

Today's Message: "Open Letter: Hope in Suffering"

When we are compelled to slow down and honestly examine our lives, we are inevitably confronted with the reality of the difficulty of life. Even though we are blessed to live in the most prosperous and abundant nation in the world, life will always include struggle, disappointment, sorrow and even suffering.

My open letter is what I have been learning about the purpose of God in difficult times. More than a philosophical defense, I would suggest a posture that acknowledges the reality of suffering but provides the hope to emerge refined and stronger because of it.
- Pastor Jay

Although I could have selected numerous biblical characters to illustrate this reality, I was lead to Abraham, in the book of Genesis, for two reasons.

1. Abraham is the first biblical character to reveal the sovereignty of God in difficult circumstances.
2. He is called "our faith father."
For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father—that's reading the story backward. He is our faith father. ... Abraham was first named "father" and then became a father because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing. When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway....
Romans 4:16b & 18a (MSG)

- I. The Present Land
 - A. For Abram, this was in Haran, which was with his people, his father's household and an abundance of material things.
 - B. For us, this may be anywhere on the spectrum from generally "good" to very difficult or even oppressive in circumstances.
- II. The Land Between
So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. (Genesis 12:4-5, NIV)

"Open Letter: Part 3"

Pastor Jay Passavant

November 21 & 22, 2015

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The Land Between is where life is not as predictable and secure as it once was, but where the future is still in question.

- A. For Abram, his Land Between required a profound level of trust in what God had spoken to him because circumstances over the course of many years seemed to contradict what God had said.
- B. For us, the Land Between is usually characterized by seasons; of difficulty, trials, sorrow and even suffering.
There is no shortage of men and women who spent long periods of time between where they “were” and where God had “promised” they would be.
 - The story of Joseph, Moses, Esther, King David, the early disciples, the apostle Paul and The Lord Jesus (See Matthew 27:46b “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)

The Land Between may be the most difficult time in our life, but it may provide the most fertile soil for radical and transformational growth.

III. The Promised Land

- A. The call of God to Abraham:
The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12: 1-3, NIV)

For Abram (his pre-covenant name) the Promised Land had two essential components:

- People
- Place

- B. Can you describe what some of the components of your “preferred future” or your “Promised Land” might be?

Concluding Thoughts: Rather than seeing the Land Between as simply a time of suffering, pray for the grace to begin to see it as the most dynamic season of your spiritual growth. Call to mind every day that you are in the Land Between **that God is with you.**

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18, NIV)

Fill your time as you journey in the Land Between with thanksgiving and praise, not complaining and compromise.

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