



BETTER THAN BEFORE

GROWING INTO
GOD'S BEST FOR YOUR LIFE

WEEK 3

PAIN PRODUCES GROWTH

DAY 1 - THE PAIN FROM THE PRESSURE OF TRIALS

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." —James 1:2 (ESV)

When lifting weights at the gym, it's the resistance of the weights that builds your muscles. When life resists you, every part of your faith gets tested. The job feels unstable, a relationship grows heavy, or a health report doesn't bring good news. And your heart whispers, "God, where are you in this?"

Here's the truth: pressure doesn't mean God has abandoned you. It means He is developing you. James says to count it all joy. Not to feel joy in the moment—because sometimes there's none—but to choose a perspective that sees God at work even in trials. This isn't pretending; it's trusting.

Pressure reveals what's inside. Just as squeezing a grape produces juice, being squeezed spiritually allows Christ to emerge in your life. God uses tight, painful moments to show whether your confidence is in your circumstances or in His strength.

Think of a seed: it grows because the soil presses against it. It breaks open and reaches upward, producing life in the process. Your discomfort may be the very soil of your destiny.

"We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." —Romans 5:3-4 (ESV)

Joy under pressure doesn't mean ignoring pain. It means trusting God is working behind the scenes. Even in struggle, your faith is strengthened, your character refined, and your witness prepared to bless others.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

In what area of your life are you feeling the most pressure right now?

How might God be using this specific pressure to grow your faith, character, or perseverance?

DAY 2 - THE PAIN FROM TESTING OF YOUR FAITH

“For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” — James 1:3 (ESV)

Testing seasons are not punishment—they are preparation. Every challenge invites you to learn that God can be trusted even when life feels confusing. Engineers test a bridge under heavy stress so it won't fail when it matters most. In the same way, God uses tests to strengthen your faith before greater weight is placed on it.

Faith isn't proven on the mountaintop; it's proven in the valley. When you face the heat of testing, your faith becomes refined, like gold purified by fire (1 Peter 1:7). The fire removes impurities such as fear, pride, and self-reliance, so that what remains is steadfast trust.

Testing exposes shallow faith. It asks: Do you follow God for what He gives or for who He is? Some of the wisest saints didn't gain maturity in comfort; they grew through endurance and reliance on God.

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life.” —James 1:12 (ESV)

Faith that's never tested can't be trusted. Every act of worship in tears, forgiveness in difficulty, and belief when everything urges you to quit, strengthens your heart. The test isn't to break you, it's to build you.

When the trial passes, you can look back and see that God was good in the fire, faithful in the storm, and present in the silence.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What test are you currently facing that challenges your trust in God?

How can you practice patience and perseverance in that test instead of trying to escape it?

DAY 3 - THE PAIN FROM UNANSWERED PRAYER

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” — 2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)

A young softball player grew discontent after sitting on the bench for a couple of seasons until her team played in the championship game. Finally, toward the end of the game, her coach called her name to go pitch the final inning. The coach encouraged the player, “All of those hours of waiting have prepared you for this moment.” Waiting on God can feel lonely. You pray, plead, and pour out your heart—and it seems like Heaven is silent. You wonder, “Does God even hear me?” Unanswered prayer can cause pain and confusion for us.

Paul knew this tension well as he cried out to God three times to remove his “thorn in the flesh,” but God replied, “My grace is sufficient.” In other words, “No, I won’t take it away, but I will give you Myself.”

Unanswered prayer doesn’t mean your prayers are forgotten. God shapes your faith through waiting. The waiting room is where trust takes root in you. Prayer isn’t just about changing circumstances; it’s about allowing God to change you.

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” —Psalm 27:14 (ESV)

Sometimes God says “not yet” or “not this way.” But God’s timing is always perfect. Over time, the unanswered prayer you once resented will reveal itself as wisdom, mercy, and blessing.

Keep praying, keep trusting. His grace is at work even when His plan is invisible. What seems like denial may actually be divine timing.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Is there an area where you’ve stopped praying because you feel unheard?

How could you reframe this waiting period as part of God’s training for deeper trust?

DAY 4 - THE PAIN FROM BEING STILL

“Be still, and know that I am God.” —Psalm 46:10 (ESV)

A patient once told me that after major shoulder surgery, being confined to bed for three days was harder than enduring the pain itself. None of us likes losing control. We want things to happen according to our plan, our timeline, and with our desired results. Yet sometimes life spins beyond our grasp, and we’re left with the only option of being still and surrendering to God.

When everything is predictable, we rely on ourselves. When finances collapse, doors close, or people disappoint us, that’s when God invites us to, “Let go and let Me take control.” Losing control isn’t failure; it’s the moment grace can take over.

Control is really just an illusion. Job 12:10 says that every breath is a gift. Surrender is wisdom, not weakness. You’re not giving up, you’re giving in to the stronger hands of a faithful Father who can carry what you cannot.

“We do not lose heart... For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.” —2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (ESV)

Sometimes God shakes comfort so that the eternal cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:27). The discomfort of losing control may be the Spirit freeing you from self-dependence and creating space for peace that no plan could produce.

Be still. Breathe. Rest in the truth: He is on the throne, still good, still working, even when your hands are empty.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What situation are you gripping tightly right now?

What would trusting God’s control more fully look like in that part of your life?

DAY 5 - PAIN CAN REVEAL PURPOSE

“And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” —James 1:4 (ESV)

Some of the best coaches were good players because they can identify with the struggles and pressures their players face. Pain is a powerful teacher. It pushes us beyond comfort into growth. When James speaks of being “perfect and complete,” he means maturity of character, not flawless performance. God uses pain to shape a faith that cannot be shaken.

The Lord never promised a life without suffering, but He promised a purposeful one. Every disappointment, closed door, and heartbreak cultivates Christlike maturity. Even Jesus *“learned obedience through what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8)*.

Your trial is not wasted. Oftentimes, trials push you to your purpose. That season that brought tears may be the ground where God plants your future. The hurt that broke you may also be what He uses to build you up. Through the pain in your life, His glory shines through your purpose.

“After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace... will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.” —1 Peter 5:10 (ESV)

Be steadfast, no matter what you are going through or facing. The pain you endure is shaping depth, compassion, and pushing you to your purpose. Over time, you’ll see how God transforms wounds into wisdom and tears into testimony.

Faith grows best in challenge. Let pain push you toward purpose; let suffering strengthen your worship.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

How has God used past pain to produce something good in you?

What might He be growing in you right now through your present struggle?