



FROM PAIN TO PURPOSE

SPECIAL WOMEN'S GROUP

SATURDAYS @ 10:00 AM

IN - PERSON

Study Workbook

From Pain To Purpose

Special Women's Group

STUDY WORKBOOK

Greater Life Church San Diego, CA
Pastor Nate Stewart – Lead Servant

1012 Derby Street
San Diego, CA 92114



GreaterLife

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Week 1

The Elephant In The Room I've Been Traumatized

Introduction:

Are you amazed at the testimonies of some people when they tell you the way they used to be. I've looked at them and thought, there is no way they used to be that way. Jesus Christ has so radically changed them.

Isaiah 61:3-4 promises that God *"will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory. They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities destroyed long ago"* (NLT).

For the person who has made a mess of his or her life—a pile of ashes, so to speak—God says, "I will bring beauty." For those who mourn because of the wrongs they have done and the sins they have committed, God says, "I will bring joy out of it."

Only God can take a tangled mess of a life, turn it around, and transform it in such a way that you wouldn't even know that individual used to be a very different person. Not only that, but such a transformation gives hope to others who may still despair over the condition of their lives.

If you come to Christ and say, "Lord, here I am. Forgive me of my sin," He can transform you and change you. He can take your mistakes and your sins, turn them around, and even use them for His glory. When you commit your life to Christ, putting the broken, stained, twisted pieces into His hand, He will transform it into a thing of beauty.

Understanding Trauma:

Trauma is defined as an emotional response to an overwhelming and physically or emotionally threatening event. Trauma can result from adverse life events in childhood or adulthood, abuse, relationship_violence, assault, loss, and more.

Making sense of a traumatic incident and its aftermath is hard. Healing may feel impossible. But trauma informed care and effective professional and spiritual support options can help begin the process of mending emotionally and physically after a PAINFUL season.

The Trauma Response

Rates of trauma are relatively high, meaning many of us have been exposed to harmful or dangerous situations.

A review of trauma literature noted approximately 60% of men and 51% of women reported experiencing a traumatic event in their lifetime. What's more, many adults will experience multiple traumatic events.

Reactions to trauma can be acute or long-term. Traumatic events can lead to disturbances or decline in emotional, physical, and interpersonal well-being. In some instances, reactions to trauma can lead to a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Examples of traumatic responses may include:

- Intrusive or repetitive memories or distressing thoughts
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Memory issues
- Persistent distressing emotions, including fear, shame, rage, guilt, or shame
- Anxiety or depression
- Feeling on edge or easily startled
- Irritability
- Isolation or withdrawal from support
- Dissociation, detachment, or depersonalization
- Avoidance of thoughts or triggers related to the event

What Is Considered Traumatic?

An event or situation may be considered traumatic when it causes psychological and emotional distress that hinders your daily functioning.

Examples of Traumatic Events:

Situations and events that may be traumatic include, but are not limited to:

- Sudden death or loss of a loved one
- Divorce or end of a significant relationship
- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Accidents
- Assault or other violence
- Combat or exposure to elements of war
- Surviving a natural disaster
- Chronic or extreme stress

Reflection Questions:

1. With everything going on in your life right now, how do you REALLY feel?
2. How have you coped and dealt with the PAIN in your life?
3. What do you want MOST for your life?
4. What gives you HOPE?
5. Therapy is OK. Have you sought professional help?

Week 2

How To Let Go Of What's Weighing You Down

Psalm 145

We all carry burdens. We carry them to work, to the grocery store, to school, and to bed at night. It's hard to get out from under them. Sometimes, our burdens are a result of past mistakes. Other times, they are out of our control. Things like financial debt, relational strife, unexpected illness, and hurt from our past weigh us down.

In most cases, we can't sweep our burdens under the rug. We might try to forget about them for a while, but they're always there — lingering in the back of our minds preventing us from fully enjoying the moment.

What if you didn't have to carry these burdens anymore? What if someone else wanted to carry them for you?

David points to God as our great burden bearer in **Psalm 145**. A burden bearer understands and carries our troubles and grievances for us. This doesn't mean God will instantaneously change our circumstances, but that He is with us in our burdens. He *"...upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down"* (**Psalm 145:14**).

God is not only willing to bear our burdens, He is able to. David reminds us that:

- God is gracious, compassionate and loving (**Psalm 145:8-9**).
- God provides for all of our daily needs (**Psalm 145:15-16**).
- God is near to those who call on him (**Psalm 145:18-20**).

The way to hand off our heavy burden is to humbly admit, "God, I'm in over my head. I need your help." We can trust that He is faithful and will come to our aid.

We are mere humans, but He is God whose "greatness is unfathomable" (**Psalm 145:3**). He is not standing on the sidelines when life gets tough. When you are ready to collapse, call out to God. He is ready to help.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is one burden you are currently carrying?
2. Have you asked God for help carrying that burden?
3. What's one thing you can do today to rely on God's strength rather than your own?

Week 3

Where Do You Turn When Everything Goes Wrong?

Psalm 146

If you found out your company was closing today, what's the first thing you would do? You might call contacts in your industry, brush up your resume, or start browsing job sites.

If you found out a loved one had cancer, where would you go for help? If we're honest, for most of us, the first response to illness is to Google the diagnosis.

When times are desperate, our first response is often to turn to others for help. People are great, but we are only human. However, there is ONE greater than any human being on earth.

"Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save" (Psalm 146:3). Humans will always have a potential to fail, even when we have the best intentions. God, on the other hand, never fails.

God is our help and He is our hope. He is our healer. He is our provider. He is our King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is our strength. And through it all, *"The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations" (Psalm 146:10).*

Often when things go wrong, we ask God "Why?" Then, we turn to everyone else for advice on what to do. There's nothing wrong with asking God why or seeking wise counsel. But if we're putting all our hope in Internet experts or godly friends, our trust is misplaced.

God is not surprised by our problems or worried about how it will all turn out. He brings order to the world and helps those who call out to Him (**Psalm 146:6-9**). If we'll reach out to God in tough times, He can bring us more peace and direction in 10 minutes of prayer than we can find in 10 hours of searching the Internet or talking to others.

The question we have to ask is: Where will we put our trust?

Reflection Questions:

1. Where do you turn first when you get bad news?
2. Have you ever relied on someone and that person failed you? Have you ever felt like God failed you?
3. Is there a situation you've been seeking others' advice on that you've yet to talk to God about? Take time today to ask how He would have you approach the problem.

Week 4

How To Be Ready For Every Season Of Life

Psalm 1

When we go through rough times in our lives, we often seek advice from friends, family, books, a counselor, or even the media. Sometimes, that advice can go a long way. Other times, it seems to make sense, but we're left feeling empty.

We've all been there. Even advice that works for a while cannot sustain us for the long haul.

Whether you are in a good season or going through hard times, it is important to build your life's foundation on something that lasts. How else will we overcome hardships when they come?

As Christians, we still face hard times. This can be a scary reality to face. However, **Psalm 1** says we can flourish and not wither. When we build our foundation on God's truth, by reading the Bible and getting to know our heavenly Father, we become like a tree planted by the water. Our roots will be so deep and healthy that we'll produce fruit during the good times and be sustained through the bad times—just like a strong tree stands through the winter (**Psalm 1:3**).

God promises to keep watch over and protect those who hold His truth close to their hearts (**Psalm 1:6**). He sustains us through the tough times. Anything else we build our lives on will not hold in life's storms, and we'll be *"like chaff that the wind blows away"* (**Psalm 1:4**).

So, consider where your foundation lies. Are you seeking answers from friends, TV, the Internet? Or, are you standing firm on the Word of God—the truth that gives us freedom and strength to stand through any storm we face?

Week 5

You Don't Have To Fight Your Battles Alone

Psalm 18

You don't have to go to war to feel like you're stuck in a never-ending battle. Maybe you're fighting for hours at work while the bills keep piling up. Maybe you're fighting for a marriage that feels like it's falling apart. Or maybe you're fighting a disease that seems impossible to overcome.

Often life's battles seem insurmountable, and we don't feel like we have the strength to make it through. David, the writer of **Psalm 18**, knows that feeling well.

Before David wrote **Psalm 18**, he was fighting for his life. King Saul had set out to kill him, and he appeared to have everything on his side — weapons, warriors, and wealth were at his fingertips. But David had God on his side, and he knew God's power was more than enough.

In **Psalm 18:2-3**, David writes, *"The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies."*

God did all of the work necessary to defeat Saul. David's responsibility was to listen to God, obey His commands, and trust God to take care of the rest (**Psalm 18:20-30**).

The same God who fought for David is fighting for us today. When we call upon the Lord in our distress, He hears us and moves on our behalf (**Psalm 18:6**). In our eagerness to get past the pain, we can be quick to act and slow to listen. But experiencing God's strength happens as we learn to be more like David — quick to listen and slow to take matters into our own hands.

Reflection Questions:

1. What battles are you fighting on your own that you need to hand over to God?
2. Is there any area of your life where you're asking for God's strength but still fighting for yourself?
3. What do you need to start doing or stop doing this week to trust God with the battles you're facing?

Week 6

What To Do When Life Spirals Out Of Control

Psalm 22

Sometimes life spirals out of control, and no one seems to be there to help. When our earthly support system disappears, it can often feel like God has abandoned us, too. Being in the midst of a storm is hard, and feeling alone in that storm is even harder.

In **Psalm 22**, David voices his frustrations about not feeling God in a moment of need. He also acknowledges that even though he feels abandoned, he isn't, because God is still God and God is still good.

In moments of fear, panic, or frustration, we too can cling to the truth the Bible gives us about who God is, and how much He loves us. The same promises David clings to in his suffering can help us hold tightly to God's character even when we can't see or feel it:

1. God does not abandon us (**Psalm 22:24**).
2. God will always help us (**Psalm 22:19, Psalm 22:26**).
3. We can trust God to be with us through whatever we are up against (**Psalm 22:3-5**).
4. With God, there is not a single person or circumstance that can permanently defeat us (**Psalm 22:27-28**).

When life throws a curveball, we can cling to these truths and know that everything will be OK — not because of what we do, but because of who God is.

A Prayer for Beauty from Ashes - Weekly Declaration

Dear God,

Sometimes the way has seemed too dark. Sometimes we feel like our lives have been marked by such grief and pain, we don't see how our circumstance can ever change. But in the midst of our weakness, we ask that you would be strong on our behalf. Lord, rise up within us, let your Spirit shine out of every broken place we've walked through. Allow your power to be manifest through our own weakness, so that others will recognize it is You who is at work on our behalf. We ask that you would trade the ashes of our lives for the beauty of your Presence. Trade our mourning and grief for the oil of joy and gladness from your Spirit. Trade our despair for hope and praise. We choose to give you thanks today and believe that this season of darkness will fade away. Thank you that you are with us in whatever we face, and that you are greater than this trial. We know and recognize that you are Sovereign, we thank you for the victory that is ours because of Christ Jesus, and we are confident that you have good still in store for our future. We thank you that you are at work right now, trading our ashes for greater beauty. We praise you, for you make all things new.