

Serving Out of Pain

Today's Reading 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

I think Rick Warren was the first person I ever heard say, "God doesn't waste a hurt." I sometimes doubt the reality of that statement when I am going through something. But now, when I look at the Scriptures, and when I look at the painful situations of my past, I know that it is true. I see that those experiences have contributed to my spiritual development. And, like Paul, I have also seen my life experiences...even the negative ones...have positioned me to be sensitive to certain situations and certain types of people.

According to Paul's story in 2 Corinthians 1, he experienced hardship and suffering to an extent that was beyond his human ability to endure. In fact, he thought he was going to die. But the results of those desperate experiences are worth noting.

1. Paul learned to rely on God. Have you learned to turn to God in the midst of the experiences of your life?
2. God delivered him from peril and provided comfort in the face of sorrow. God can take a hopeless, dark night and transform it into a hope-filled, bright morning.

3. Paul saw his experience as something that equipped him to bless others. As the recipient of God's comfort, he had become a channel to pass it on to the Corinthians who needed it.

Bottom line, Paul's experiences had uniquely positioned him to have a ministry of encouragement to people in Corinth. As you consider both the positive and the negative experiences of your life, remember that God can leverage those experiences from your life in order that you might better serve others. Your highest highs, lowest lows, and everything between, your bad decisions, your good decisions, and "the jury is still out" decisions of your life allow you to be a voice that weeps with those who weep, rejoices with those who rejoice, or warns those about to make the same mistake you have made!

Use your experiences as a well-spring for effective ministry.

