



Counseling Discipleship Training

Finding God's Grace in Seasons of Suffering

Vicki and Brad Bigney | Oct. 2019 | ACBC Pre-Conf.

1. You'll Find Out How Much You Need God's Word

"It is not that we will learn from adversity something different than what we can learn from the Scriptures. Rather, adversity enhances the teaching of God's Word and makes it more profitable to us. In some instances, it clarifies our understanding or causes us to see truths we had passed over before." Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*, p. 178

2. You'll Wrestle with Who God Is

Is God good?
Does God love me?
Is God with me?

3. Your False Refuges Will Be Stripped Away

Suffering helps me to see what's going on in my heart as the heat pushes to the surface the idolatry of trusting or hoping in something other than God! And, often, I don't know that I've done this until it's taken or shaken.

"If God told me some time ago that He was about to make me as happy as I could be in this world, and then had told me that He should begin by crippling me in all my limbs, and removing me from all my usual sources of enjoyment, I should have thought it a very strange mode of accomplishing His purpose. And yet, how is His wisdom manifest even in this! For if you should see a man shut up in a closed room, idolizing a set of lamps and rejoicing in their light, and you wished to make him truly happy, you would begin by blowing out all his lamps; and then throw open the shutters to let in the light of heaven."
Quoted in John Piper, *A Godward Life*, p. 288-289



4. You'll Be Forced to Relinquish Control

Suffering and trials, more than anything else, kick the props out from under my self-sufficiency so that I am driven to cry out to God in prayer as if my life depends on it, because it does!

5. You'll Need to Believe that God is Working on a Bigger 'Story'

“You Americans always pray for God to remove the trial; we pray for God to strengthen our backs to bear it, for His glory.”

Reading books can stir me and inform me but suffering and trials are what God uses to really transform me and make me more like His Son.

I'm a much better husband / pastor/shepherd/ and leader when I lead with a limp or start from a posture of weakness rather than strength.

6. Your Marriage Will Be Tested and Stretched for God's Glory

Suffering will expose and assess your marriage in ways that surveys and personality tests just can't do. A season of suffering will expose any weakness or hair-line fracture in your relationship that, apart from God's grace, can become a 'Grand Canyon' of separation between you and your spouse.

7. You Will Be Tempted to Pull Away and Isolate

When we're overwhelmed with sorrow we can be tempted to crawl into a protective coffin of our own little world, pulling away from everyone, and shrinking our world down to the size of our trial.