

# *SUFFERING*

*by BRYAN ELLIOTT • from MORE THAN GOLD*

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There are many types of suffering. Paul tells the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 4:8, “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.” He acknowledges there are many types of suffering, not just one. Mental, emotional, physical, spiritual — we will experience them all. When we deny ourselves, we suffer. Take fasting, for example: We deny ourselves by willingly removing food, media, or anything else that our flesh depends on for comfort, pleasure, or distraction to help us focus on God as our comforter.

## *SUFFERING PREPARES US TO DO KINGDOM WORK*

As we experience different struggles, God gives us tools to minister to those who will benefit from our experiences. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, it states, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those

in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” When the source of our comfort is God, our suffering has a purpose. Similarly, 1 Peter 4:1 explains, “Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.” Without experiencing our own suffering, how could we comfort someone else in need? When we trust God, knowing He is producing a good work in us, we can suffer with the same attitude as Christ.

## ***GOD DOES NOT WANT US TO SUFFER ALONE***

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells the believers in Galatians 6:2 to “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” We are to bear the weight of suffering together as the church, not alone. This requires openness and vulnerability. When there is a need, it is the church’s job to meet it. As believers, if someone is struggling, we must surround our brothers and sisters to support and cover them. God is communal, and He designed the church and His people to reflect His relational nature.

## *SUFFERING INVITES US TO GLORY*

Suffering is temporary and calls us back to God. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 states, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” It is essential to view suffering from an eternal perspective. In this light, the rewards of suffering far outweigh the costs. As Christ’s suffering became our reward, our own suffering brings us closer to the glory of the cross. We are told to deny ourselves and bear our cross. The cross brings death to self. Death proceeds resurrection life through daily choices to follow Christ. These small ongoing daily changes lead to abundant life, increasing glory and Christlikeness.

## *ADDITIONAL RESOURCES*

This resource is from Bryan Elliott’s book, *More than Gold*. Bryan is the President and co-founder of M46 Ministries along with his daughter, Bryn Elliott. Their mission is to inspire, disciple, and bring hope to the nations.

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