

SMALL GROUPS

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. People don't hate pain—they hate pain without purpose. When we can see a reason, we can endure much more.
2. God's preparation often comes packaged as pain. What feels like an attack may actually be preparation for your purpose.
3. Don't view life from a perspective of pain; see your pain through a perspective of purpose. Romans 8:28 reminds us God works ALL things for good according to His purpose.
4. The greater the pain might indicate the greater the purpose. God may be doing something IN you before He does something THROUGH you.
5. Your story of pain can become your ministry to others. Like Peter, who denied Jesus three times yet preached at Pentecost, God redeems our failures.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. Pastor Mack shared that Jesus allowed Satan to "sift" Peter (Luke 22:31-32). How does this challenge your understanding of God's protection? What does it teach us about how God uses difficult seasons?

2. Read James 1:2-4. Why do you think James tells us to "consider it pure joy" when we face trials? What's the difference between being joyful about trials versus being joyful in the midst of trials?
3. Peter failed repeatedly—rebuking Jesus, falling asleep in the garden, cutting off someone's ear, denying Jesus three times. Yet God used him powerfully. What does this tell us about how God views our failures?

Personal Reflection

4. Pastor Mack said, "Sometimes God's preparation comes packaged as pain." Looking back, can you identify a painful season that was actually preparing you for something? Share if you're comfortable.
5. Are you currently in a season where you're asking "What's the purpose?" or "Where is God in this?" How does this message speak to your situation?
6. Pastor Mack mentioned unhealthy coping strategies like pornography, pills, or alcohol. What are some ways people try to numb pain instead of trusting God through it? What healthy alternatives can we choose?

Going Deeper

7. Read Romans 8:28 together. This verse says God works all things for good "for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." How does focusing on God's purpose (rather than our own plans) change how we view difficulties?
8. Pastor Mack shared his own "hell week" story and how he now sees God's purpose in it. How can we develop the spiritual maturity to trust God's purpose even when we can't see it yet?
9. Jesus told Peter, "When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). How has God used your past pain to help others? If you haven't experienced this yet, how might God want to use your current struggle in the future?

Practical Application

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice:

1. Change Your Perspective
 - When you face frustration or pain this week, pause and pray: "God, what might you be doing IN me through this? What's the purpose?"
 - Journal about the situation and ask God to help you see it through His lens.
2. Strengthen Someone Else
 - Reach out to someone who's going through a difficult season. Share your own story of how God brought you through pain and how you now see the purpose.
 - Offer to pray with them specifically about finding God's purpose in their situation.
3. Declare God's Faithfulness
 - Like the pastor did in his car with his son, even when you don't "feel" God's presence, declare His promises out loud.
 - Choose a verse (like Romans 8:28 or Hebrews 13:5) and speak it over your situation daily.
4. Address Unhealthy Coping
 - If you've been using unhealthy ways to numb pain, confess it to a trusted friend or this group and ask for accountability.
 - Replace one unhealthy coping mechanism with a healthy one (prayer, exercise, worship, calling a friend).
5. Serve Through Your Pain
 - Don't wait until the pain is over. Find one way to serve or bless someone else even in the midst of your difficult season.

Group Prayer Time

Break into pairs or smaller groups of 3-4 and pray for each other using these prompts:

- Pray for anyone going through a painful season right now—that they would sense God's presence and see His purpose.
- Pray for perspective—that we would see our circumstances through God's eyes, not just our pain.
- Pray for strength to endure—not for God to remove the trial, but to help us get through it.
- Pray for future ministry—that God would use our pain to strengthen and encourage others.

End with this prayer together:

"Father, help us to trust that You are working all things together for good. Even when we don't feel You, even when we don't see the purpose, help us to stand on Your Word. Give us faith to believe that the pain we're experiencing today is preparation for the purpose You have for us tomorrow. Use our stories to strengthen others. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Before Next Week

- Memorize Romans 8:28 and recite it when you face difficulties this week.
- Check in with someone from your group mid-week to encourage them and share how God is working.
- Come prepared to share one way you saw God's purpose in a difficult moment this week.

Additional Resources

- Re-watch or listen to the sermon if you need encouragement during the week
- Read the full story of Peter's restoration in John 21:15-19
- Consider reading a book on suffering with purpose, such as *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering* by Tim Keller

Remember: You don't have to go through this alone. That's why we're a family, a body that supports one another, prays for one another, and carries each other's burdens together.