

PAIN'S GREATER PURPOSE

Pain, cultivated by the Spirit's compassion, invites us to care deeply for one another, grow together, suffering with one another so that none of us is isolated or alone. Pain opens the door to the Spirit's compassion in us.

EIGHT INDISPENSABLE PRINCIPLES OF PAIN

1. PAIN CAN MAKE US APPROACHABLE

Pain reminds us that we need one another. When we are open, honest, and vulnerable, we invite others to share their pain too.

Illness can be a call to a greater compassion and empathy towards others who suffer. (Pope Benedict XVI)

2. PAIN CAN GROW OUR COMPASSION AND KINDNESS

Through pain, we learn to be tender-hearted, listen patiently, offer a hug, or sit with someone in silence.

Affliction is the best book in my library. (Martin Luther)

3. PAIN CAN MAKE US STRONGER

From the depths of pain, we learn endurance and strength, so that when difficult seasons come again, we can face them, knowing God is with us, no matter what.

Compassion costs. It is easy enough to argue, criticize and condemn, but redemption is costly, and comfort draws from the deep. Brains can argue, but it takes heart to comfort. (Samuel Chadwick)

4. PAIN HAS A GREATER PURPOSE

Through pain, God chisels away at the things we cling to, growing our patience, endurance, and trust in Him. Each time we encounter pain, God builds on the work He has already begun.

Extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces. (Matthew Henry)

5. PAIN CAN BE INSPIRING

Great beauty can be found in the crucible of suffering, where we experience the exquisite tenderness of God. Beauty and pain are mirror images. In God's tenderness, He is refining us into the flawless craftsmanship He created us to be before we were born into this broken and hurting world.

Yet the choice is ours. In order to discover the beauty, we must first surrender to the pain.

My faith didn't remove the pain, but it got me through the pain. Trusting God didn't diminish or vanquish the anguish, but it enabled me to endure it. (Robert Rogers)

6. PAIN CAN BE A DOORWAY TO JOY

What if it's only *through pain* that we discover joy? In John 15:5, Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." The grafting of a branch onto a vine is only accomplished through wounding. When we abide in Christ, and bear fruit, the result is joy.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)

Afflictions are but the shadow of His wings. (George MacDonald)

7. PAIN CAN DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

Pain can inspire us to grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus. When we choose to worship in the midst of pain, we don't deny the pain, but we shift our attention from *what we feel* to *who God is.*

Through pain, God has ushered me into the fullest, most intimate, most sacred encounters with him. (Vaneetha Risner)

8. PAIN CAN TELL A STORY

Our scars tell the story of our pain, sorrow, loss, and survival. Our scars don't define us, but they do tell a part of our story. Sometimes things must be undone, unraveled, or even torn down for God's best to be purposed, built up, or birthed in us.

Take the very hardest thing in your life – the place of difficulty, outward or inward, and expect God to triumph gloriously in that very spot. Just there He can bring your soul into blossom! (Lilias Trotter)

Where pain dismantles, the Spirit's tender compassion can flourish.