in this situation? What is His plan? How does our family make sense of this?* I had a thousand unanswered questions. Questions I still have today. I finally realized I wouldn't know the answer until someday in Heaven, where I would see Misty again and then maybe get my answers.

Prior to Misty's passing, Karen and I had signed up with CEO Forum for a trip to Israel. We came very close to cancelling it because we just wanted to be by ourselves, but we finally decided to go and it ended up being one of the best things we could have done. We will never forget the support we received from the entire group. The prayers, the notes left in our seats when we would get back on the tour bus, the heart shaped rocks the women would give to Karen, (Misty collected heart shaped rocks). Karen and Mac McQuiston and Brent and Maggie Garrison attended to our every need.

Linda and Stephen Quinn were also on that trip. They lost their daughter, Sam, a couple of years before we lost Misty. They had walked in our shoes and they understood. I remember Linda walking Karen up to the Wailing Wall so she could put the prayers Misty's children had written in the wall. The bond we have with Linda and Stephen continues to this day and I am sure will continue until both of us see our Misty and Sam again.

So how do you not waste the pain?

First, as a Christian, remember that God loves you even when you don't understand and don't feel His love.

Second, don't hide your pain. We can't pretend our pain away; hidden pain will always show up someday. Be open about your pain with God, your family and close friends.

Third, do what YOU need to do. We get a lot of "*We should do this or that*," or "*It's been long enough, it's time to move on and get back to a normal life*." We are human and I don't believe we need to make excuses on how we deal with our pain. If you stay in bed for 20 hours a day or decide to quit your job and hike around the world – or as I did: lay on the couch and watch movies all day so I wouldn't have to think. Understanding we all must consider our own individual situation, but we need the freedom to deal with our pain in our own way.

Fourth, the pain will lead to brokenness and brokenness will lead to new discoveries about yourself and who you are. In the experience of the emptiness and the pain is when God confronts us with the choice to abandon ourselves to God knowing His love, or being the tough guy fighting the pain ourselves. In other words, we are faced with who we really are and what we really believe.

Fifth, use your understanding of the pain to help others. Linda and Stephen understood like no one else because they had been through it. Their insights, friendship and love helped us more than I can describe.

In Romans 5:3-6, Paul tells us to rejoice in our suffering knowing that it produces endurance, character, and hope. God intends for us to profit from all our trials and disappointments in life. Through faith we need to believe that He is up to something good and through our response there will be a feeling of encouragement and a new attitude. Therefore, *don't waste the pain you might be facing today.*