

*Think Local: Why Changing the World Begins in Your Backyard – Week Five*

# ***Pattern Three: Being Aware of Pockets of Pain***

*Selected Scriptures*

**Introduction:** Since God uses pain to lead us to Christ and produce character, we should be especially sensitive to those in pain, and enter into their lives with intent to show them God's grace and lead them to a place of healing.

## **1. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE – Pain is a pathway to humility & insight.**

- A. *Foundation* – God establishes pain as the pathway to humility in Eden. Gen. 3:8-21
- B. *Example: Moses* – In Numbers Moses experiences the adversity of intense complaint.
  - 1. Three complaints: the plan (4:1-4), their needs (11:1,4-6), & his leadership (12:1-2)
  - 2. God uses this criticism to shape his character. Numbers 12:3
- C. *Example: David* – In the books of Samuel David experiences the adversity of unfulfilled ambition.
  - 1. David's passion was worship; David sought to build a worship center.
  - 2. God says no. 1 Chronicles 28:3
  - 3. God uses unfulfilled ambition to transform his character. Psalm 131
- D. *Example: Paul* – During his travels, Paul developed a chronic physical pain.
  - 1. He saw a vision of heaven. 2 Cor. 12:1-4
  - 2. He experiences a thorn in the flesh. 2 Cor. 12:7-10
  - 3. God used this condition to grant him more power.
- E. *Example: Jesus* – Jesus faced the adversity of intense temptation.
  - 1. Jesus faced temptations at the beginning and at the end of his ministry.
  - 2. Jesus' temptation taught him what it means to obey experientially.

## **2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION – Pain is a pathway to primary greatness.**

- A. There are two kinds of greatness.
  - 1. Secondary greatness is external greatness in the world that lasts only in this life.
  - 2. Primary greatness is greatness before God that lasts into eternity.
- B. Jesus is the ultimate example of primary greatness at the end of his life.
  - 1. All secondary greatness is ripped from him at the end of his life.
  - 2. Jesus had primary greatness because of his character and victory over sin and death.
- C. Primary greatness is the desperate cry of our generation, and we have a satisfying answer.

## **3. MISSIONAL RESPONSE – We need to ask, “Where are the pockets of pain in our community and how can we provide hope?”**

- A. Our desire as a church – To be viewed within the community as a solution rather than a problem.
  - 1. The stereotype – “Churches can't help; they're all about rules and shame.”
  - 2. The hope – People will see GCC as a source of hope for those in dire straits.
- B. What does that take? We must see pain differently.
  - 1. In many professions experts look for the bad as opportunities for good.
  - 2. Christ-followers need to view people in pain the same way.
  - 3. We do that by seeking opportunities that naturally come in the hard knocks of life.
  - 4. The illustration of Johannes Brahms and Charles Haddon Spurgeon.
- C. What can you do? Think in terms of categories of pain as being opportunities for service.
  - 1. First category: Addiction to substances and damaging behaviors.
  - 2. Second category: People struggling with various kinds of poverty.
  - 3. Third category: People going through transitions.
  - 4. Fourth category: People struggling with relationships.

5. Fifth category: People who struggle with insignificance.
6. Sixth category: People who struggle with chronic illness.