

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Thief of the Heart - At the Movies

Proverbs 4:23

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

Last weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder delved into the movie *Black Widow*. In the beginning, we hear the mother tell her two young daughters not to fear pain. She tells them to use their *pain* to make themselves stronger (and more ruthless) and to “never let it steal your heart.”

But what does that mean? Pain, both physical and emotional, can be life-altering in ways no one wants. It can make us bitter and take away from the life God has for us.

Ben described what happens inside us when pain flattens us. He said one of the things pain destroys first is trust, and when pain begins to redefine your heart in a destructive way, you stop trusting others. You begin isolating yourself, always preparing to defend yourself against every real or imagined attack. And that’s when it happens—*hurt people hurt people*.

So how do we guard against that? How can we stop pain from destroying us and, instead, choose to take that pain and use it to make us stronger?

First, we need to recognize that some of the most important and meaningful lessons in our lives are born of pain. For me, the hardest lesson was watching my husband bravely live with and then succumb to the ravages of Alzheimer’s.

Somewhere along the way, I learned to ask God in every scary, painful, and even fatal circumstance, “Lord, what is it you want me to learn from this? How can I serve you better by having lived through this?”

Pain has taught me God is the potter, and as such, he has the undeniable right to choose to shape me for what **he** wants me to do to bring him glory. It’s never about what my self-absorbed sin nature wants to do.

After that revelation, my question then became, “Will I trust you Lord through the painful times?” Through his grace and leading, my answer has become, “I do.”

Zephaniah 3:16-17 tells Christ followers, “Don’t be afraid! For the Lord your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.”

Thankfully, God has taught me several things:

First, life is full of pain, but God never wastes a hurt. In Romans 8:28, the Apostle Paul proclaims that as adopted children of God, “we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”

Secondly, God allows **but does not cause** our pain. God uses it to purify our sinful nature. He uses it to make us stronger, more Christ-like vessels, knowing that because Jesus suffered and died in our place for our sins, God not only goes with us through the fire, Jesus carries us through it.

Then God uses us to bless, grow, and help others through their pain-filled hurts and disasters. With God at the center of our lives, we confirm to them how and why we will never allow pain to steal our hearts.

Questions:

How do you deal with pain? Do you let it weaken and/or destroy you? Or do you let God use it to strengthen you?

Do you know Jesus Christ saved you from the price demanded for your sins?

Next Steps:

Dig deep into what the Bible has to say about how immense God’s love is for you. He chose to sacrifice his only begotten son to save you from the punishment demanded as payment for making yourself the god of your life.

Ask questions. Talk with your DreamTeam Leader, Groups Leader, or a CedarCreek staff member. They would love to connect with you! Not sure how to connect? Check out CedarCreek.tv/connect.

Pray that you will turn your life, hurts, habits, and hangups over to the one true God who loves you.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord, for giving us a way back to you, our creator, father, and lord,

by providing for us what we could never provide—a perfect sinless sacrifice to pay the price for us—your son, Jesus Christ. Help us to live with and for you all the days of our lives and for all eternity. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

This post was written by Martha Smith, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

A Journey from Pain to Blessing - At the Movies

November 30, 2021

Last week, as I was reflecting on Thanksgiving and all I have to be grateful for, I was honestly overwhelmed by all the good in my life. God has given me more than I could ever deserve. Of those many blessings, the greatest blessing of all is the people I get to do life with—my friends, family, and coworkers.

The irony is that a lot of the blessings in my life right now were, at least in part, the result of pain. In the midst of dealing with the pain of a broken relationship, and the broken trust that resulted from it, I had a choice: I could either isolate myself to avoid getting hurt again, or I could lean on those around me as I healed.

Last year, I made a hard decision that upset someone I care for. I don't blame them for responding the way they did, but their response damaged my outlook on all of my relationships. If one friendship was that easy to break, could I trust my other friends to continue to care about me, even when I make mistakes?

I could have chosen to isolate myself—it's harder for someone to hurt me when there's distance between us. After all, if I can't trust others to care about me when I inevitably mess up (and since we're all imperfect, we're bound to make mistakes), then maybe it's safest to just keep them at a distance.

Fortunately, I knew better. I had already learned an important principle: **we all need honest friendships, authentic relationships, community, and connection—especially when we're hurting.** Instead of withdrawing, I leaned on my friends. It helped me to heal and learn from the situation. And as I realized my friends could be counted on and wanted to be there for me, those friendships became even stronger.

Proverbs 17:17

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.

Leaning on my friends not only strengthened my current friendships but also opened opportunities for me to form new life-giving friendships as I learned from my mistakes, grew, and honestly shared my experience.

We're not meant to do life alone—in good times or bad. We need Jesus first and foremost, but as a close second, we need others who can help us experience God's love in a tangible way. And then we need to help share that love with others.

When we allow others into our hurts, it can heal our hearts. It's like medicine. And the more we heal, the more we're available to help others do the same.

Questions:

How do you usually respond to hurt—do you withdraw or do you lean on those closest to you?

How would you want the people you love most to respond when they're hurt?

Who can you lean on the next time your heart is hurting?

Next Steps:

If you're not currently in a [Group](#), I can't encourage you enough to join one when the winter Group semester starts. One of the best ways to prepare for whatever life might throw at you is by building life-giving relationships right now.

If you're currently struggling, reach out to a trusted friend. Just as you want to support your friends, healthy friends will want to support you—give them the opportunity to do so.

If you're currently in a season of life where you're thriving, look for a friend you can share the love of Jesus with.

God's church thrives when we are there for each other.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you that I don't have to do life alone. You have designed us to help and encourage one another—we are strongest in community. Thank you for the life-giving relationships you have placed in my

life. Help me to build authentic community and connections. Help me to lean on others when I am in need and to support others when they are in need. May your will be done in us and through us. Amen.

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

A Portrait of Compassion - At the Movies

December 1, 2021

Confession time: Compassion doesn't come naturally to me.

Don't get me wrong, I absolutely care about people. However, knowing what to say or do when someone is hurting? That's not my forte. God has been growing me in this area, but it still often feels like everyone else has wiser, kinder words in those situations than I can scrounge up.

I don't think I'm alone in this. If we look around, one of the common responses to others' struggles is to tout affirmation and offer familiar, feel-good platitudes such as "it'll be okay" or "everything happens for a reason."

But what if that's not *true* compassion?

This weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder introduced us to the Greek word for compassion—*splagchnizomai*—which means "to be torn up in the gut." It means we ache because the other person hurts, that we step into their pain. We can't have compassion and stay comfortably situated in our day-to-day lives simply because we're unaffected.

The greatest example of this is Jesus, who loved us so deeply that he entered our messy, sinful world to heal our pain. He didn't shy away, leaving us to bear the consequences of our brokenness. Nor did he offer well-intentioned, cliché phrases. No, he was Immanuel—*God with us*—and he cared about our suffering so much that he died so we could be saved. The Apostle Paul puts it like this:

Romans 5:6-8

⁶ When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Jesus is a portrait of what true compassion looks like—it's stepping into others' pain to help, even though it costs us. Through the Holy Spirit, he empowers his

followers to imitate his example of loving and serving others. We don't have to rely on our own strength or insight to muster up compassion. Isn't that wonderful? And when we depend on his compassion, it also prevents us from adopting the other extreme of taking unhealthy ownership of others' issues.

Our reaction to others' pain shouldn't look like the world's. Demonstrating true compassion requires greater sacrifice than spouting off a trite saying, but it ultimately helps others far more. Because of Jesus' compassion for us, we can show compassion for others and step into their pain.

Even when it doesn't come naturally to us.

Questions:

Do you know anyone who is struggling? How can you show them compassion?

What are some practical ways you can step into others' pain?

Next Steps:

Identify your natural reaction when people are hurting. See how you can bring it closer to Jesus' example.

Ask God to help you grow your compassion and refine it to be more like the compassion he has for us.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the compassion you've shown me. You loved me dearly enough to send your Son into my brokenness to die so that I could be saved. Father, I sometimes struggle with showing compassion. Please, help me to love others the way you do, and give me wisdom so that I may best help those who are hurting. I can't do this on my own. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Sarah Pagel, a regular contributor and proofer of the LivingItOut.

Ready to Turn the Page? - At the Movies

December 2, 2021

I've had many conversations with teenagers and young adults about the difficulties they experienced growing up. I relate to them because I understand that their pain came at a time when they were defenseless. Not everyone is blessed enough to have caring people to pull them out of the darkness early in life. "[I remember when I was afraid. Oh, the hand I felt lead the way. For the first time in my life, I felt safe. Now that I'm older, would you lead me again?](#)" Thankfully, I was blessed to have people whose compassion introduced me to Jesus.

In one of the clips played this weekend, the mother, Melina, tells Natasha the story of the mouse born in the cage. Her story is heartbreaking. When you live in the darkness long enough, you start to believe that's all there is for your life. Natasha responds with, "But you're not a mouse, Melina. You were just born in a cage, but that's not your fault."

Galatians 4:19

Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I'm going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.

In a conversation I had a few weeks ago, I mentioned that what happened to my friend in their childhood wasn't their fault, and it wasn't fair. It is now their choice to keep their story on the same page or to move forward believing God has something greater for them.

There is an answer to everyone's hurt. Choosing to find the light in your future can help you to deal with your past.

John 12:46

"I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark."

Questions:

How do you show compassion to others? Did you have people in your life who showed compassion to you?

Next Steps:

Don't ignore hurting people. Pray for them, offer them guidance, and listen to their story. Invite them to a life-changing church. If you're one of those hurt people, find a community of Christ followers. Take GrowthTrack to help lead you to your purpose.

Prayer:

Dear God, I am reminded of how blessed I am to be part of a fantastic story each day. Thank you for showing me that I was never forsaken. Allow me to do my best to help those who are lost and hurting to find their way back to you. Amen.

This post was written by Jaron Camp a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

A Different Point of View – At the Movies

December 3, 2021

One of the pivotal scenes from last weekend's featured movie, *Black Widow*, took place around the dinner table. After years apart, the "family" was back together, and their conversation was eye opening.

The last time this family had seen each other, the evil Drakov had separated them against their will. This abrupt end to the world they knew caused pain and heartache for each one of the characters. In the years between their family being torn apart and this reunion, they had each tried to understand why things had happened the way they did by forming a story from their own point of view. As they tried to make sense of it all, blame became a central theme in each character's mind.

In Pastor Ben's talk, he pointed out that it was clear from their conversation that each of their perceived views of the past had defined and shaped the state of their heart and their views of each other in the present. As I thought about this point from Ben, it reminded me of the bottom line from a past series.

In week 1 of our series, [*How to Not Hate a Jerkface*](#), Ben taught us that **while our perspective might be right, it is not always complete.**

In this case, each character had a perspective of what had happened years ago and a perspective of what had happened in the years between, but they only had *their own* perspective. Once they settled down and took the time to talk to each other, it became clear that each of them held a perspective that wasn't complete. As they listened to each other's stories and connected with each other's hearts, they began to find understanding and healing.

What a great lesson for us to learn from. When we are hurt by someone, or when a relationship we value is broken, there may be more to the story than we see. But if we humble ourselves, if we are patient and compassionately listen to one another, we may gain a more complete perspective. This helps us to see what is real, what is not, and what really matters—and allows us to move toward forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:2

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

Questions:

Can you remember a time when you thought your perspective was right and complete but later discovered you were missing something?

What tension point(s) in your life do you need to spend time on this week in order to get a better perspective?

Next Steps:

Listen to Ben's talk on perspective from the *How to Not Hate a Jerkface* series.

Prayer:

Dear God, I recognize that my perspective isn't always complete. Forgive me for the times that I place blame or try to hurt others based on my incomplete view of the circumstances around me. Help me to be patient, open to learning, and forgiving in all of my relationships. Help me to love others the way you love me. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Ben Bockert, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.