

WAITING ON GOD IN CHRONIC PAIN

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Open in Prayer.

Pastor Derwin opened with this analogy: A microwave vs crockpot. The microwave cooks quickly. The crockpot slow cooks. For food to cook and taste good, it takes time. The microwave is analogous to our 'here and now' society. The crockpot is analogous to God taking time to produce character out of our pain and suffering.

Consider Pastor Derwin's statements "What if what we're going through isn't meant to harm us but to grow us in Him? To conform us to His image. To be conformed to His image means we go through hard times...just like Jesus did. His ultimate goal is for us to be conformed to His image."

Abigail's story:

She was the "model kid" growing up in the church. Her father is a pastor. She had a normal life with the usual dreams of having a family and doing big things in ministry. When she was 20 she was diagnosed with a kidney and bladder disease. The disease caused her to have more than 200 kidney stones at one time. She was then told there was no cure for her condition.

Abigail thought, this can't be my life. The wait of not knowing what's coming next was crippling. No hope, and doctors were unable to help. She felt like her life was like a snow-globe that had been shattered to pieces. She started to grieve for a life that she had not yet lived.

She said, "I felt like I was a grenade that was going to explode at any time. I pushed people away. I thought it was the loving to do because I didn't know what was going to happen. I withdrew into a shell trying to protect people from my pain."

Abigail began to doubt her faith, and wasn't sure where God was in the midst her pain.

She then thought of a quote by Adrian Rogers: "A faith that hasn't been tested is a faith that can't be trusted"

- What do you think he means by this?
- How has your faith been tested through difficult times?

While in Hawaii at her lowest point, Abigail was alone at the beach when God showed up and whispered to her, "It's ok not to be ok." At that time, she was reading *Limitless Life* by Pastor Derwin and came across something that really spoke to her: "You're more than your past when God is holding your future." She learned that her faith was hers and her story was hers.

God told her to stop looking at herself and start looking at others around her. She found purpose in those whom she saw. He allowed her to dream again, but more than that, He gave her peace. Peace in knowing that her faith isn't to be perfect, but just to trust in Him. "His plan is so much greater than any plan I had for myself." He used her pain to find His purpose for her! God doesn't waste your pain.

Discuss her story with each other and talk about some key points you took away.

Read 2 Cor 1:3-11

Paul's is describing his affliction while ministering in Asia.

- As you read this text and reflect on Abigail's story, why does God allow affliction in our lives?
- Why do we run from it rather than allow God to use it for His glory and for others?
- How does Paul tell us how to not waste our sorrows?

Read Isaiah 53:3-4

This prophecy is about Jesus and what He endured on our behalf. He is the "Man of sorrows." He was afflicted for us. He carries our sorrows. He bears our griefs.

- How do we go to Him differently knowing He endured grief and sorrows as we do?
- So many times, when we go through tough times we say, "you can't understand what is happening, you can't relate!" How does this text in Isaiah change this?
- When we go through affliction and sorrow, why is Jesus the only One who can ultimately rescue and comfort us.

Read Romans 5:1-5

Paul is writing to the multiethnic churches in Rome who are living through the Roman persecution, while at the same time getting used to being a multiethnic church. Things are hard yet the church is growing. Paul reminds us that our justification is through faith – that we have peace with God. And then he tells us we are to "rejoice in our sufferings".

- Why does Paul start with our justification and then transitions to our sufferings?
- Where do we put our hope? In our situations or in our Savior, our true hope?
- What does suffering produce?
- What does endurance produce? (Read Hebrews 5:8 too)
- Why do we want the end results without the process to get there?

Pastor Derwin concluded with these thoughts:

"God is more of a crockpot than a microwave. God doesn't get us out of stuff, but walks with us in it. He gets into our pain and our stuff." This is God, Emanuel!

"God is not wasting our pain. As we wait on God in the waiting room He transforms and conforms us."

"Trouble handled well honors God."

- How do these thoughts above help us rest in Him in these truths?

Soul Tattoo: Slowly read Rom 5:1-5 again and again, and let the Word of God sink in.