

TWR WOMEN OF HOPE

DEVOTIONAL OF THE MONTH

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Enabled to Endure

Written by Harmony Buffington

I recently had the chance to teach a close friend how to swim for the first time. She understood the motions of kicking her feet and moving her arms, but as we began to talk, she explained that it was always the idea of putting her head underwater that made it difficult for her to embrace swimming. If I am being totally honest, I get it! We aren't fish. We weren't designed with gills that let us live and thrive underwater without majorly risking our lives. Pushing through the initial fear of being underwater and coming to the realization that it won't consume you can be a real feat. It made me think, learning to endure suffering is a lot like learning how to swim.

I believe we all can agree that this world is broken. It seems like every day we are hearing news of devastating hurt and suffering taking place all around the world. Not to mention the incredibly personal challenges and heartbreaks that each of us carry within our own unique stories and life



"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

~ Ezekiel 36:26

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experiences. If we spend too much time meditating on these realities, it can overwhelm us in a heartbeat, but be encouraged because we were never meant to carry these burdens on our own. In fact, it wasn't even supposed to be this way.

When God first created humanity in the garden of Eden, everything was perfect! There was no suffering, no abuse, no heartbreak. Just work, worship, and communion with an ever-present God. This my dear friend, is what we were made for. Unfortunately, by Genesis chapter 3, sin entered the scene and with it came all the heinous ways we see it manifest in our world today. Be it in the things done against us or even the things done by us, wherever there is sin, there is guaranteed to be suffering. Seeing as sin and suffering are an inevitable part of the human experience post-Eden, the question then becomes not "how do we avoid suffering?" but "how do we endure in the midst of it?"

Later in Genesis we are introduced to a young boy named Joseph. Joseph's story is one full of suffering and misfortune, but throughout every season of his life we see how he glorified God despite his suffering. Joseph was a dreamer. One night God gave him a dream in which he saw his older brothers bowing to him. When he shared this dream with his brothers, they were furious. So they sold him into slavery and faked his death. Joseph worked diligently for his master Potiphar until he was made second in command. Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife took a special interest in Joseph. When he denied her advances, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of attempting to rape her, and he was thrown in prison.

Even as a prisoner, Joseph continued to work hard. He proved himself a trustworthy man and as a result, he was put in charge of all the other inmates. Throughout all his difficulties the dreamer in him was still preserved.

One day, two inmates had dreams and they wanted to know what they meant. Joseph interpreted the dreams to mean that one of the men would be hung and the other would return to his job as Pharaoh's cupbearer. All Joseph requested in return for his interpretation was that the cupbearer put in a good



word with Pharaoh in hopes that he too could be set free from prison.

All that Joseph shared came to pass, but the cupbearer forgot about Joseph. That is until one day when Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret. The cupbearer remembered Joseph and brought him before Pharaoh to interpret the dream. That interpretation would ultimately bring hope to all of Egypt amidst a famine, reunite Joseph with his brothers, and allow him to see the fulfillment of the dream in which his brothers bow before him.

For many years, Joseph's life was one full of suffering. He had every right to be angry with his brothers, however, his heart was not filled with vengeance or anger, instead he was filled with an eternal perspective.

In Genesis 50:20 Joseph tells his brothers "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people."

When we look beyond our offenders and into the heart of our ever-present God, communion is restored, and we get to experience a little piece of Eden. It is important to remember that in the midst of our suffering, there is a God who wants to carry our burdens. When we allow him to do just that, he will enable us to endure all of life's struggles with the grace, peace, and strength that comes from being in His presence.