

# FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE

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To Whom it May Concern,

You have meaning and purpose. No matter what amount of pain you have experienced or may be currently facing, you matter! Again, I say, “You matter”! Beneath the layers of your difficulties is a bright light that’s ready to shine. You are precisely why this book was written. It’s time to heal and recover!

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHOR

**MANY PEOPLE ARE** experiencing the emotional hurt of past or current challenges in life. The wounds these experiences have created are fear, anxiety, isolation, detachment, anger, etc. People feel trapped by their pain, which is severely affecting their ability to form meaningful relationships and move forward in their lives. Some have even turned away from their faith in God because they feel disconnected from His love. There are also those who attend church services weekly and repress their hurt for the sake of appearances. They want to show that they have faith; although, in secret, they're experiencing turmoil and a lack of peace. I've spoken to several Christians who are embarrassed by their inability to manage their troubled emotions and said they go along with the church's norms of being brave and

exercising faith. It's unfortunate that Christians who are in real pain feel they must mask it when they're in the church gathering. I can empathize with them. It was very difficult for me to share my hurt and pain due to what I call, "The self-empowerment movement". It emphasizes being your best self and to approach life with a positive mindset. While there's nothing wrong with encouraging others to go forth and be better in their lives, many of the platforms that offer advice don't address the whole person. They look right past the pain and focus only on the solution, as they see it. However, if people are going to get better and come out of difficult seasons in life, they must get healed from the inside out. Today, there are all sorts of resources out there to help hurting people recover. Even in church, the messages are focused on faith to improve our lives and live victoriously. But, with all of these motivational messages and platforms, why are so many still struggling with emotional pain?

It really concerns me that Christians are suppressing their pain and trying to numb their emotions through their Sunday worship experience. It's like going to the doctor's office each week to get enough medicine to get through the week. The problem with this is it doesn't remedy the condition. It only treats the symptoms. It's time to get to the root and overcome painful life situations. Now, I have no magical, overnight solutions to offer. My own recovery happened through intentional fellowship with God. As a Christian, I realized that my faith involved more than believing God for good fortune and favorable outcomes. My recovery would come by believing and trusting God. There were no gimmicks or tricks to it. I just had

to embrace the process and put in the work. What was unclear to me before that I know today is God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, is my most trustworthy and loyal confidant. He is my heavenly Father and cares deeply for me. As a result of His love and care, I know firsthand what moving from pain to purpose means.

If you've been made free from pain in your life then you know the liberty that is available in Christ (John 8:32). You know the journey involved in reaching that place of rest. I'm sure you've discovered that going through painful situations made you stronger and more resilient. But there are a great number of Christians who are feeling the weight of their pain and can't seem to break through. Maybe you are newly freed from a situation and experiencing the comfort of heaven mending the broken pieces of your heart. Or maybe you're currently going through a painful season in your life and this book couldn't have come at a better time. One thing is for sure—walking in ordered steps will involve some discomfort from time to time; but, be encouraged. There is nothing so irreparably damaged that God cannot mend it. We all experience the pain of brokenness at some point in our lives. It's a condition that can be traced back to mankind's beginning (Gen. 3:1-6). People all over the world from all walks of life are hurting mentally, emotionally, and physically. Painful experiences have left a bruise on their hearts and minds and this can be very difficult to shake. Have you ever had something wound your heart to such an extent that it felt as though you would never recover? That one experience or two that really shook you to your core? Life works that way, unfortunately. Often, there are no warnings.

Something devastating can just happen out of nowhere. It can be an illness, loss of a loved one, relational breakup, financial hardship, family crisis, etc. We try to reconcile in our minds why these things happen, but the only answer we seem to come up with is, “It’s just a part of life”.

Much of the pain in our lives is due to the broken, fragmented state of our emotions. Yes, we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and personal Savior; but pain and suffering are still very much a part of human life. Because of this, God wrote sixty-six books that declare His love and care for mankind. He is a relational being who desires to have fellowship with YOU. He is deeply concerned about all aspects of your wellbeing (mind, body, and spirit). He is able to provide the strength you need to get through any challenge. This means that you can rebound and recover from any present or past hurt because God is right there with you! He knew you before you were physically formed. He knows every detail of your life and is acquainted with all of your ways. Nothing about you is unfamiliar to God or takes Him by surprise. He knows at what point in your life pain will show up and has already made the way for you to overcome. You have consolation in His Son, Jesus Christ. Although we, as Christians, experience many of the same kinds of trauma and challenges as others, we have an anchor for our souls in Christ. Through the love of God, mankind was sent an anointed Savior (John 3:16). Jesus Christ is humanity’s only and final solution to its sin condition. Much of the pain in the world is due to the brokenness that this sin creates. It has been perpetuated throughout every generation since the first two human beings. Christ is our only hope. The



conditions of life are too painful for us to overcome on our own. Therefore, we look to the One who declared, “I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

In various seasons of my life I went through a series of painful emotions. Half of this was due to personal choices I made because I didn't know my worth and importance to God. I made reckless, unwise decisions that led to unfavorable consequences. However, through it all, God was still with me! My other challenges were due to circumstances beyond my control that really took a toll on me. These weren't caused by poor choices, just life's challenges in general. I reached a point where I knew it was time to break free and adopt a new mode of thinking and living. It took the hand of God to bring me to a point where I could gain a sense of esteem and confidence. As I go through my process each day, I discover the richness of God's love for me. It is truly liberating! I didn't know that my pain would lead to my purpose. In return for God helping me recover, I've turned my efforts toward helping others work through their troubles and challenges. I knew that my purpose was to help the whole of humanity, but also people of faith who need to know the Savior's mending and healing power.

Many Christians appear fine and function successfully in various ways. They attend church services on a regular basis and even serve in auxiliary roles such as, teaching Sunday school or participating in outreach. They live seemingly devout lives in their Christian communities. Yet, underneath all of their piety is a wounded heart. They have learned how to live with their pain. This, after all, is what we do in the church. We adapt to dysfunction

and tough it out when we're hurting. What's worse, those who find it difficult to overcome their mental, emotional, and physical pain are often viewed as weak and lacking in faith, which makes it all that harder for them to open up about their challenges. We feel as though we have to put up a brave front to show that we're spiritual, as if we aren't allowed to have personal challenges. Of course, we are to evangelize and share the gospel message; but we can't forget that it was that same message that led us to the Healer and Mender of our souls. We must not lose sight of the power of the cross. It repaired our brokenness.

When we listen to all of the positive messages coming from the church, how do we reconcile them with the brokenhearted, the hurting, and the wounded? When Jesus was upon the earth He declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). This declaration is important because it states the mission that He left to His church. We should seek to mend not only those outside of our faith, but also those on the inside. It is a falsehood that because of our faith in God we shouldn't be moved by emotional pain. Many, in fact, have brought painful memories and experiences right into their salvation. We can't brush these occurrences in life aside and pretend they never happened. The goal of Christ is to mend what has been broken and heal what is hurting. So many Christians have crossed over the threshold of salvation with a misguided view of being made free and

whole. They've been ushered right into church works and services without a fundamental understanding of how to live out their faith (something that can be remedied through discipleship in spiritual living). They become religious and pious but have not allowed Christ to deal with their emotional wounds. I can't state enough how much He cares about His followers and wants us to be whole. The gospel must resonate within us if we are going to passionately share it with others. I can attest to this; I became preoccupied with working in the church, but I ignored the parts of my life that needed to be mended. As time went on, those wounded parts created a contradiction in my spiritual walk. I neglected to receive discipleship and for a long time I didn't allow God's word to reach into those broken places. If only more emphasis were placed on empowering Christians to understand their identity, position, and relevance in Christ, over church works.

Many are regretting poor choices that led to despair, while others are facing painful life situations that have wounded their hearts. I've spent considerable time with people who have been Christians for years and still need to be mended and restored. Harsh life experiences have impaired their ability to intimately connect with God. The closest many of them have come is learning and remembering biblical information. This keeps them from having to be open and vulnerable before God. They don't speak of the pain of their past due to shame and embarrassment. It's all too common among Christians to hide behind their Bible knowledge and hold back from truly baring their entire beings to God. Consider a powerful statement of vulnerability in Psalm 139:13-16, "For You formed my

inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."

The passage indicates that God knows everything about us—all of our thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Nothing about us is hidden from Him; yet, we continue to hide. We don't realize that the areas we're uncomfortable with are already open to the eyes of God. Perhaps we feel it's easier to just go on and forget about the possibility of getting our pain remedied. No matter how I tried to ignore it, I discovered that my dysfunction and pain never left, because they manifested in my temperament, interactions, and relationships. Our hurt always shows up when we try to cover it up through church works, busyness, and denial. We all have faced painful situations in our lives. Some we have resolved; some we're still working through; and others we refuse to address. Whichever way we have chosen to handle emotional pain in our lives, there's no denying it has left a mark. Nevertheless, your pain doesn't have to debilitate you. It can be fuel for your purpose. You can move toward greater fulfillment and purpose in your spiritual life, provided you place and keep Christ at the center.

Do you desire to recover and heal from painful experiences, but are unable to reconcile your pain with Jesus Christ's atoning work? Have you given any thought to the

current condition of your life? Are you facing any kind of pain in the form of depression or negative stress; unhealthy emotions such as, anger, bitterness, guilt, shame, regret, or rejection; or some kind of physical illness? Do you need hope and direction? Are situations from the past still affecting you? Your challenges present the perfect opportunity for a comeback. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ didn't stay in the grave. He resurrected; and you, likewise, must make your way back from the conditions keeping you from experiencing freedom in Christ. He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives..." (John 14:27). His peace will sustain you through adversity and misfortune. What the Lord offers transcends earthly wisdom and knowledge. Through Christ you can live in security and peace. It's time for you to break free from the hurt and despair clouding your mind.

One of the biggest myths is that Christians don't experience setbacks. We have the same kinds of problems as non-Christians. While the most significant part of who we are is in Christ, this doesn't mean we don't have to deal with our share of challenges. Again, the difference is our hope and dependency for life are anchored in Jesus Christ. Be encouraged and remember that you are no less a Christian because you go through emotional trials. Just because the pain is difficult to bear, that does not mean that you lack faith and trust in God. As we draw closer to Him, we gain strength in a time of need. There are times when we all have uncertainty; but your faith shouldn't be called into question for it. Earthly living can be difficult and can really knock you down sometimes; but with God, there is always an opportunity for redemption. He is "a

very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1).

Because you are important to God and He knows your grief, He has inspired me to share with you the factors that led to my own emotional recovery and purpose. As I’ve stated, I’m no stranger to living with a broken heart and wondering if things will ever get better, all while trying to reconcile the Bible’s relevance to life’s circumstances. There were times when I wondered if God would ever help me land on my feet. At one point, I got tired of waiting and started taking matters into my own hands. Let me tell you, trying to recover without God’s help only keeps us searching and reaching. The solution lies in sorting through our troubled emotions and addressing what contributed to them while receiving comfort and support from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He heals people of both their physical and emotional infirmities. He is still extending His hand of love and compassion today, as He did over two thousand years ago. What keeps many of us from seeking Him for relief is the notion that Christians should always live in victory. That may be the idea, but we also live in a world filled with sorrow. We all go through times of distress and tests of our faith. One passage of the Bible that helped me understand that my struggle was a part of the human condition is First Corinthians 10:13. It declares, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” I clung to this Scripture when going through trials and emotional pain.

Sometimes the most difficult thing to do is get to the

root of that pain. In medicine, whenever there are complications, a series of tests are run to determine the cause. But there are no tests that can determine why we have emotional pain. We must look at contributing factors and other variables to find the origin of our troubles. It's not always apparent. Identifying the source of the pain is made even more difficult when Christians consume themselves in their church lives. They numb their emotional pain through singing worship songs, social fellowshiping, and saying "amen" behind their favorite preachers. They use expressions like, "God is good" and "Won't He do it?" But, beneath the surface of their religious energy are wounds that keep them from truly experiencing the abundant life that Jesus offers (John 10:10). They allow the thief (the devil) to use condemnation and sorrow to keep them from being vulnerable with God. The enormity of life's struggles suffocates their devotional life. Some have even been angry with God for allowing them to suffer adversity.

My heart goes out to those who are experiencing the negative outcomes of either poor choices, unfortunate life situations, or circumstances beyond their control. No matter the cause, the effects can deliver crushing blows to the heart. I've been in all three of these situations. The important thing is to learn from them, develop healthy coping strategies, and keep moving forward. This can be difficult when unhealthy emotions have taken their toll and the light of freedom seems dim. I went through phases of anguish and distress when I didn't think that relief was possible. Praying, reading the Bible, going to church, and fellowshiping with other Christians only helped me

temporarily. I wasn't truly healed until I realized that my recovery was contingent upon my willingness to give God access to the areas of my heart that were hurting. In addition, I had to take the necessary steps toward becoming whole. At first, I thought about the long road that was ahead and felt discouraged. However, I knew that if I was going to recover, I had to put in the work. There are no overnight cures for pain and suffering of any kind. However, by going through the process and committing to one's wellness, it is possible that things can move in the right direction. Whatever happened or is currently happening in your life that has inflicted pain, you can move toward purpose! This is your opportunity to look deeper into the areas that have sidelined you and kept you from experiencing all that God offers through His Word. The Bible encourages us to cast all our cares on Him, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

“From Pain to Purpose” sets out to help those who are hurting to understand the importance of drawing closer to Christ, take steps toward healing and recovery through His power, and move toward a greater meaning and purpose in Him. It's your time now! You can rise to new heights in Christ and go to the next level on your life's journey.