



**CEO Devotional – February 3, 2014**  
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***Don't Waste the Pain***

When you are going through trials that you don't understand have you ever ask the questions –Why me? Where is God? Isn't God hearing me?

Being in the real estate investment business in Phoenix for the last 40 years and never having a major loss until the recession in 2008, those are questions that I asked over and over without answers – that led to bouts of depression, many sleepless nights, loss of hope, and a very uncertain future.

I just wanted the pain to stop, I wanted to escape, I wanted out and all of this to go away. Every time I would drive by one of the properties I built and lost, or get a call from an investor the pain was there in full force, and it wasn't leaving.

Then I started sensing maybe there was more to this, maybe there was a purpose, maybe God did have a plan. I started focusing on what God wanted me to do rather than my losses. I changed my questions from Why Me? To what is God doing? What is His purpose, His plan? What am I learning?

I Peter 1:3-8 As a Christian God has given us an unshakable hope for the future through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter realized that as a Christian we will have good times and we will have trials.

Peter goes on to say, that the tested genuineness of our faith is more precious than gold, and the testing of our faith is the only way to find out how strong our faith is. There is no other way and nobody is trial free, or failure free.

So the question is, what we are going to do when the trials come? Hudson Taylor the first missionary to China wrote this in the 1800s; *"It doesn't matter, really, how great the pressure is, it only matters where the pressure lies. See that it never comes between you and the Lord—then, the greater the pressure, the more it presses you to His breast."* Life is tough; we are going to be confronted with trials and, uncertainty for as long as we are breathing. Hudson Taylor says it is either going to draw us closer to God or push us further away, it is our decision.

If we allow the trial and the pain to come between us and God then we have accepted defeat, and that leads to a downward spiral of despair and depression outside of His will. We will then have to fight those battles on our own.

But, we have another choice. We can choose the path that God has set before us, which leads to an inner peace beyond our understanding no matter what the circumstances. Our goal is – we want out, we want to quit, escape. God's goal is that we benefit no matter who or what the cause is. Maybe it is a health problem – maybe we caused it ourselves. Maybe it is something with the kids, maybe there was a recession, maybe, maybe, maybe.... We don't need to know the exact source. What we need to know is how to respond in a way to "benefit from the pain?"

God understands our pain and we have to understand that nothing happens to us that first doesn't go through the hand of God. He does have a plan. We are His children and He is carrying our picture in His wallet just like you carry your children's pictures. He has a dream for us and wants only the best for us and He is never going to give up on us. Because we are His, He is our protector. We are not a victim to anything. He assumes total responsibility for our needs.

Sometimes when nothing seems to be working, we become overwhelmed with fear and the intensity of the pain gets so bad that it is hard for us to believe and keep moving forward. This is the point we need to dig deep and exercise the courage, not to do more or try harder but to trust and rest in Him, letting Him carry our load, focusing on Him for our hope. We can't let the fact of His unconditional love for us get sidetracked by our feelings. It is when we can't handle any more pain and cry out to God, that He starts first, conforming our inward person to His likeness, and then He works on solving the problem.

George Muller the man from Bristol England who in the 1800's built a number of orphanages and fed thousands of children without asking anybody except God for money, had this to say about how he dealt with trials, and I think it applies to us today. George, like many of us, had a hard time concentrating when he prayed, his mind would wander and he felt his prayers were not effective. He said, *"The most important thing I had to do was to read the Word of God and to meditate on it. Meditation on God's Word has given help and strength to pass peacefully through deep trials. What is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God—not the simple reading of the Word of God O, we must consider what we read, ponder over it, and apply it to our hearts. The weaker we are, the more meditation we need to strengthen our inner man. Without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations can be overwhelming."*

Peter tells us that our faith is worth more than gold, one of our greatest assets is our faith and we feed our faith daily by meditating on His word and making it a part of our inward person. This is the connection needed for our faith to grow and a chance for us to show God who and what we believe. Our pain is a stepping stone to more dependence on Him, building a partnership that is everlasting and giving us the assurance that we are operating within His will doing His work not our own.

In Romans 5:3-6 Paul tells us to rejoice in our suffering knowing that it produces endurance, character, and hope. He intends for us to profit from all of 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.