



# Sermon Discussion Guide

## Never Waste Your Pain

### Getting Through What You're Going Through – Part 7

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*“Have you gone through all of this for nothing? Is it all really for nothing?” Galatians 3:4 (CEV)*

God doesn't want us to waste our pain. Most people don't know that God wants to take advantage of our pain to move us toward his goals for our lives by using it to draw us closer to him, to draw us closer to others, to become more like Jesus, to help others, and to witness to the world. Sadly, many people don't gain from their pain. Have you learned from your pain and grown? Here we'll discuss how to cooperate with God to use our pain to help fulfill his purposes for our lives.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

*“We were crushed and overwhelmed ... and saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was good, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us. ... And he did help us!” 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 (LB)*

1. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians above, what was good about the overwhelming pain he suffered? In what ways could those kinds of experiences draw people closer to God?
2. The pain in our lives won't draw us closer to God unless we choose to let it do so, and cooperate with God about it. What do you think choosing to cooperate with God would look like in a painful life situation, and what are specific examples of actions we might take that could draw us closer to God?

*“By helping each other with your troubles, you truly obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2 (EXB)*

3. People are more likely to take the risk of being vulnerable when they are among others who show grace and do not judge their feelings. In time, they can use their pains to grow closer to others. What struggles have drawn you closer to others?
4. How can people intentionally cultivate deeper relationships – whether in a marriage, friendship, or fellowship group – that will enable them and others to become vulnerable by openly sharing their feelings and experiences?

*“I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.” Philippians 1:12 (NLT)*

5. Our pain can be used to reach out to others. Why would sharing our weaknesses be more effective in connecting with others than sharing our accomplishments?

*“In everything we do we try to show that we are true servants of God. We patiently endure suffering and hardship and trouble of every kind.” 2 Corinthians 6:4 (LB)*

6. Think of an example of a painful experience, whether personal or not. How can it be used to form a message about sharing our relationship with Christ among others?

### Diving Deeper (optional)

1. Discuss whether or not it seems reasonable that God doesn't spare us from the kinds of pain that Jesus went through. Why would God want that? How do you feel about it?
2. Winning in life requires resilience: the ability to bounce back from our problems and pains by seeing God's purpose in them. Describe an example from your life or from your family, regardless of whether you “bounced back” yet or not.
3. What painful experience could you use to draw closer to God, draw closer to others, become more like Jesus, help others, or reach out to others? Whom could you reach out to who is going through a painful experience similar to yours?

**REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.**

## Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

### Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Describe some different types of trees or plants that are resilient to rough weather or environmental conditions.
- Encourage group members to learn how to cooperate with God to use their pain to help fulfill his five purposes for their lives: (1) know and love God (worship); (2) love others (fellowship); (3) become like Christ (discipleship); (4) serve others (ministry); and (5) lead others to Christ by finding and sharing their life messages (mission).
- Sovereign Lord, transform all our pain to be used for a good purpose. In our sorrow, use our pain to draw us closer to you and others, instead of running from you and isolating ourselves. Through suffering, grow us to become more like you. Strengthen us to be resilient and not bitter, to one day use our pain to serve others with compassion. Finally, help us use our pain to witness boldly to the world, so others will see you are a God to be counted on and worth living for.

### Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

### Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.
- Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.