

# Born for Adversity

“In this world you will have trouble.” John 16:33

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Proverbs 17:17

“There is no person on this earth without some trouble and affliction. Who is it then who is most at ease in suffering? He who is willing to suffer some affliction for God’s sake.” Thomas à Kempis

# **Two Primary Objectives:**

1. Take a cursory look at some of God's purposes for suffering.

Premise: Those born into Christ are born into adversity.

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2. Consider some possible responses of the pastoral care provider towards one who is experiencing affliction.

Premise: Those called into pastoral care are called to enter into the adversity of others and to journey with them through it.



# Two Theses

- **Theological Thesis:** God has created the human soul in such a manner that it reaches its full depth of maturity through suffering.



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- **Theological Thesis:** God has created the human soul in such a manner that it can only reach its full depth of maturity through suffering.
- **Applicational Thesis:** In the presence of one who is experiencing difficulties of any severity, a pastoral care provider's *primary* response is not one of providing a remedy for the problems at hand but rather being a journey mate through the personal hardship as God's purposes are explored.



# Definitions

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- θλιψις (thlipsis) A generic term for any difficulty. The desired English rendition is “affliction.”
- **Suffering, a working definition:** Any experience that causes internal or external duress physically, emotionally, spiritually and/or relationally.

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Context: End of first missionary trip full of persecution

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**Acts 14:22**

Paul's point is that an aspect of existing in the Kingdom of Christ is difficulties. This is the way God has designed it.

# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

A brief look at some of God's purposes for affliction in the lives of His servants.



# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

- 1. Affliction is an essential element in the maturation process**

**James 1, Romans 5 & 8**

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James 1:2-4

Count it all **joy**... **knowing that:**

**Various trials** → **Patience** → **maturity**

Romans 5:2-4

**Glory** in tribulation... **knowing that:**

**Tribulation** → **Endurance** → **Character** → **Hope**

# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

## **1. Affliction is an essential element in the maturation process**

- God's Purpose:**
- Our Perspective:**
- Our Response:**



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  - Our Response:**

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- 1. Affliction is an essential element in the maturation process**
  - **God's Purpose: Christ-like character**
  - **Our Perspective: "Knowing that" → a transcendent awareness of God's shaping work**
  - **Our Response: Joyful endurance**



“The Father is seeking persevering  
sons and daughters  
who take on the shape of Christ  
Through adversity with joy.”

# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

**2. Affliction tests and strengthens our faith that it may be pleasing to Christ**

**1 Peter 1:6-7**

# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

**3. Affliction has the potential to form in us a resolution toward obedience over pain avoidance**

**1 Peter 4:1-2**



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**3. Affliction has the potential to form in us a resolution toward obedience over pain avoidance 1 Peter 4:1-2**

**God's relentless desire is to shape Christ in us regardless of the temporal fallout and He is committed to building that same determination in us.**

# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

**4. God uses difficulties to discipline us for character deficiency**

**Hebrews 12:5-11**

**(God's pursuit of Christ in us)**

# **God's Purposes for Suffering in the believer's life**

**5. Affliction is our spiritual heritage and a key determinate of our eternal reward**

**Matthew 5:10-12**



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**5. Affliction is our spiritual heritage and a key determinate of our eternal reward. Matthew 5:10-12**

**“For to you it has been *granted* on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also *to suffer* for His sake” Philippians 1:29**

**From God's perspective, suffering is a gift.**

# **Summary: Those born into Christ are born into adversity**

## **Theological Premise Revisited:**

God has created the human soul in such a manner that it reaches its full depth of maturity through suffering. This is the path that He has marked out for all who desire to be transformed into the image of Christ. God is relentless in His pursuit of Christ being formed in us and uses all of life toward this end.

Premise 2: Those called into pastoral care are called to enter into the adversity of others and to journey with them through it.

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”

Proverbs 17:17



Premise 2: Those called into pastoral care are called to enter into the adversity of others and to journey with them through it.

**Applicational Thesis Revisited:** In the presence of one who is experiencing difficulties of any severity, a pastoral care provider's *primary* response is not one of facilitating a remedy for the problems at hand but rather being a journey mate through the personal hardship as God's purposes are explored.

# Four Postures

A Consideration of some possible responses of the pastoral care provider towards one who is experiencing affliction.

**Goal:** Increase our ability *to discern* God's transcendent work in others lives and increase our capacity *to be with* others in this process.

# Four Postures

## **1. Posture of God-awareness**



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Where is Christ already at work here?

How can I join in on God's sovereign purposes?

Am I willing to seek hard after God to hear from Him on behalf of the one who is struggling?

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## **2. Posture of Other-awareness**

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We must listen, and listen long, before we have gained a right to speak.

What is this person experiencing?

How is it impacting them?

How are they responding? Relating?

What am I hearing? Seeing?



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Epaphroditus’ example: He “came close to death” Philippians 2:25



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## **3. Posture of Giving of Ourselves**

Have I prepared my heart to be poured out for others?

Am I willing to repeatedly go into those difficult relationships and international regions to serve His servants?

Am I willing to lay my life down for others?

# Four Postures

## **4. Posture of Waiting**

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Am I willing to endure with the one who is being called by God to endure pain?

Have I fostered in my heart space and the capacity to linger in difficult pastoral scenarios?



# Born for Adversity

1. Missionaries, by calling, live under duress.
2. The pastoral care provider's primary responsibility is to join God in His work in and through missionaries' lives and ministry.
3. We serve God and missionaries well when we increase our understanding of God's use of affliction in the shaping of His servants and develop the capacity of our hearts to journey with others in those hard times.