

through these experiences. If you're stuck blaming or whining about something get some help. Be open to discover that God might very well want to use the most painful things to develop your character. Be open to seeing how God might want to use your experiences to introduce others to relationship with Him.

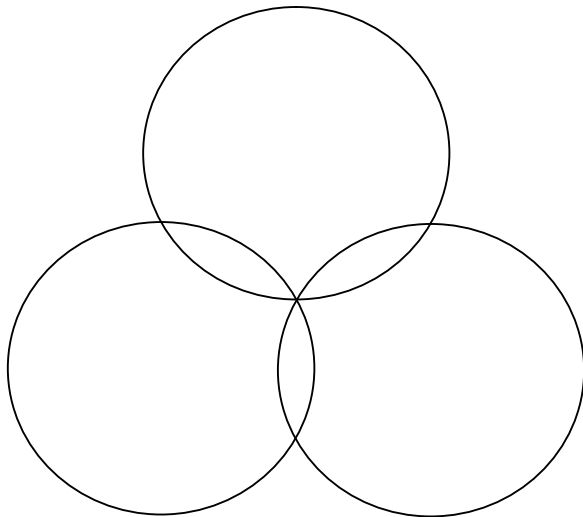
Opportunities for Fruitfulness:

hard marriage – faithfulness
neighbor in crisis – kindness
loss of income - contentment
struggle parenting – patience
loss or physical pain – comfort
ministry struggles—focus

Listen to this promise that Paul give us in his letter to the church in Corinth:

2 Corinthians 1:4 – “God comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

3 stories:



the fruit of experience

philippians 1:12-14

David Drury

“Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”

– Philippians 1:12-14

my experiences

- ?? Intentional and Christ-following parents
- ?? Negative influence of neighborhood kids—porn in the trash
- ?? Early years of success
- ?? Harvard Story—proclaiming the Word in a world that has drifted from it
- ?? Church planting years of failure—so frustrated! — *poured out*
- ?? Family years — joy
- ?? West Michigan years — growth

two big truths

everybody has experiences

- ?? Prayer Cards – praise reports, thankfulness, new babies, family crisis, cancer, marriage struggles, financial difficulties, death of a family member or friend
- ?? *-poured out*

our response is the key

- ?? Life is good – I typically think it's because of my smart decisions
- ?? Life is hard I look for who is to blame and ask, “why me?”

?? I should be asking – what can I learn? How can I trust God more through this? How does God want to deepen my relationship with Him during this?

Chuck Swindoll

“I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% my response to it.”

In fact = My senior pastor has said: “God uses people greatly that are broken deeply.”

READ: Philippians 1:12-14

what has happened to me ...

” – **key phrase!**

Paul is writing from prison – life is not good. End of chapter 1

Phil 1:30 = “...you have seen me suffer in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle.”

Anthony Krehn story – “God has given me an incredible place of need to serve as a missionary.”- it’s all in your response

Let’s take a quick walk through Paul’s experiences:

Spiritual Experiences – God began to get his attention - stoning of Stephen. He met Jesus on the road to Damascus in a vision that left him temporarily blind. Subsequently Paul fully surrendered to Jesus and received forgiveness. Paul had dreams, visions, and direct guidance from the H.S.

Painful Experiences – 2 Corinthians 11:23-27

Prison, flogging, exposed to death again and again...

Missionary Experiences – book of Acts. Incredible missionary stories – courtroom drama, language & cultural differences, friendships all over, miracles, and finally martyrdom. There wasn’t much Paul hadn’t experienced.

GROUPS OF 2 or 3 at the most (not spouses) TO DISCUSS:

—what’s one of the best experiences you’ve had in the past year and one of the worst

—ask for prayer for a tough experience in your past that still has a bit of hold on you

the paul perspective..

incredible fruitfulness – Paul’s experiences changed him & impacted others in amazing ways. His connection to Jesus gave him a perspective that caused the people around him to take notice. There was a validity and authenticity to his words about Jesus because of how he lived his life.

joy in difficulty

whining & blaming

Philippians 2:14-15 – theme is JOY

-poured out

hope in uncertainty

despair & discouragement

Philippians 4:11-13 Optimism the shines through this letter – love it! JVK – 86 & the best is yet to come. So fun to be with him because the glass is always half full. Not fake but hopeful!

peace in chaos

– anxious & frustrated

Philippians 4:6-7

Day 14 there quote — writing about Jeremiah & Jesus “Their finest hours of fruitfulness came at their deepest points of pain.” - so true of us as well – difficulty, uncertainty, chaos – they may be our finest hour

Think back again on Paul’s phrase:

“what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.”

Paul was convinced that God was big enough to take all of the experiences of his life & weave them together in a way that would change him & impact others

What has happened to you? *Pause*

Those are the very things God wants to use in changing you and changing others. . Identify the lessons God taught you