

## Our Pain, Their Gain

He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. - - For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then - - . II Corinthians 1:3-7, (Partial)

There are some "troubles" in this world that I can feel from my insides, and others that I can't. It depends on the extent to which I've "been there and done that" myself. We've all had experiences that we would have rejected if we'd had the choice, and our pilgrimage through them equips us to help others.

Every day we meet people who are hurting in one way or another. People who need help. They want to do better but can't. You can feel their struggle because you've been there, and God wants to touch them through you.

One of my life-sayings is, "Most of the work of God's kingdom is done through the little people." Nobody knows how often that thought has comforted me in my Christian life and service. It is the faithful Christians who serve God day by day in spite of their weaknesses, whom He uses to touch others. Our fellow students or workers. Our neighbors. Or those who come to church week after week and always have the same blah look. All are waiting for someone like us to help them move on. So many people need so little help to do so much better.

Somebody once described another person to me as "hard." I said she was probably hurt and that she certainly had a soft spot that someone could touch. He chuckled and repeated that she is "HARD!"

Listen - - every hard front is only that. Everyone has a soft spot and at least periodically they long for someone who is "real," to touch them. Each of us has relationships where we can reach inside someone in a way that others can't. They might not let a pastor near them but for some reason they open themselves to you. Often it is because they sense that we understand – and that is because we have been there.

We live in a broken world. Even the church itself is not whole. None of us has it all together – not even those who act like they do. But how has God instructed or comforted you in a time of difficulty? Where has He brought freedom into your life? We all have something to give and He wants us to pass it on!

We're not talking about "big time," here. Or about saying profound things. Or doing something spectacular. You don't have to be "Bible answer man." In fact, if you feel like an expert in regards to someone else's problems you're probably not ready to help. If you have a quick fix, keep it to yourself. We're talking about the humble, compassionate "coming alongside" that gives others hope and can patiently show them the way up because we've been down there ourselves.

People are not looking for theory, or the "Alls you have to do is - - " kind of advice. They want someone who feels what they feel; accepts them in spite of what they feel; and can humbly partner with them in working through it.

People are not always ready for help, but everyone is open to the right kind of help at the right time. Jesus' approach was to keep his ear toward the Father as he walked among people, and by the Holy Spirit the Father would let Him see the hearts that were ready. I cherish His words in John 5:19, "I assure you, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does." The Holy Spirit will also show *you* where He is working, and where He wants you to step forward – in the right way at the right time.

So who does God want to touch through you? Possibly he would reach deeply into their heart but maybe it's only to soften them a bit. Either is okay. You may see results and you might not, but you don't have to. Your success is in obedience, not results. You might sow, others water, and still others reap the harvest, but you will know the joy of God's "Well done!" And it all happened because He met you in *your* time of need, and you simply passed it on!

The next time "troubles" come, ask God to use them to further equip you to help others. It will give them a new spin! What Satan meant for your defeat will be turned to bring victory to you and others.

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