

God, Why Are You Making Me Suffer?

A Biblical Understanding Of Pain And Suffering.

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my close friends, who remained by my side, when I was in deep pain and suffering.

Fr. Boniface Kioko, my able spiritual director, who never gets tired of listening to my endless cries of desperation.

Fr. Boniface Kimondolo, my iconic Parish priest at Nkoroi Catholic Church, who always works day and night, to pull me out of the bottomless pit where life has a tendency of throwing me.

Ann Katiku, I can write an encyclopedia about this girl, she is the reason why I am strong, she has been through the worst suffering in this world, and I have not experienced half her pain, but she still stands strong and takes care of me like I am the only hope she has in life. You are a blessing to me and I am, because you are.

Miss Jacinta Mutisya, that one close of mine who is exactly the opposite of me, but gives me the hope that God's timing is the best.

Ann Mbaki this girl...she is a partner in crime. Holy crime I guess, because her spirit gets me energized.

Mr. Josephat Mwanzia, Jacinta's husband, the man who never gets tired of hosting me in his house whenever I need to experience a "family "environment. God bless you.

Introduction

God, why are you making me suffer? If you are asking God this question, then, you are in the right place to get the answer, and also, you are not alone. So many other people have asked the same question, in fact, Jesus on the cross asked a similar question, as is written in *Matthew 27:46* “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” This means, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” It was not easy for Jesus to let out that cry of despair, He was on the verge of giving up, and His body could no longer take the pain. He was taken to Pilate, who found nothing to charge Him with. When given the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, who was a convicted murderer, the people opted for the release of the murderer and insisted on Jesus' death.

Jesus was condemned to death, scourged, crowned with thorns, carried the cross, was mocked by a battalion of soldiers, then crucified. On the cross, He was mocked for not being able to save Himself. Everybody else, apart from His mother and one disciple, abandoned Him to suffer and die alone. All who dined and wined with Him were nowhere to be seen at that moment of agony. The cup was too bitter for Him to drink, the pain unbearable and in despair, He cried to God. After dying on the cross, it was not His end, the end was the victorious resurrection and His reign as the king of the universe. This is a clear indication that after bravely going through pain and suffering, there is always a victorious ending.

Sometimes, in life, you have to go through the worst, so that you can see the best, and good things fall apart, so that

better things can come together. As you go through pains like sickness, loss, failure, heartache, tragedy, disappointment, death and many others that we know too well, it can be easy to ask the question, *why is God making me suffer?* Even those of us who have experienced the goodness of God in many ways sometimes wonder, during suffering, why He seems to have forgotten you.

This book comes to remind you that you are not the first person to suffer, you are not the only one suffering, now and after the storm, you shall not be a victim, but a warrior and victor. It reminds you that no matter what you go through, there is light at the end of the tunnel and the darkness of the night never stops the sun from rising. It happens many times that in life, where you suffer the most, is where you eventually shine the most and the days that break you, are also the days that make you. Believe that the depth of your pain is directly proportional to your greatness.

The message herein is a constant reminder of the words of Isaiah 59:1 “Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.” God hears and sees everybody’s situation and at the right time, He shall bring you out of your pain and make everything beautiful. In life, you know that suffering doesn’t happen in vain, but it happens to fulfill a variety of functions in the life and personality of a human being; it can cause a personality degradation or can further a personality development. It motivates you to change your behavior, when possible, in ways that enhance your chances of growth.

It's clear that some people bring suffering upon themselves by the choices they make. It's also obvious that some are unsuspecting victims of others' bad decisions or of seemingly random events of an unfair and unjust society.

It's fundamental, to understand that God doesn't promise to prevent all loss, heartache, or stress in your life. In fact, He acknowledges that at times we will suffer, but He promises the cross. When you feel like God is distant, indifferent, or uncaring toward you in your suffering, the cross stands as compelling evidence that He's not, because you get victory after enduring the cross to the end, you know that He rose from the dead. Just as you share in that cross, you also share in the glory that comes after death.

The cross is God's ultimate response to the brokenness of humanity and that includes your pain and suffering. The way to the throne is through the cross, there is no victory without the cross, God can only change you from the victim to a victor only if you are faithfully carrying the cross, through enduring all the pain and suffering that comes your way. He walks through every season of life with you, seeing what exhaustion and frustration life can bring, and reminding you that He is so compassionate towards you that He's already responded.

There comes a point in life where the only means of talking is through tears. It is at this point that you realize that your tears attract God's mercy. You need to pass through intense pain and suffering so that you can truly experience God's mercy. Every time you go through intense pain, you are reminded that the anointing of God settles on scars and not on flesh. God is talking to you in that difficult situation that you

are facing and is telling you to hold on because he wants to be glorified in it. Things may not have gone well with you in the past, but you have to always remember that there is a future that needs to be lived with positivity, stay strong, believe in yourself, and always hope that better days are coming, knowing that even in the midst of calamities there always appears an oasis of hope.

Suffering fulfills a variety of functions in the life and personality of a human being; it can cause a personality degradation or can further a personality development, according to the perspective in which it is viewed and perceived. Suffering is deeply personal, and people experience it in many different ways, just as each person is unique in their own way, then each person has a unique way of experiencing pain, suffering, and healing from both. Suffering also motivates us to change our behavior, when possible, as we will be seeing in chapter II of this book.

From the above introduction, it is clear that as long as you are alive in this world, you shall surely go through pain and suffering at some point, but Jesus promised that you shall overcome and you should remain with that hope, knowing too well that you will only be bent and not broken; “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” John 16:33. You will at one point in life have to overcome by healing. The fact remains that the painful wounds you have may not have been your responsibility, but healing is for sure your sole responsibility.

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Chapter I

Understanding Suffering

All through this book, we are going to talk about pain and suffering and where God is found in the midst of our agony. It is therefore important that you understand the concept of the two so that you don't miss a point. From the Oxford Dictionary, pain means a highly unpleasant physical sensation caused by illness or injury, it also means trouble. Suffering means the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship. It can also be used to mean discomfort, anguish, dissatisfaction, failure, conflict, and hurt. I realized that I could not talk about suffering alone without talking about pain which is the main cause of the suffering.

From these definitions, you can get to see that pain is the feeling. Suffering is the effect of the feeling. If one can endure pain, one can live without suffering. If you are able to deal with pain then you will never need to talk about suffering. Ideally, you should neither push suffering away nor indulge in it, but

simply understand suffering for what it is: an ever-changing, impermanent condition that arises as a result of dealing with pain.

Pain can be emotional or physical. Emotional pain arises from heartbreak, rejection, abuse, loss, or grief. Physical pain stems from injury or illness. Suffering can also be physical or emotional. For example, if someone chooses to beat you, you suffer the consequences of their actions in the form physical pain, if the person abuses you verbally, you suffer emotionally.

Once pain is intense in anybody's life, there is likelihood of severe suffering which uses distress. At this point, there don't seem to be adequate words or explanations to express oneself, and one communicates more through tears. All that the person does at this point is lament and ask: "Why? Why me? Why not me? Why now? Why this? What's next? Where is God?" Soon we are going to see the name of this stage of asking questions and how to get over it.

It is good to understand that suffering is not meant to kill you, as some of you may think and even end up taking their lives, because of a problem they are going through that isn't solved. We have heard endless cases of suicide, mostly from people who could not bear their suffering. Suffering plays an important part in your growth and development. Suffering makes you more resilient and better at enduring hardships. Just as a muscle, in order to build up, must endure some pain, so your emotions must endure pain in order to strengthen and make a better you. Suffering is inevitable. It's part of the human condition, and it's just part of being alive. Sometimes, bad things happen to you, and you suffer. Even now, some of you

may be in the hospital because of an illness. Others may be heartbroken because of the end of a loving relationship or death of a loved one, others may be frustrated because they are not able to fulfill their goals. you all have your struggles, pains, and sufferings.

Some of the pains and sufferings are beyond your control like natural calamities: pandemics, natural disasters, economic chaos, rioting, crime, corruption, and such. The COVID19 pandemic is still fresh in all of us and it affected everybody including the unborn of that time. Years after that and we are still dealing with the effects of the pain and suffering that it left behind.

There's so much of it around us that at times we try to pretend that all is ok, so as to survive through life and avoid fear, anxiety, sadness, hopelessness and powerlessness.

Unfortunately, nature never forgives and there is a way every feeling that you suppress will one day in your lifetime come up again. Feelings must be felt and dealt with at the moment that they show up.

In moments of intense pain and suffering, especially that which is associated to human injustice, we can't help but focus on it and wonder "Why?" Why is there so much pain and suffering in the world for mistakes we do not commit? It is true that every person on earth experiences good times and bad times, joys and sorrows, successes and failures. But why the bad times, the sorrows, the failures?

In most cases we blame God and start asking:

- What did I do to deserve such pain and suffering?

- Why is God punishing me for mistakes that I clearly did not do?
- Why has God abandoned and forgotten me?
- Why is God making me suffer?
- What does God want of me?

These are very important questions that must be addressed if one is to have a deep and long-lasting relationship with God. If the questions are not addressed in the right way, then many people will arrive to a wrong conclusion, leaving them confused and asking if God really cares for His creation. Others even conclude that God is unfair, and unloving and therefore make a decision never to believe in God anymore. You know of believers who went through some pain and now they turned to be something else and don't want to hear or know anything about God.

I spent a whole year in 2022 asking these questions and many more. I remember my friend Jacinta Mutisya would speak to me every day on phone and in most cases I would be crying and she would tell me “Gods timing is the best” well, I hated that statement, and she knows I hated it with a passion, because I didn't know why God was taking so long with His timing and I was going through hell. It is the year that I hit rock bottom and everyday seemed to bring a new pain and a new suffering all together, so I couldn't understand what this Gods timing was all about when situations were moving from worse to worst. It is after addressing these questions that I got the answers to where God was and why I was suffering. I will be sharing the answers in the next chapter.

Many people suffer unnecessarily because they abuse their bodies, or do not take proper care of them. If you indulge in smoking, drinking, taking drugs, and intemperate living, you are making excessive demands on your body. Consequently, your body, and even your mind, may break down under these stresses. There is much suffering, however, that comes upon the human race over which you have no control, and it comes unbidden to the rich and poor alike. No one, no matter how good a person he is, can be assured that he will be exempted.

Being a social worker and a missionary servant of God, I have worked with and served hundreds of people from various cultures, educational backgrounds and beliefs, and social status. I have actually worked and know many corners of all the major slums in Kenya, for example. I have also worked and rubbed shoulders with the great in big organizations like the United Nations and interacted with those who are in the high social status and also with local communities and community-based organizations struggling to make ends meet.

I have shared with those who have been deprived of basic needs, to those who have had everything given to them, I've discovered that nobody is immune to pain and suffering. The poor materially may suffer poverty, lack of basic needs, and such. The rich on the other hand may have all the basic necessities, but suffer discrimination, violence, depression, rejection, loneliness and abuse. It makes sense in the light of all the suffering in the world that you would ask why God is making you suffer. Because either way rich or poor, healthy or sick you will still suffer.

Origin of suffering

Suffering, as understood by Christians, originates from Adam and Eve's disobedience. This is often referred to as "original sin." The Bible teaches that much of humanity's suffering is a result of this breaking of humankind's relationship with God and spoiling of His perfect world as seen in the book of Genesis, when God gave instructions, but the two disobeyed "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die" Genesis 2:16-17. The devil, in the form of a snake, convinced Eve to eat from the tree by telling her that after eating she would be powerful like God. "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil" Genesis 3:5. Adam was later persuaded by Eve, and he also chose to eat the fruit, knowing that it was against what God had instructed, and by so doing they were disobeying. When they ate from the tree, Adam and Eve decided to take the power of good and bad into their own hands, rather than trust God. In the same way, we sometimes take the power in our hands to solve our problems and end up failing terribly. Through that choice, humankind broke their relationship with God and brought imperfection into the perfect world that He had made.

God had protected His people from evil and death. But in choosing to step out from under His protection, where they enjoyed eternal life, Adam and Eve brought death and suffering into the world for the first time. They disobeyed God and rejected his command. It is extremely frustrating when children rebel against you as a parent and ignore the rules you established for their protection. If you are a parent, you can understand how deep and painful it is to have your children reject you repeatedly. just as it happens many times in the bible that people turn away from God and reject His commandments.

However, all is not lost in this sin of disobedience, the Bible in the book of Revelation tells us about the new creation God will make in the future. One day, God will make everything new and once again perfect and free from suffering and free from tears. “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain, because all the old ways are gone.” Revelation 21:4

There is an important difference between what God causes and what He allows. God created the world and gave people a free choice to know Him, Love Him, obey Him and at the end to live with Him “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” Deuteronomy 30:19.

Unfortunately, many people choose to rebel and choose the opposite of Gods wishes. He respects our choices; because He gave us the free will and reasoning.

God continues to respect our choice of whether or not to live under His authority and protection or go our way and do what is pleasing to us and what the worldly pleasures offer. He

gave us the commandments to follow and in His commands for example He commands people not to steal, but He allows people to freely choose to disobey and steal anyway. Of which the consequences may be to suffer in the cells after being judged guilty according to the law. People often choose to hold God responsible for things they have chosen to do that result in one kind of suffering or another.

There are endless sources of suffering when you look around the broken world that we live in. Every day as we see in the news, there is war, disease outbreaks, murder, rape and persecution happening all over. Sometimes, the suffering gets closer to us through the death of a loved one, or break-ups, divorce, job loss and when it hits closer, the world comes crumbling right in front of your face and this changes your perspective about life.

When you or someone you love has been a victim of a crime or abuse for instance, it can change the way you look at people around you and your feelings of general security and trust. I was once robbed of all my belongings in the streets of Nairobi, I got so scared from that time such that even an innocent stranger who may want to greet or share a word with me or even ask for direction becomes a criminal to me. I look at everyone in the streets with a suspicious eye because my security was once breached.

Stages Of Pain And Suffering

The five stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. People experience these stages differently, depending on the impact of the pain and the suffering it causes and the uniqueness of every human being. Some may also not go through all the stages, but still may deal with their pain.

As we saw earlier, pain can be dealt with and suffering can be avoided. In these stages, a person may be helped or may work towards dealing with a situation before it gets out of hand.

Denial

Every time you find yourself in the middle of pain, the first human instinct is to pretend that nothing bad is happening and be in denial. This is a dangerous stage in suffering because you are literally forcing the brain to accept the contrary of the truth, you are forcing your body and brain to act as if everything is ok, you are “cheating” the brain that all is well. You stop living and start surviving. The denial of suffering means your real feelings get repressed, held in and squashed down, which results in you getting cut off from all your other feelings as well, not just the uncomfortable ones, because smaller and more insignificant things begin to torture you, in proportion to your fear of being hurt. The one who does most to avoid suffering is, in the end, the one who suffers most. Life becomes more superficial and emptier, because any depth of real feeling

has been put out of reach. Unfortunately, nature never forgives. As you start moving on in life, all the feelings you were denying begin to surface and there is no way you will move on before dealing with each feeling one by one.

Recently, I was reading a question posed by someone, explaining how life has been unfair on her side: her marriage had failed, leaving her with three children to take care of, no job, no source of income and bills were coming in each day. She resolved to hawking in the streets, but life was hard in those streets, because she was in denial of her situation and was not ready to face the reality. Friends, relatives and school mates would pass by the streets and she would quickly dodge not to be seen and even at times leave customers unattended. She was simply unable to face the fact that the same classmates who even performed poorly than her in school, are now her customers in the streets. She would pretend that things are okay, but run away when a classmate came by. She was living in denial

This stage is also heavily experienced in times of loss and grief. Immediately you receive the news of loss of someone especially a loved, the first instinct is to get numb, almost not able to reason on the next move, then you sink in disbelief. At times you may even say “it can’t be true!” At this point, the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. You are in a state of shock and denial, you wonder how you will go on, or if at all there is need to go on. you try to find a way to simply get through each day, trying to pretend that life is normal.

Some people at first, carry on as if nothing has happened. Even if they know clearly that someone has died, it can be hard to believe that someone important is not coming back. They try to pretend that things will soon be ok. Ever heard of people who never cry or mourn a loved one and go through the season of loss and burial, only to go down with depression later? Yes, the reality only hits them later and coming back to deal with a suppressed emotion is more severe than dealing with it at the moment it showed up.

In cases of break-ups in relationships, almost nobody accepts it at first that they have been “dumped” after investing all their time, feelings and resources on someone then all of a sudden, they are left in unclear circumstances. It is a bitter pill to swallow, and denial seems to work for the first few days. There is a Swahili slogan common in the streets of Nairobi that helps a lot in relationship breakups and that I love anyway, it means when you are left, accept to be left (literally) “*ukiwachwa, wachika*”. Move on with life. Don’t pretend and deny, because the consequences of denial can be dire.

In cases of suffering the loss of a job, denial cheats you that maybe they will call you back to the job. Instead of getting yourself something to do you fall into the danger of waiting for that call and you realize that you are falling into a financial ditch that may cost you your life to get out of. You don’t work neither look for work. Have you seen people who have lost their jobs, but still wake up each morning like they are going to work, just to go and idle in town then return in the evening at exactly the same time they used to get home from work? That is denial.

Anger

In this stage, you are no longer forcing the brain to accept what is not true. You are now slowly coming to terms with the reality; the truth. This accepting raises feelings of bitterness and anger, towards God, towards people, towards yourself, towards things, towards everything and anything if I could say. You become easily irritable, because nothing and nobody seems to understand what you are facing or better still you feel like everybody is the cause of your pain. Anger is a natural emotion and a necessary part of understanding and accepting your suffering. Be willing to feel your anger, even though it may seem endless. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal. Express it and don't try to suppress it, and then try to manage it either on your own or with the help of someone close.

Anger is an important emotion towards accepting pain and at the same time it is very dangerous if not well managed. It is out of anger that people lose control of themselves and commit suicide, kill others, physically hurt others or say unpleasant and unnecessary words that could have long term effects on someone. At one point you must have a dialogue with yourself in this stage and accept that you are a broken person and need to calm down. You need to know exactly where your cracks are and how deep they run, before they get uncontrollable. The truth is, we are all broken, but it is those who know exactly where and how they are broken, who also know exactly where and how they can be helped to get whole again.

There is this one country in the world that I truly hate, one person from that country made my life miserable, unfortunately

I felt so hurt that I hated the country because of that one person. Well, this is a case of uncontrolled anger, how it can have damaging effects towards people and things, I am still trying to heal from that, but not planning to travel to that country any time soon.

It is this same feeling that leads you to isolate yourselves since you have the feeling that everyone is to blame for your misfortunes and suffering. It is natural to feel deserted and abandoned, but we live in a society that fears anger. I have seen a teenager pack their bags and leave home just because the parents questioned something about their behavior, like an addiction.

They first deny it that they are addicted, then out of anger leave home only to go and live a miserable life in the world. It is an emotion that makes you feel empty and unable to connect with nothing and nobody.

I consider this as the most delicate stage when you are going through pain and suffering. It is a stage where you don't reason with your brain, but with your emotion. A stage where no logic and reason are applied, but simply feelings. In counselling, it is the most difficult stage to try and help someone see sense, because they can only feel. At this time the brain is at "sleep" mode.

Bargaining

In this stage, one is trying to “cool down” and some sense is now evident, the brain is gradually “waking up”, here you come up with many options and start weighing them. It is like you have a balancing scale in the brain and try to see which options carry more weight than others.

In this stage you start to make deals with yourself in your mind, or perhaps with God. You want to believe that if you act in particular ways, you will feel better, or if you acted in a certain way things would not have been the way they are.

It's also common to find yourself going over and over things that happened in the past and asking a lot of ‘what if’ questions, wishing you could go back and change things in the hope things could have turned out differently. Like in a job loss you may start asking, what if I went back and asked for a second chance? What if I appealed?

It is a stage of forcing issues, you want life returned to what it was; you want your loved one restored in cases of death. You want to go back in time. If it is a case of addiction, you may even ask God, what if you took my life back to five years ago then I can restart again.

The “what ifs” cause us to find fault, what you “think” you could have done things differently. You may even bargain with the pain and you will do anything not to feel the pain of this loss. You remain in the past, trying to negotiate your way out of the hurt. It is at this stage where you are strongly advised on the benefits of moving on.

Letting go- letting bygones be bygones, forgetting about the past and what should have been done and what should not

have been done and forging ahead. At this stage, you feel like other people and situations failed you in one way or other. At this stage, you may come up with your own strategies on what you should do to get out of the suffering.

Depression

This is the where reality hits you just as it is, without sugar coating. It is the stage where you live the present moment and face the facts of life as they are; *raw and cruel* as one good friend of mine used to say. It is a stage where you realize that the truth is more important than the facts. For cases of death, it now becomes clear that the person is dead never to return to life.

For cases of job loss, it now becomes clear that bills have to be paid, for cases of broken relationships the reality comes that you are no longer with your partner and have to journey alone. Withdrawal signs and a lot of intense sadness are very visible here, you become depressed after noticing that bargaining will not give positive results. Empty feelings present themselves and you wonder, if there is any point in going on with life.

At this point, life can feel like it no longer holds any meaning. It is a very difficult stage emotionally and also a natural one. To feel depressed after a tragic situation is normal. When the loss of a loved one fully settles in your soul, the realization that your loved one is not coming back is understandably depressing. Depression is one of the many necessary steps towards healing, because it helps you come head-on with the truth. At this stage, I recall the words of my

novice mistress, who used to say that we have to learn to call things by their names, if at all we need to be helped. In this stage we call a spade a spade and not a big spoon. If you need water, say it that you need water. Otherwise, if you just say I want something to drink, you may be given vinegar and forced to drink it.

It should be noted that this kind of depressive feeling from the effects of pain and suffering is not the clinical depression associated with mental illness, it is just a stage of dealing with pain.

Acceptance

Anyone who reaches this stage in their journey of pain and suffering is mature enough to handle so many situations in life. This is a person who has seen it all, gone through all the above stages and accepts the situation as it is and is now moving on. Gradually, most people find that the pain and suffering eases, and it is possible to bear with what has happened.

It is a stage of accepting the reality that whatever happened and caused you to suffer, actually did happen and now you have to live with the new reality of the consequences. You may never like this new reality, but eventually you will learn to live with it. You may never ‘get over’ the death of someone close, but you can learn to live again, while keeping the memories of those you have lost close to you.

It is the new norm with which you must learn to live. You accept that you can never replace what has been lost, but you can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, and new inter-dependencies. Instead of denying your feelings, you

listen to your needs; you move, you change, you grow, you evolve. You may start to reach out to others and become involved in their lives. You start to invest in your friendships and in your relationship with yourself. You begin to live again. At this stage, you have to be ready for change and readjusting to the new life that the pain and suffering brought you into. In cases of sicknesses or illness like diabetes, for example, you have to live on diet, you have to change your lifestyle and eating habits, leaving space for medication.

Categories Of Suffering

Suffering that Comes from the Sins of Others and from Circumstances.

This kind of suffering has greatly affected me and I write this with some reserve of pain, though I know healing is a process and I might struggle for some time before I say that I am fully healed. Once in a while, I shed a tear, when I remember that I don't have a blood brother or sister who I can identify with, but at least I have step siblings and half siblings.

In my fragile human nature, I am tempted to feel the pain that other people put me through growing up, without the love of my parents, but with time, I have changed my view about life and understand situations better, thus, I don't let brokenness define me. At one point in my life, it took me a full year to discover my real identity, because I could not fully understand myself.

My identity was mixed up by people close to me when I was a child and I never knew what was happening. I suffered the consequences of all these, because I had to travel down memory lane over 30 years to try and unearth some truths of the past, so as to understand the present. Unfortunately, none of the people who put me through that mess was there with me to help me dig out the truth. Everything around me seemed like a mystery. I couldn't understand why other people were living with their parents, but I was living with grandparents and

occasionally with relatives. I couldn't understand why I had nobody around me to call my father, unlike other people. I went through emotional suffering, trying to understand what was not clear to me at that time.

At some point, you may experience hurts and injustices which are caused by others. By embracing this form of suffering, you learn to look past your wounds and hurts and discover God's will in the midst of your pain and confusion. So, should you act to seek justice or to make a demand upon those who harm you, you must learn to do so from a place of stillness and love.

I was sharing some experiences with one of my friends, who was apparently born out of rape. Unfortunately, he came to learn of it very late, this has led him to suffer emotional breakdown. He was finding it difficult to forgive and heal, leaving him suffering from the pain he did not cause.

I know of another, who at the age of 45, the mother was sick and called her because she needed to disclose a certain secret. The lady had sacrificed a lot for her parents, leaving her with almost no savings for herself. The mother broke the news that the father whom she knew as the father was not the biological father, but that 45 years ago, she had cheated on the husband and she was the fruit of the relation. The lady broke down and is still on the journey to absorbing that pain which she could not see coming her way at any day.

Suffering that Results from Bad Decisions.

All the choices that you make in this world have consequences, some are short term and others long term. These consequences may cause suffering in your health, relationships or life in general. God created humans with the capacity to choose between doing good and doing bad.

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! Deuteronomy 30:19 .

When you make poor choices, you reap the fruits. If you choose to be violent for example, the consequence could be, you being hurt in the process of the violence or being caught and charged with a crime, going to prison and suffering the loss of your freedom. Another example of poor choices is the addictions that you sometimes may get into, consequently affecting your social life and health. When overcoming such pains and sufferings, you need to acknowledge your sinfulness and contribution towards the pain, to facilitate dealing with it.

When things start going wrong in my life, I usually start asking myself if there's anything I did to put me in that situation. Often, if I take enough time to search my heart, I find that my sinful choices or desires could have led me down a dangerous path, and turning back to take the right path becomes easy because I am conscious of where I went wrong. You need to acknowledge when you know it was your fault that caused the suffering and be ready to turn away from that, otherwise you may never find a solution. Sometimes, the only way to get

you to stop and take a good look at yourselves is to allow some hard things to come into your life. God does not do this to make you feel bad about yourself. He does this because He knows that in order for you to continue to grow spiritually, you need to recognize, repent and let go of sins that threaten to hold you back.

Bad decisions can also be influenced by your choice of company and friends. Peer pressure has in many a times pushed us to do things even against our will, but we chose them so that we can fit in the group. The bible already warned us on the issue in 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Do not be fooled: “Bad friends will ruin good habits.”

Fasting, Penances and for a Cause.

Most of the saints, especially St. Francis of Assis, gives a good example of this. This kind of pain is self-inflicted and helps in your spiritual growth, or for the good of many, although it should be practiced with moderation and prudence. There have been famous examples of saints who have gone to extremes in this area, but your current wisdom is that moderation is to be preferred.

Often the greatest happiness in this category is found within suffering precisely because it is painful. Nelson Mandela, for example endured great suffering at the hands of few, but for the good of the majority. It gave him fulfillment to know that he is suffering while fighting for the better good of many and that explains why he never gave up the cause even with the pain. It is implausible to think that he did not experience happiness within the pain and suffering he

experienced in the twenty-eight years spent behind bars, knowing that he was achieving greatness and actualizing the potential of the people would come after him in the governance of South Africa, through the hardships he suffered.

Mountain climbers voluntarily endure excruciating pain and suffering, in their attempt to reach the summit. They risk their lives, endure high altitude sickness, bottomless crevasses and glaciers, mountain storms, snow blindness, and sudden storms all to experience the several moments of magnificent comfort and satisfaction the mountain summit has to offer. And the joy of accomplishing a goal.

I cannot count the sleepless nights I spent, burning the midnight oil with occasional mosquitoes and back pains, reading volumes of books on whatever topic so as to come up with my own writings. It is a lot of pain and sacrifice, but I choose, to go through it and enjoy the fulfillment that it brings, when I finally see my works on the shelves.

Past mistakes and offenses

After we confess our sins, their roots remain deep within the human heart. An example is of a person who was struggling with addiction and is cured, they still have to battle the results which include diseases associated with the addiction like liver cirrhosis caused by excess alcohol intake. Or one who was a thief but stops the habit, but the society still labels you as such and it is almost impossible to get the name out of people's thoughts. These past mistakes cause great fear, anxiety, shame, and a whole host of unpleasant emotions and memories.

Healing takes time, patience, and perseverance as you must willingly embrace the discomforts that come with it.

Existential Suffering/ the Dark Night of the Soul

Those who are being led into greater intimacy with God come to this point of sharing in the sufferings of Christ. As with purgation, this suffering is an incredible work of the Holy Spirit, and when it is freely embraced, it leads to our divinization in Christ. This is where we are going to dwell most of our arguments in the next chapter so as to be able to understand God and suffering. Existential suffering will answer the questions we have been asking all through of why me? Where is God? How is this happening? It helps in understanding pain and suffering not from a human point of view, but from a divine perspective.

Aspects Of Suffering

Suffering as a Consequence of Sin

The first truth about suffering is the recognition that it was never in God's plan that human beings must suffer pain, but it is a product of the fall, a consequence of human sin against God. Romans 5:12 "Sin came into the world because of what one man did, and with sin came death." This is why everyone must die, because everyone sinned. Some suffering is due to our sinful and wrong choices, but some is due simply to the world being broken.

Your wrong choices will lead to more sufferings as we have already seen. Pain is a gift from God to warn you of the impending suffering you might face if you continue with your wrong choices and if you continue sinning. When you suffer, you learn that the only way to live this life is to follow God, trust Him, seek His kingdom and eventually get everything else that you desire. Your suffering will lead you to repentance and will call you to change for the better. Without suffering you may never be able to know if you are moving on the right track or if you are lost, suffering corrects you and brings you back to the right path. I believe that God is after a deeper relationship with each one of us. As such He often uses hard times to get your attention. When things are going great, you are not so quick to turn to Him. But when trials come, they often drive you to your knees in search of answers and comfort.

Suffering as a Tool of Sanctification

God uses suffering as a way of preparing you for future glory, as Paul clearly states in the book of Romans 8:18 “The sufferings we have now are nothing compared to the great glory that will be shown to us.” Suffering is used as a tool of preparation, so that you are acquainted and prepared enough to handle the abundance of the glory that would be shown to you. Suffering should not be viewed as a thing of the present time, but as one that would be projected in later times. Even if you are left broken after the suffering period, you should still remember that nothing is so broken as to be unusable by God. Most great biblical men and women were broken but God used them for His Glory. An example is Joseph who rose from the well where he had been thrown, to being sold to slavery, to being put in prison and later being glorified as a prime minister. Suffering helps you to grow and as you handle difficult situations you become more mature and more prepared to face harder situations in life. Through suffering, you are able to look more into your life and see clearly where you went wrong, if at all the suffering was brought about by ignorance or bad choices.

Suffering as a Test of Faith

Suffering calls you to declare to those around you that it doesn't matter the pain you are in, it doesn't matter how far you are broken, you can still declare Gods goodness and salvation like prophet Habakkuk: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Habakkuk 3:18.

It is in suffering that you can clearly demonstrate the extent of your faith. They say it is not on the smooth roads that you know the best drivers, but in the bumpy ones. This truly applies to our faith too, it is the scars that strengthen you. In times of intense pain or turmoil, you cling to what you have placed your hope in. In this way, suffering reveals whether your faith is a mere childish hope or a factual reality.

In this case suffering is used as a call to live out a better and more faithful witness to the world. When you are burdened beyond your strength, you must not become bitter but instead allow your faith to polish you make you the best gem.

Finding Meaning In Suffering

Helen Keller, who in her lifetime knew much suffering, as well as joy, noted that “character cannot be developed in ease and quiet”.

Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

The fact that suffering is in most times beneficial, does not imply that you ought to seek it, suffering is inevitable in life, all you have to do is just live and at one point in life you will come across pain and suffering.

Naturally, human beings seek pleasure in life and try to minimize the amount of pain they endure and learn to accept and even embrace, difficult experiences. In this case, suffering becomes a tool and instrument, for growth. Suffering can also be a warning sign of potential danger.

Pain becomes a memory to avoid facing future danger, a good example of this is the putting your hand on fire. When you touch fire or something hot you get hurt and remove the hand immediately, you now learn that when you see fire, you won't touch it.

Suffering is part of the flow of life which can be transformative, if you are willing to let go of what no longer serves you, so as to move into the unknown. Through your suffering you are humbled and reminded of your mortality and

the reality that none of us are exempt from the difficulties of human life.

Suffering reminds you that life is sometimes simply unfair, although the transformative effect of suffering suggests that it is your greatest pain that may contain a deeper purpose and the deeper the pain, the higher the purpose and the calling to fulfil it. Perhaps that purpose resides in the function of human compassion. The word compassion comes from a Latin root which means to suffer with.

Christian Understanding Of Suffering

As you go through pain and suffering, it is helpful to be reminded how much our Savior suffered. Jesus lived a perfect life, completely free of sin. If anyone deserved not to experience suffering and pain, it was Jesus Christ. Yet He suffered terribly, more than any other human being, mentally, emotionally and physically.

When Peter expressed on behalf of the disciples their understanding that Jesus was the Messiah, He told them, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day” Luke 9:22. He was rejected by his own when He needed them most. The disciples and especially Peter, who openly declared not knowing Him, were nowhere to be seen during the last hours of His agony.

Jesus realized what was ahead. He knew He would suffer in many ways and eventually be murdered. On that same occasion Jesus made it clear that those who follow Him must also be willing to suffer. He did not promise you a pain-free life, “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” Luke 23-24. So, as a Christian every day is a new awakening to take up your

pains and sufferings, and follow Christ. Just as a person being led to crucifixion was required to carry his own cross, Jesus said that His disciples would have to be willing to carry the burdens of life while faithfully following Him. It's evident that Jesus suffered and that you will too, but for your own good as we shall see later.

God has good plans for you," I say this because I know what I am planning for you," says the LORD, "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future." Jeremiah 29:11

He has a good future prepared for your life, so as to conform to the image of God, for God made you in His image and likeness, but sin keeps destroying that first image. Every day, He is gradually taking you back to that original self, He is gradually making you what He wants you to be.

So, if anything wants to slow you down or stand in your way, even if it is your most-prized possession, God will allow you to lose it. Even if it is a friend, a family member, or a relationship, God will allow you to lose the person so that at the end, you will gain Christ and become like Him.

In summary

As you continue understanding suffering, I want to remind you that you are not alone in your pain, soon you will find meaning to your suffering and will feel better. When times are tough, it's important to remember that everyone experiences hardships and that God will not let you be "tempted" beyond

what you can handle. In the end, He will help you through it, because He says that His grace is sufficient for you. St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians comforts us when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you, except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Just be still and try to handle every situation with a lot of calmness and diligence. It shall be well; it shall be over. Be strong and of good courage, do not give up on life.

Life is not going to always turn out the way you want, there shall be difficulties and obstacles, so even when things are not perfect, remind yourself that life is also beautiful and brighter moments are yet to come.

When you start to listen to that inner voice that promises brighter days, then positivity kicks in and you surely experience the best towards your destiny. It might be too late to change the bad choices that you have already made, those which led to your suffering, but there is time to make the right choices and change your future.

Trust God for He goes with you everywhere even in your pains and sufferings, even at the rock bottom remember, He promised you that He would be there with you in the midst of it "He will not leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6

Chapter II

God Where Are You When I Am Suffering And Why Are You Making Me Suffer?

God Where Are You When I Am Suffering?

When you are suffering, God is right beside you. Nothing can separate you from His love, as the bible clearly states in Romans 8:38–39 “Yes, I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor ruling spirits, nothing now, nothing in the future, no powers, nothing above us, nothing below us, nor anything else in the whole world will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

He is closer to you in your suffering “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Psalms 34:18. Know that when your path in life is more difficult, then you have a higher calling that needs a deeper and stronger foundation, which can only be founded in overcoming trials and sufferings. God actually hates to see His people suffer “Though He brings grief, He also shows compassion, because of the greatness of His unfailing love. For He does not enjoy

hurting people or causing them sorrow.” (Lamentations 3:32-33) God is always close to the people in trouble and ready to shield them, as long as they seek Him “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.” Psalm 9:9.

From the above psalm, you can see that His help is not automatic, you have to seek Him and put your trust in Him. Whether in good times or bad times, this is something you should strive to do every day. God will help you, as long as you continue to trust Him, because He is ever present, especially in times of pain.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1.

When the pain is intense, you may occasionally forget that God is always with you. When times are good and you are feeling happy, you praise God for His goodness. But, when times are bad, and you go through some suffering, it is common to believe that He has abandoned you in your moment of need. This is not true, though as the psalmists mentions, God is “very present” even when we are in pain and suffering and will help you get through the situation.

Just as you are demanding an answer from God for these questions, Job also demanded an answer from God for his suffering. He lost almost everything- his children, his servants, his livestock, and his health. His friends and wife were of no help to him as he suffered. If you have ever been at a point where you felt you had nothing left to lose, I bet you can relate to Job. And this book comes as a response to your cry.

All of us have problems, and some of them can seem pretty hopeless and overwhelming when we're deep in the midst of them. God has reasons for allowing troubles to come into your life.

In fact, it could be said that He has given you problems for your good, both here and hereafter. Many people think that when they go through problems, God is punishing them, or, perhaps, He has abandoned them. That kind of reasoning is often wrong. Many times, problems are exactly God's will for your life. If that statement perplexes you, stay with me, you will probably understand it by the end of this book.

I cannot think of a single Godly person mentioned in the Bible, who didn't have at least some difficulties in life. Daniel suffered the agony in the lions' den, before he came out victorious. Jonah was in a whale's stomach for three days, before he was proclaimed a great prophet in Nineveh. Lazarus was raised from the dead, after being in the tomb for four days, and went on to proclaim the goodness of God. God will raise you from whatever situation you are in, if only you trust and believe. God's purpose is always greater than your pains and sufferings, no matter what you are going through. Always remember that life is filled with suffering and that the only way to survive is to find meaning in it. Man's search for meaning in life, amidst trials and temptations is a primary motivation of our existence and one that gives us a reason to live. As Nietzsche said, He who has a 'why' to live, can bear with almost 'any how'.

Many of you feel pain, loss and suffering, but you should never let it define who you are. Instead of wallowing in pain,

find out in this chapter why it's actually normal to experience the hard times and sufferings in life. Everyone wants a good life; no one wants to suffer. It would be great if things went just the way you want them to, but you know that doesn't happen.

Has anyone lived a whole life without some measure of loss, grief, pain or hardship? no one for sure. The beauty of life is in having times and seasons. If there was sunshine all through, the world would turn into a desert, and if the moon shone all alone, we would never appreciate the beauty of the stars. These times and seasons are intrinsic with being human, and give beauty, and they help to give beauty and meaning to everything around us.

Don't be ashamed of your tears. Even Jesus felt the pain of losing His friend Lazarus and wept for him, before bringing him back to life. This gives you the hope that even if your problems have pushed you into a bottomless pit, it is human to cry. God will surely appear even when you may not feel His presence and just by the call of your name, you shall be out of it, just as He called Lazarus, and Lazarus exited the tomb.

It is also good to note that when Satan wants to use you, he will isolate you and magnify everything around, so that you no longer see the faithfulness of God. All the anthills become mountains, and small obstacles are magnified to mean great suffering. Be strong and remind yourself that you are a survivor, not a victim of the devils crafting, because God sends the hardest challenges to the strongest soldiers.

God Why Are You Making Me Suffer?

Suffering Helps You To Find Your Destiny

"The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be." -Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Life is about creating yourself and molding yourself everyday into what you want to be and this can best be done through the painful experiences you get and daily sufferings.

The journey to destiny is the most difficult, but also the most fulfilling. It needs a lot of obedience, sacrifice and resilience, since it involves a lot of pain and suffering while travelling through mountains and valleys of life. Life itself is a journey, we are travelers.

So, every time you face pains and suffering, you have to remind yourself that you are just passing through on your way to somewhere where you are destined to be, somewhere more peaceful, and that there is a purpose in that particular mountain.

You cannot win all the battles in life, but when you lose a battle, it doesn't mean that you are failure, or that you will never reach your destiny. It means that you are on another step, a higher one, on the way to your destiny.

I am strongly reminded of the story of Jonah and the story of Paul in the bible. God often uses challenges to point us in a new direction, a new assignment and finally to our destiny. Proverbs 20:30 reminds us that "Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways." Saul of Tarsus, was a Jew who hated Christians and would brutally kill them. He considered it his number one mission in life to end Christianity. One day, he was traveling from Jerusalem towards Damascus, with the intention of going to arrest some Christians

who had fled there- it is worth noting that he was going there against God's will, as he was going to harm God's people.

Suddenly, a bright light flashed in the sky and blinded him. He had to be led by the hand into the city of Damascus. He was blind for three days, perhaps wondering if he would ever see again. In the end, God restored his sight and he became a champion for the Christian cause, as the great Apostle Paul, who wrote two-thirds of the New Testament.

For him to reach this rank of being a great follower of the gospel, a great apostle and preacher, and a great writer, he had to go through pain and suffering. Being struck by blindness. Before the pain was inflicted on him, he was a furious killer and if any prophet would go to prophesy to him and tell him that God wanted to use him as an apostle, he would kill him immediately. So, God had to do it Himself, by first inflicting him with a serious problem.

Sometimes, it takes a painful experience to make you change your ways. Sometimes, God has to turn you around by inflicting some necessary pain, because you are cruising down the highway of life headed in the wrong direction. Sometimes, God has to light a fire under you and things become uncomfortable, so as to become comfortable. As someone once said, "If we don't change when we see the light, we change when we feel the heat." God sent Jonah the Israelite to Nineveh to preach, but Jonah refused to accept his divine mission and left on a sea voyage in the opposite direction instead. Jonah boarded a ship headed for Tarshish, which was exactly the opposite of where God had sent him. God had to redirect him

and change his direction back to where his mission was. God raised a great storm as a sign of his anger with Jonah.

The sailors, realizing that Jonah's disobedience had caused the storm, threw him overboard in an attempt to save their ship. Jonah was saved from drowning when he was swallowed by a “great fish”. He stayed for three days inside the creature’s belly, after which the fish “vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” Needless to say, when he got out of the whale’s belly three days later, he was headed in the right direction. Thankful that his life had been spared, Jonah took up his prophetic mission, the mission that had to come after a period of pain and affliction inside that belly.

A good question to ask yourself when facing a problem is; “Where is this problem leading me to?” Problems seldom leave you where they found you. In many cases they “vomit” you in the right place, just like Jonah. Knowing too well that God has a plan for all of you, helps in answering the question on where God could be leading you with the problem at hand. When you trust and seek God with all your heart, good things will happen.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:11-13. God knows our destiny, but at times we do things exactly the opposite of what is in His plans. It is at this moment that He brings about a situation that will make us make a U-turn to the right direction.

Suffering Protects You From Worse Situations

Sometimes, a problem is a blessing in disguise. God at times breaks your heart, so as to save your soul, and when you miss an opportunity that you very much desired and feel the pain of denial, sometimes it is not a denial per se, but it is God trying to redirect your focus to something better. The best example I can get for this is the story of Joseph in the bible, as recounted in Genesis 37, 39-45.

Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons. His father loved him more than any of his other sons, and gave him a colored cloak. His brothers were jealous of him, because of the fathers' love. One day they ganged up on him and sold him into slavery. Then they went home and told their dad that a wild animal had devoured him. But that wasn't the end of the problems for Joseph, it seemed like the beginning.

He was later resold to Egypt and eventually became steward to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials. Potiphar's wife tried unsuccessfully to seduce him, and when he refused on the grounds that she was married, she accused him of rape.

As a result, he was thrown in jail for two years for a crime he didn't commit. To him, this was real suffering, and he had all the reasons to be angry with everyone, including God, and give up on life. But at this point, God was making plans behind the scenes and in his suffering, He was positioning him to be raised up as second in command in Egypt.

Due to his ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream, he was made governor of Egypt. Remember, the gift of interpreting dreams was given to him by God, so that Joseph would use it just at the right time for his own good. Reminds us that even in the middle of pain and suffering, we need to look around and see what we have and how we can use it for our own salvation.

Joseph in his God given wisdom, rationed the country's produce in preparation for a time of famine. During the famine, Jacob's sons came to Egypt to plead with Joseph for supplies.

They did not recognize him, but after he was sure that they were reformed, he revealed his true identity to them with great joy. Joseph invited his father and brothers to come and settle in Egypt. Most people, with that kind of undeserved problems, would probably have had those hateful brothers beheaded! But not Joseph.

When he confronted them, instead of taking vengeance, he said in Genesis 50:20, “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people lives”.

Through all of Joseph's problems, God was actually protecting him and his family from destruction. He was using Joseph as the one who would save all of his family from the famine. Maybe, had he remained with his family, he would have died of the famine much earlier on.

You will be hurt in life even sometimes by those closest to you, just like Joseph. When they do it, their motives may be evil, and, in most cases, it is to destroy you.

But God intends and allows it for good! He will turn it around and bring good out of it, if you respond to Him in faith

and trust Him in the midst of the problems. Is it possible that, God is protecting you right now from something you can't see? Only time will tell. Remember God has a capacity of seeing what our naked eyes can't see and He hears conversations that we don't hear, trust His actions, you could be the next Joseph.

In the year 2005, I was a third-year student, at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. One evening, I walked across the university to a supermarket we used to call "jubilee", next to the CITAM church.

It was around 7 pm. I was chatting with this lady from Sudan at the counter, as we were paying for the goods bought. She was ahead of me in the queue. After clearing her bill, she told me she would not wait for me because she was in a hurry, but I could just catch up with her, further along on the way back.

After paying for my goods, I hurriedly walked out with the intention of catching up with her, and just at the door, I missed a step, twisted my leg so badly, that it had me falling down with pain while screaming.

I attracted considerable attention from the people around; the pain was too much I could hardly walk.

I remember one priest from Tanzania recognized me from the crowd, and seeing my agony, paid for a taxi to take me home.

This ordeal took less than 10 minutes. As we drove towards the university gate, I saw a big crowd of students and the university security personnel at the reception, the taxi slowed down so that we could understand what was transpiring.

Apparently, the Sudanese lady we had just parted ways at the supermarket, had been robbed of everything she had and was seriously injured. I had probably escaped that ordeal by minutes, if not seconds, thanks to the leg injury. I was in pain and had to go to the hospital the following day, to get a plaster cast fixed, but I had been saved from a worse incident. Anybody who was at the university at that time can remember the incident, since I remained to tell the story, a painful misfortune saved me from another worse one.

Suffering Makes You Strong

Has God ever used a problem to strengthen you? Yes, He has. All problems if viewed with the eyes of faith, come for your own good. Don't let any type of pain define you; learn from it and grow stronger. Life does not ask you if you want to be strong, it teaches you to be strong. Experience has taught me how important it is to just keep going and staying focused.

Eventually pain passes and the flow of nature returns. Sometimes, you are tested, not to expose your weaknesses, but to discover your strength. There are times when you are put in a situation and you realize your only option is to be strong. The pain may be unbearable, but at the end, the strength it gives you is immeasurable. Even with all the pain you may go through, you have to remain secure, because God promised to guard us from all dangers, "The LORD will protect you from all dangers; he will guard your life". Psalm 121:7

In St. Paul's letter to James, Paul spoke of what your attitude should be during these times of testing, when he wrote "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance and perseverance finishes its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2-4

This testing by problems is a necessary part of your growth as a Christian. You might notice in that verse that it

doesn't say if you encounter trials, it says whenever, to show that suffering and problems are a sure bet, your input comes in how you handle the trials. You can't always predict when these tests and trials will come, nor even what shape they will take. But you must know this: They will come and God does have a purpose in them and a solution for them.

The Bible compares suffering with a refiner's fire. To get the impurities out of gold and silver, it must be heated to a very high temperature. It literally burns off the impurities.

That is what Peter was referring to when he wrote, in I Peter 1:6-7: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I remember growing up, we used to have cake matrons during feasts and celebrations, especially in weddings. I am not sure if we still have them, because I rarely go to celebrations. All of them had the same narratives before the cake cutting ceremony, especially in weddings.

They would explain how the cake had endured a lot of "pain and suffering" from the mixing of the ingredients that were solid and independent, to a watery mixture of all of them blending together, to the baking in the high heat ovens. The cake had to go through all that, so that it comes out hard, strong, beautiful and edible.

That's true to our lives. We are weak and fragile, but after going through the "furnace" of life, with lots of suffering, we

come out strong and more valuable. The Lord tells us in Isaiah 40:31 “but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.” If you wait on the Lord, if you call on Him in your pain and suffering, He will for sure strengthen you through the pain. Remember also that the pain you feel today, will be the strength you feel tomorrow and strength is the product of struggle, you must do what others don’t do, to achieve what others won’t. You must learn to turn your pains into power, all through enduring and hoping in the Lord.

The journey through the desert to the promised land is a good illustration of God strengthening His people through suffering. It is a journey full of episodes, where God was making the Israelites strong as quoted in Deuteronomy 8:2, God told Israel, “And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not”.

It should take about two weeks to march from Egypt to Israel, yet it took Israel forty years to make that trip. God was strengthening them, before taking them to their destiny. Time and time again, God tested them to see if they were ready to go into the promised land.

Sometimes, they would be without food, then He would send them manna. Other times, it would be water, then He would provide water from a rock, other times it was meat, and He would provide quails. They would pass through hardships,

but they were all being prepared for the best opportunities in the promised land.

I have gone through so many problems in life, such that I jokingly tell my friends that I am not sure if I am strong, or I have just become numb because of enduring pain. It has become too much such that I can literally sleep in the storm like Jesus, while everybody else is panicking.

I remember in 2012, I lost my cousin, Valentine Mbithe. We were in Angola, with just a few relatives in the house attending to the visitors. Somebody was needed to go to the mortuary, take care of the body and make frequent visits to check if all is well and run errands, as we made the funeral arrangements, while we waited for other family members to travel from Kenya, since we were in a foreign land. It took some time because of visa processing.

Prior to then, I had never seen dead bodies, nor come near one. But I happened to be the only one chosen to go to the mortuary. I would make regular visits, check if the body is “ok” and was not decomposing before burial. This had to be done with vigor, because in that country, they rarely use the mortuary.

According to their culture, a body is supposed to be buried within 12 hours after death. So, the issue of taking care of a body in the mortuary was not a priority and I had to be keen on that, and sometimes even go an extra mile to inspect what they had done and not done. When the burial day came, I had to be at the mortuary to prepare the body, to dress her, put her in the coffin, ensure that all was well and transport the body home.

I was crying out of pain for losing my cousin, additionally, the pain and suffering of taking care of her while dead was immense, but I had no choice than to do it anyway. I believe that God was strengthening me, because after that incidence, I have had a series of occasions where I had to handle dead bodies, being the only one available at the time of need.

It so happened that the same year, two school children were hit by over speeding cars and being the only person near, and the missionary that I am, I had to take responsibility of following up with the cases until they were buried. I had been strengthened enough to face mortuary doors.

I have accompanied several other cases, including a case of a European missionary, where I had to take photos and videos of everything, from the preparation of the body, to the dressing, to the putting in the coffin and burial and sending all the pictures and videos to the family members in Europe, who did not manage to come and bury their own.

I understand most of the pains in this world, because I have tasted their sting, But I know that God wants me to grow beyond that. I also understand that out of suffering, have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are filled with scars. You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it. But you still emerge strong if you are perseverant.

Suffering Helps To Bring Out The Hidden Potential In You

If you want to have some good lemonade, you have to get a lemon and squeeze out all the juice from it. The juice is hidden inside the fruit and it has to be thoroughly strained to extract it all out. This also happens the same way with your potential, it is hidden somewhere within you. Everybody is capable in their own way, but to achieve your full potential, you have to be squeezed a bit. You don't have to stoop low and settle for less, just because a problem came your way. Remember Nelson Mandela once said, "There is no passion to be found playing small, in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living." Let suffering be a source of inspiration to squeeze you a little bit and to push you to what you are capable of attaining.

You must do the things you think you cannot do and hope for the best, once you choose hope, everything becomes possible. At times life can get so dark and you even think that you are being buried alive, but on the contrary, you are being planted, so as to bring out the best of your seed.

There are many people going through hardships and facing problems from every direction. Many ask the question, 'Why am I going through all this?', you often go through problems, only to realize later that they bring out the hidden potential you didn't know was within you. People are a lot like

tea bags, you don't know what's in them, until you drop them in hot water. The potential of a tea bag is only seen when it's fully in hot water, and when you stir a little, it is then that it releases all its potential. Your potential will only be seen fully in suffering. In the midst of pain, lies the opportunity for greatness. If you are to discover that hidden gem in suffering, then you must understand that pain is a part of life, still, it must never control us.

For those of you who have worked with a catapult, you know how it functions: if you want to throw a stone the furthest, then you have to stretch the catapult to its maximum potential. The more you are 'stretched by suffering', the more your potential is capacitated, to land on higher grounds

Oftentimes, you don't even remember God and His goodness until you are going through times of great difficulty. Many going through suffering are giving up, and some are even committing suicide. Regardless of how big your problem may seem, recognize that every problem has an expiry date and the expiry date for your suffering may be today! When you are going through problems, always focus on the problems from which the Lord has already delivered you. They are no longer problems, but memories and victories. Remember the goodness and grace of God who brought you through those problems. If He has delivered you from the problems before, He will do it again, and you will come out of it having gained more experience.

During the lockdown in March 2020, when the world suffered the great COVID19 pandemic, we were all grounded and doing literally nothing. In the first two weeks of the

lockdown, I somehow enjoyed the moment, because it sounded like a holiday to me. But then as from the third week, I realized that it was serious and I had to get my mind involved, so as to distract myself from the disturbing news about the number of people infected and the numerous death reports. It was worse for me, because I was far from my family and friends. I was alone in a different country and the airports were closed. I could not travel and felt like I was on an island alone. I was suffering emotionally, but had almost nobody to share my feelings with, because the whole world was suffering the same.

I had to look for ways of surviving through the problem. YouTube became my friend. Every day, I would go to the “how to” kind of videos or the DIY (do it yourself). I made use of the natural materials around me, since I lived on a farm and the resources were plenty. I dusted a sewing machine that had been abandoned at a corridor and almost nobody thought of its utility all through. I put my hands and mind into working, I activated my artistic enzymes. By the end of three months, I had built myself a religious art gallery, the first of its type in that country. Making religious objects, sacramentals and garments, all from nature and artistic fabrics and materials. I built an online platform and by the time end of 2021, I could not satisfy all the orders that I was getting. The demand was too much, the returns overwhelming.

I no longer depended on the small hand sewing machine, but had to buy three more big industrial sewing machines. I also outsourced tailors, carpenters and other artisans when the orders from all over that country became overwhelming. I

would design church furniture and pews then get carpenters to build them.

My art gallery, designated “*Arte Sacra*”, which started as a way of dealing with emotional pain and suffering, made me realize that I am a creative artist who could do a lot and also design, it made me discover my confidence, because I was invited on big platforms like radio stations, to talk about my work. It made me thankful to God for His gifts, and above all, it gave me the peace that I needed in the middle of adversity. This could also be a source of your breakthrough and a realization of your purpose and great potential in life, as it was with my case. I discovered my potential which is helpful to me up to date, I love art.

Suffering humbles you.

I truly believe that every single person has to come across a situation, or somebody, that absolutely destroys them, so that they can figure out who they are. Life does not give you the people you want, it gives you the people you need, to love you, to hate you, to make you, to break you and make you humble.

This verse from the book of 2 Corinthians 12:7 explains this in the best words ever that I could find, when Paul says, “So, that I would not become too proud of the wonderful things that were shown to me, a painful physical problem was given to me. This problem was a messenger from Satan, sent to beat me and keep me from being too proud”.

Some Bible translations will call it “a thorn in the flesh”. Sometimes we are so proud to notice the needs of the people around us, God gives us grace in opposing our pride through suffering.

Humility is our greatest companion and often comes through no other avenue than by suffering in our lives.

Suffering reminds you of your humanity, of your finiteness. When you go through sickness or loss, you are reminded that you are not in control of your life. You need to be humble and learn to depend on the master of your life.

Katerina Stoykova Klemer once said; “If pain doesn't lead to humility, you have wasted your suffering.”

I know of this lady; she is still alive but completely changed. She was very proud and lived her life to the fullest. She looked down upon people, especially some of us who lived around her. She would share nothing with anybody and in extreme cases where she was forced by circumstances to share even a seat, she would wipe it seriously with some cloth, before sitting.

Unfortunately, one day as she was in the market, she accidentally fell in a ditch and broke her leg. At first, we did not know what to do, since even shaking anyone's hand for greeting was a problem with her.

She would shake your hand, but immediately cleanse it with alcohol gel, just in case contracted germs. She was badly fractured, such that she required help in almost everything around her life. It is in this state of her pain and suffering that she had to be humbled if at all she was to survive.

I vividly remember that on the first day, she never ate. We were all afraid of going near her, because we knew her level of pride. We could not imagine how she could swallow our food. Towards the end of the second day she cried, talked to some of us who were near her, asked for forgiveness and asked for food.

I thought I was dreaming, I could not imagine that, that same woman could eat food prepared by anybody and accept to be cleaned and clothed by anyone available.

It took long, almost a year, for her to go back to her normal routine, but that experience was so humbling, such that from then on, she interacts freely with everyone as a way of appreciation for the help we granted her when she was helpless.

Many have found that by accepting difficulties and troubles, their hearts have become softened. The humility that pain brings, opens your mind to your dependency on God and

His purpose for you. You become like little children, who are fully dependent on the father. You can understand that, through suffering and difficulties, He intends to humble you and draw you closer to Him.

Suffering Strengthens Your Faith

Faith, in this context, means your trust in the love, power and mercy of God, to watch over you and care for you at all times, despite your present difficulties. It does not make things easy, but it makes them possible. You may fall as many times as your destiny requires, but by faith, it is possible to stand and continue with the journey. Faith reminds you to do what you can do and leave what you cannot do to God.

When your body stays idle for some time, then one day you decide to do some exercises, the muscles are often stretched and this causes pain and discomfort for some days. The same thing happens with your spiritual life. The “muscle” of faith needs to be exercised, and at some point, it may cause some pain, suffering and discomfort when it stretches. Unless your faith is put to the test, it will not be exercised or strengthened. This testing of faith is clearly indicated in the book of James 1:2–3, “My brothers and sisters, when you have many kinds of troubles, you should be full of joy, because you know that these troubles test your faith, and this will give you patience.”

God isn’t just interested in only giving you rest and comfort. While He definitely gives incredible comfort during all your trials, He is also interested in using them to mature you and teach you to trust Him and spend your life chasing what matters most while enriching your hope in Him.

Whenever you are faced with problems, you are reminded to trust in God. He will take you out of it. At times, you make the mistake of trusting in your own strength and understanding, and that is when the pain becomes unbearable. The bible says in Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.” You must have seen people who never go to church or pray, but in the middle of adversities, they never miss any church service, neither skip any prayer. It is the extent of the suffering that pushes them to seek God more.

Many people were converted into Christianity during the COVID19 pandemic, than ever before. After all the medications failed, they realized that only their faith could see them through the ordeal. Faith does not remove the pain, but it helps us to get through the pain with hope and trust in God, which enables us to endure our suffering with hope. Let us be prepared to “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” 1 Timothy 6:12. This verse inspires you to never give up and to keep doing what’s right. Those who continue to fight the good fight will find happiness. Just hold on to your pain.

The story of Abraham, our great father of faith, is an example of how faith can be tested through suffering, when God asked him to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Imagine the trauma Abraham went through, at the time he got that message from God. To sacrifice his only son; burn him alive like an animal. The agony in His heart as he walked to the place of sacrifice with firewood ready, the pain of looking at this son and imagining the ordeal

that awaited him. Sometimes, the testing of our faith is so deep that we even doubt the hand of God, but He promises to see us through if we have faith anyway. “...God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear...”1Corinthians 10: 13b

Suffering Teaches You To Comfort Others

In Latin we say, “*experientia est optimus magister*”, meaning “Experience is the best Teacher.” When you go through suffering, you are in a better position to tell of the pain to others. Through helping them out, you get the first-hand experience of how to deal with certain issues. Suffering helps to increase your understanding and compassion for others, based on a shared experience. It is easier to go for help from someone who has gone through the same predicament facing you, than someone who has not experienced it at all, just as it is hard for anyone without shoes to teach you how to tie shoe laces. Everybody hurts sometimes, and allowing yourself to feel this universal emotion links us together in a web of compassion with others.

The dictionary defines compassion as a “deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with the wish to relieve it”, but the only way you can gain a deep awareness of the suffering of others is by having suffered yourself. A theoretical understanding of suffering is as meaningless as a theoretical description of a color to a blind person, it is of less impact and value. To know it, you need to experience it, feel it and go through it. Life is not about solving problems using the theories we learn in school; it is a reality to be experienced and lived. Sometimes, you can't see yourself clearly until you see yourself through the eyes of others.

This can best be explained as in the book of 2 Corinthians 1:4, “He comforts us every time we have trouble, so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us.” Our Lord experienced the pains of living in a fallen world. He did it all because of our sins. Therefore, He brings encouragement through His Holy Spirit to the souls of those who have been transformed by the gospel. When we go through periods of pain and experience the comfort of God, we can have the conviction, the testimony, and the willingness to comfort those who experience the consequences of their pain.

Personally, I find it very easy and natural to comfort people who have been through pains like rejection, because I have heavily experienced it, of which the case could be different if I hadn’t suffered it. I have highly experienced lack when I was growing up, I saw my grandfather sell land, goats, cows, maize and sweet potatoes, so as to pay my school fees, especially in my primary school education.

I was never given pocket money to school and I was in a boarding school from class four, all through primary school, to secondary school, up to the university. Anybody who went to the same school that I was in, knows that I was a needy pupil all through. Right now, I do not need any manual to read about poverty and lack, so as to write about it or to understand someone going through it, I am a living manual for that. Suffering all these helped me to be strong, and now it helps me to easily connect with anyone who is going through the same, when they come to me for help, I can easily see through their pains. When you help others in their pain, you find joy and you

are able to heal yourself at the same time, because a dose of joy is a spiritual cure and it transcends all barriers.

I went through so many unhappy moments growing up. That, with time, taught me that God had an assignment for me to help others going through the same in this world. I feel fulfilled when I meet somebody going through what I went through and I get the opportunity to lessen their pain, then I clearly know that my suffering was not in vain. I made it part of my mission to spread love everywhere I go, and my daily prayer is that no one should ever come to me without leaving happier. I can assure you that when you have been through terrible pain and suffering in life, you do not wish anyone to go through the same.

Suffering Reminds You Of The Shortness Of Life

Your suffering is a constant reminder that, no matter what you go through, you do not have a city that lasts forever in this world, but you are looking for the city that you will have in the future. God allows many natural calamities, like drought and pandemics, to remind you of the severity and the destructive nature of sin, and also of the shortness of life.

Often times, people forget that this world is not our home, and do evil things towards one another, forgetting that we are only passersby here. Worldwide disasters like drought may be caused by destruction of natural resources and unequal distribution of the few resources that we have. This shows how sin has caused dysfunction in the nature, because of egocentrism of some leaders, and how sin has brought wickedness into the hearts of humans.

God allows tragedy to show us how destructive sin can be, when we keep thinking about ourselves and forgetting the person next to us. His goal for us is to repent, and turn to following Him, failure to which is death. Going through the pain of healing the loss of a loved one helps you to meditate and think about your own life and its brevity.

There are some sicknesses that at times leave you almost losing your life. They come as a wakeup call that we are not here to live forever. On 20th October 2020, I was almost sure of my death. I was sick, seriously sick, and I needed a priest to give me the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. I was 35 years of age, I lay down on my sick bed looking at the ceiling and imagining myself gone with the angels, I would try to examine my life- what I had achieved.

I realized that it was not much, and unfortunately there was no more time, because I believed that I was dying. I felt that there was a lot I had not done in life. I tried to rearrange my life and make plans, but I was in bed and could do nothing. After receiving the sacrament, and medications for a few days, I regained my strength.

Every day that I lived was a miracle during that time. I felt I would die anytime, but I only came to that realization after the pain and suffering caused by illness. Every time I get sick, I am reminded that I may leave anytime, although I still got things to do. And that's why you are always reminded to do what is your best today, to make the world a better place, because tomorrow is unknown.

Hebrews 13:14, reminds you that suffering is temporary and of this world only. Suffering comes to remind you that you are still alive. Suffering and pain causes us to long for our heavenly home and live more fully for eternity, since we are only "temporary residents" in this world. When you experience an accident where people die on the spot, then you are led to the awakening that life is surely short. This helps you to redirect your life with more eternal purpose than before, and you focus

more on pleasing the Lord, and not earthly desires. Suffering and pain have existed as long as human beings have. When you suffer, you are connected to the common fate of the people who came before us, and the people who will come after us.

Suffering Helps You To Learn And Be Wise

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”-Benjamin Franklin. Life is a school, and no one is exempted from this school, the young and old alike, and as long as life exists, then learning continues. Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Once the shell is broken in suffering, your world view is broadened and your perspective towards life becomes wiser. Without pain, there would be no progress nor wisdom in the world.

David wrote in Psalms 119:7 “Before I suffered, I did wrong, but now I obey your word” Later in that same Psalm, in verse 71, he wrote, “It was good for me to suffer so I would learn your demands.” David saw that suffering is what he needed to learn and be better than he was. You learn far more through suffering than you do through success. Experience has always been very crucial in grasping most of the life’s lessons.

There is a Swahili saying that says “*mtoto akililia wembe, mpe*” (when a child cries for a razor blade, give it to them). It is easier for the child to get a cut from the razor blade and become wiser to never touch it again, than explain to them the dangers of the razor blade, because in many cases, they may see you as unwilling to give them what they want. A wise man is one who has learned through experience. Michael Jordan, when he was asked about his secret to success, said; “I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.”

Some of you, learned the value of money only when you were independent and had to pay your own bills, and somehow at the end, the income and the expenditure didn't seem to balance, leading you into debts. You often learn the value of friendship, only after you have gone through the pain of being betrayed, and lost a someone you trusted. Some people have learned the value of marriage only after going through a divorce, and the value of health only after being admitted in a hospital.

Why is that? We are at times stubborn and just refuse to learn things naturally. When you experience this kind of problem that is rooted in making you learn something, rather than thinking that God hates you, thank Him because of the lessons learned.

The next time suffering gets you to rock bottom, don't ask "Why me?", but stop and think, "What is God trying to get through to me with this? What is the message He is trying to put across in this?" God may want to teach you something in the problem you are facing or may soon be facing. He may want to expose a weakness or a blind spot, or show a character defect in you, that after correcting will make you emerge as wiser.

There are lessons you can only learn by going through the whole process and coming out alive to tell the story. Suffering helps you to avoid making the same mistakes in future, it is unwise to get burned by the same flame twice. There is an ancient Indian proverb, which says that before we can see properly, we must first shed our tears to clear the eyes. Suffering has been stronger than all other teachings. Through the many times I have suffered and shed tears, I learned to understand life. I have been bent and broken until I got into the best shape to share with others my experiences.

Suffering Teaches You The Value Of Contentment

Most of us have gone through the kind of life where we were basically surviving. We lacked most of the things we enjoy today. Bread was a luxury to me, sometimes I am moved to tears when I can freely walk into a shop and buy bread with my money, and eat as much as I want. Today, I am very content with what I have, because I know what it means not to have. Like Paul says in his letter to the Philippians 4:12, “I know how to live when I am poor, and I know how to live when I have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being happy at any time, in everything that happens, when I have enough to eat and when I go hungry, when I have more than I need and when I do not have enough.” When you have lived in the two extremities of life, then suffering lack gives you the meaning of appreciating plenty. Yesterday, I could not afford to walk into a hotel for any meal. I remember when I was at the university and all I could afford for lunch were meals in some sheds by the roadside which we popularly nicknamed “*kibandasky*”.

A contrasting name to the most prestigious hotel in Nairobi at the time; “*Kempinsky*”. Today, when I walk into a five-star hotel and order for any meal I want, I am filled with gratitude, because I know where I am coming from. If at times I am offered a simple meal by anybody, I rarely look at the

contents of the plate, but at the heart that gave it, because I know of a time when I never had anything to offer to anyone. The more one has suffered, the less one demands. To protest is a sign that one has traversed no hell. For those who have lived hell on earth, earthly pleasures mean nothing to them and they can literally survive in any environment.

To anybody who is going through pain and suffering now, I can tell you to be patient and tough. To handle each day as it comes, because someday, the pain will be useful to you. It will give you the grace to survive in many places, where people who have not been through pain can't survive. Offer your suffering as a sacrifice for now, which will be a treasure in future. In some ways suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning.

I remember in the 90s, we literally survived on selling sweet potatoes, arrow roots and pumpkins at Tala Market, in Machakos county. I was, ten years to be precise, but I knew how to get a hoe, plant and cultivate sweet potatoes, and sell them at the market. Tuesdays and Fridays were our market days. If at all I expected to get toiletries for school in following term, I had to bear the scorching sun while selling in the market. As if that wasn't enough, some of my colleagues from the rich families would stroll with their mothers on market days and bump into me, desperately selling my sweet potatoes, then use that as ammunition to "embarrass" me in front of the other students come school days. It was not easy sitting in the open-air market, under the scorching sun, with no guarantee of customers. At times, we would go back with the produce and sell on the next market day. Other times, we would be

interrupted by heavy rains had to walk back home, about seven kilometers from the market. I walked countless times during market days, with my basket full of sweet potatoes or arrow roots, with my grandmother occasionally holding my hand to help me cross small streams. I can still clearly see her making me sit under a tree to rest a bit and enjoy some consoling shade, before continuing with our walking under the blazing sun. This experience of suffering, helps me to be content with whatever amount that anybody offers, because I know the pain of getting money, the hustle behind putting food on the table, and the suffering one goes through to have a coin in the bank.

Suffering Helps You To Develop Character And Grow

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering, can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.” Helen Keller

God uses suffering to develop and give you character in your life. Pain can be a catalyst for that growth and transformation. This reminds me of a common phase in Kenya “character development”. When people move from upcountry to the city, they are in most cases naive, innocent and ignorant about the city life. In most cases, they suffer in the hands of conmen and women as a form of saying “welcome to city life”.

Some may pose as potential life partners, just to have sexual relations with you then leave you. Others may want to suck some money out of you. This kind of suffering makes you learn the hard way that you never want to go through the experience again. It is this nasty experience that we call “character development.”

After this development, you grow to be somebody else and you are never the same again. “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been

poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Rom. 5:3-5.

God will test you because he wants you to grow up. He wants you to mature. He wants you to develop a walk with him that is not based on your fluctuating emotions, but on your commitment to him, as you learn to walk by faith. Never doubt God in the darkness what he has given you in the light. The art of life is to know how to enjoy a little and to endure very much, only then can you grow.

Once, I was given some little pocket money by my grandfather as I was going back to school. It was not common for me to be given money. It was only 200 shillings, but you should have seen the way I was overexcited about it.

I imagined I could buy all the snacks in the market with that money. As I was meandering the streets of the nearest Tala Market, I came across some people who were gambling. They had three white plastic cups on a table and any spectator wishing to play would place some money under one of the cups.

The man in charge would shuffle the cups, then ask under which cup the money was. If the person who placed the money got it right, they would get double the amount they had placed. If not, they would lose the money to any other person who could point out the right cup. I found that very easy and couldn't understand how one would fail at just pointing out the correct cup.

I placed my first bet with 100 shillings. They put the money under one cup, which I clearly saw and marked, they said if after the shuffle, I pointed out the cup that had the money, I would get double my stake, if not, I would lose my

money. I was excited and was sure of my bet. Who could fail pointing out one cup out of the three? Easy! So, I thought. After the shuffle, I pointed at ‘my cup’, but to my disappointment, the money was not there! Hell knows how the money moved from that cup, to the one that another man in the crowd pointed at, thus, winning my 100 shillings.

I lost my money, but because I was naïve and never knew of gamblers, I tried a second time with the remaining hundred. Well, you know what happened! Yes, you do. I lost it. I was in pain, I was in denial.

For the first time, I had been given pocket money, then lost it all just like that, in broad daylight. I cried and cursed God for leading me through that street. It was a real problem going to school without money, suffering a whole term. But this helped me to grow out of that naivety and ignorance, to be the responsible person that I am today.

That whole term with no money, after I had imagined the kind of good life that I would have that term, planted a strong seed of growth in me that I would otherwise not have learned through mere advice.

Whenever I see children in school uniform around those gambling areas, I get chills, remembering my own experience, and I chase them away, making sure that they are out of sight from such daylight robbery. Remember that every pain is a lesson, and every lesson makes you better. All you have to do is embrace your pain and suffering, and you will find the strength to overcome it.

Through suffering, God is preparing you to be a good witness here, and a good citizen for eternity. He is far more

concerned for your character development, than He is about your momentary comfort! The Bible, in Hebrews 2:10, says that the Author of our Salvation (Jesus) was perfected through sufferings. What makes us think that we are any different? God uses problems to perfect you, just as He used suffering to perfect Jesus.

Suffering Disciplines You

Discipline means to train a person in accordance with proper rules of conduct or the law, which may change from one place to another. For example, one way God teaches us His law is through our study of the Bible. Generally, discipline can be used to mean punishing for the purpose of improving behavior. Parents have the responsibility of punishing their children to help them learn from their wrong behavior, especially those who are not ready to learn by mere instructions. In the same way, there are times when God allows you to suffer the consequences of disobedience, so that you can learn from your sinful mistakes.

If God ignored your misbehavior and allowed you to continue in it, He would not be expressing the love of a Father who wants the best for His children. No father would sit and watch as their children enter into a ditch of misery in life.

In life, you must all suffer one of these two things: the pain of discipline, or the pain of regret or disappointment. The pain of discipline is far less than the pain of regret, so If you're going through hell, just keep going, knowing that; "The Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as His child." Hebrews 12:6.

I remember one time I was heavily stressed and I needed someone to talk to. I was in a faraway country, miles away from home, but I needed spiritual help. So, I approached an old

capuchin Franciscan priest called *Frei* Moises Lokondo. I was crying and told Him I could not understand why God would choose to punish me in such a way, after I had faithfully served Him for 12 years as a missionary.

I was leaving that mission land, but in a lot of pain and tears. I thought that God would have made my last days worthwhile as a way of appreciating my service to the people there.

The priest smiled and pulled a bible from his drawer. He read to me the verse from Hebrews 12:6, and showed me that my suffering was a clear indication that the Lord loved me and He was trying to discipline me as His beloved child. Well, that did not sit well with me at that time, but later I saw the truth in his words. “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it”. Heb. 12:7-11

Some of you may have had human fathers who disciplined you for a mistake done and you respected them for that. How much more then, should you submit to your heavenly Father. Your earthly fathers disciplined you, as they thought best; but God disciplines you for your good, until He feels that you are fit to share in His Holiness. God often uses suffering to train and discipline us as His children, in order to grow us into maturity. I would encourage you to endure hardship as discipline from God, because we are His legitimate children, His true sons and daughters. This kind of correction or discipline is one of the proof that you are one of God’s children! He doesn’t let you sin and get away with it.

A father will not discipline the neighbor's kids, because they're not his. He will discipline his kids because he loves them and want the best for them, because they're his blood. Just as parents allow kids to suffer the consequences of their mistakes so they can learn and develop character, God allows people to suffer the consequences of their individual and collective sins. Sometimes, He imposes painful consequences designed to correct His children. Often, though, the pain you experience is the natural result of your own choices, or of living in a painfully broken world.

Suffering Helps You To Understand The Glory Of God

God is working to display His glory in your pain and suffering. Remember the story of the man who was born blind, in the gospel of St. John, and the disciples could not understand the man's suffering and the purpose, but Jesus gave a direct answer and said; "It is not this man's sin or his parents' sin that made him blind. This man was born blind so that God's power could be shown in him.

I have had this discussion many times with my friend Josephat Mwanzia and we never reach a consensus. I got so much used to suffering, because I have suffered in almost all the aspects of life that I keep telling Josephat that, I think I was born to serve as an example to everyone who needs to talk about any aspect in life. I have gone through the pain of so many situations and came out alive, that I believe that my life can now be used as an example by anyone who wants to.

I believe that I am an instrument to be used for God's glory, and that for me to go through all the traumas, it was not because my mother or father or the relatives that neglected me made a mistake, but it was in God's plan for me to be a witness of His goodness to many. Josephat never believes that God can be glorified through my suffering, and we always end up arguing. Ironically, Mwanzia is a social worker, and works with abandoned and orphaned children, but He believes it was God's

wish that these children go through hardship and be rescued. Come on Mr. Mwanzia, it is the same God who is being glorified in those kids that is being glorified in my and your suffering.

Suffering allows you to be a witness of Christ to those who do not know Him, or who do not believe in His power. Certainly, our heavenly Father allows His children to experience various afflictions. But there are greater purposes that you are fulfilling through these difficulties and pains.

Ultimately, they all result in the maturity of His children, the spread of the gospel, and the glory of His name. Twenty years ago, many people kept telling me that I needed to write a book and document all that I had gone through in life, because it was a lot at my age. I was not fully prepared to write this book then; I was a teenager and wanted to fit in, so I never wanted the other young chaps to know about my struggles behind the curtains.

Some people would tell me that I needed to document my pains and struggles so as to help other young girls, but I felt that I was not ready, though I knew one day I would. I can boldly say that from that time onwards, God submitted me into serious difficulties that I may come out alive and proclaim His glory and anyone in doubt may believe. It is because of these experiences that I now write books based on real live examples, and I still continue holding on to God, because He tells me that “He will never leave me nor forsake me.” Hebrews 13:5.

Always remember that God is always with you in your suffering. God is always walking with you, protecting and

guiding you and declares that “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” Isaiah 54:17

The suffering you experience makes you think about your life deeper than you do on calm days. You at times feel alone in your suffering and think no one understands. I spent a lot of time in solitude, because I was sure that nobody seemed to understand exactly the pain I was in. I would look at people and wonder how they would feel and act if God made them pass through exactly what I was going through.

To date I still don't know where I used to get strength to even walk when I was going through some pains. But it is funny to share with you that during my lowest moments, that's when I travel a lot, because I feel like I just need to go and be away from everybody.

The many times I have travelled around the world, and the country, were during my worst moments. In such moments, many people indulge in self-pity and become bitter. Rather than despairing, you can allow your suffering to be turned to the glory of God. Once you resign from battling with your pains and suffering and humbly say, “Lord, thy will be done,” God can speak to you.

There are many instances where people have thanked God for taking them through the valley of suffering, because it has caused them to stop and think, and eventually see His goodness through it all. They then realize there is more to life than fulfilling their own desires, pleasures, and pursuits. Many

testify that they have found the Lord through suffering. I can testify that time and again, it was at my worst that I decided to journal all my pains and help someone who is on the verge of giving up in life. My breakthrough in writing came as a result of my breakdown with suffering. I thank God that I suffered so that I could have a story to tell and I can gladly say with Paul “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Corinthians 15:57

Suffering Helps You To Identify With Christ's Sufferings

The bible says in the letter to St. Peter, "Rejoice when you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed" 1 Peter 4:13.

The only way you may be able to participate and to identify with Christ's sufferings is through experiencing the same. Christ suffered persecutions, rejections and physical assaults, the same way we do. When we experience such and identify with what He went through, the pain is more understandable and bearable. Being a successful person is not necessarily defined by what you have achieved, but by what you have overcome.

Paul says, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

I want to know Christ yes, to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings." Phil. 3:8-10. Paul is saying that nothing is worth as much as knowing Jesus, and you come to know Him more through His resurrection power, but remember there can never be a

resurrection without a death. That at the end of the suffering, there is the joy of triumph. Through sharing and identifying with Him in His suffering, you are able to give pain more meaning, and a reason to endure to the end. There is a level at which you cannot know Jesus more, except through your suffering.

Multiple times, the Scriptures point to how suffering allows you to identify with, and draw near to Christ, like nothing else can.

“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange things were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.” 1 Peter 4:12-13.

When life gets really difficult, and the pain unbearable, don't jump to the conclusion that God has abandoned you, or that He is blind to your situation. Instead, be glad that you are in part of God's project to reveal His glory. You are a true and living testimony of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, actually, it should make you proud knowing that you have been chosen to be used by God, as an instrument to have a taste of His suffering, and the coming glory will be outpouring and you shall rejoice in exaltation.

In some cases, the suffering is so unjust and out of control. The barren woman for example suffers unjustly. She is despised and rejected, because of superstitions and cultural stigma and standards. Her condition does not indicate a curse from God, and she need not despair. She is just being used by

Jesus to share in His suffering, He was also despised and rejected. In this case, let us always remember that He knows what is best for us. I have come to a conclusion that sometimes we suffer because we tend to dictate and instruct God on what He should do, yet He is the creator and all-powerful God, who knows what is right and wrong for everybody.

Suffering Drives You To Dependence On God

Nothing happens to anybody, which he is not fitted by nature to bear. That explains why after you have tried all the worldly means of solving your problems and they fail you still run back to the word of God which reminds you that you can never be tempted beyond what you can bear. Always believe and trust God, even when things don't make sense to you at that moment, one day they surely will and you will give thanks and appreciate yourself for not giving up.

Pain and suffering cause you to run to God with your need, it brings you to the awakening that by your strength alone, you are nothing and powerless. When you realize you are not in control and that your life is a "mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14), you are able to cling to God, who alone is your rock and sure foundation. An example from the scripture is when the children of Israel were involved in the worship of idols, the wrath of God was released upon them in the form of a disaster.

These disasters are taken to be evil because they brought suffering and pain, but the aftermath of it all is that it caused them to return to God, plead for mercy, become closer to Him again, and fully depend on His providence. You were created to always depend on God, and not on any other earthly gods, nor on your own abilities. So, whenever you go off, God will allow

suffering to come to you, to remind you of your true nature of dependence on Him. You are not independent in this world. Suffering reminds you to turn back to God and show your loyalty and dependence on Him as the supreme authority.

Suffering drives you to lean on God like nothing else can, and it allows you to see that God is enough and He is greater than your pains. It allows you to see that you have something worth far more than anything this earth can equate.

It reaches a point where you are overwhelmed by your suffering and that is when you run to surrender everything to God and cry out, “into your hands Lord I commit my spirit” or better still “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13. Even if the Lord may at times seem silent and unresponsive to your cry for help when you run to Him, just talk to Him on your pains, because His timing is different and He is neither deaf nor blind to see your predicament. “Is He deaf, the one who made your ears? Is He blind, the one who formed your eyes?” Psalm 94:9

Whenever you have everything, you want and wish for in life, and all seems to be moving on smoothly, there is this sense of independence. In most cases, you lose focus and sight of the things of God, and you are easily carried into worldly pleasures.

There is nothing to struggle for, so there is no need to call on God. This can lead you to gradually detach from God, and you begin to see no need to depend on God, because you think you have all that you need to be content in life. God, in this case, may allow suffering to come to

you, as a reminder that you are never autonomous in this world. And you need to always aspire the things of heaven not of this world. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God”. Colossians 3:1

Sometimes you may have to suffer extensively, but you can find relieve in accepting what God has allowed for your good. God is the Master Planner-with every trial, He has promised to provide for your keeping. When the apostle Paul was able to accept his difficulty in the mission that God had given Him, he was able to be a happy and carry out the work entrusted to him.

He prayed three times, asking God to remove the thorn from his flesh, but God answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” 2 Corinthians 12:9. Similarly, as you completely surrender to God and accept your suffering, God’s strength sustains you with His grace that is ever sufficient. When you accept God’s plan for you in suffering, it brings forth an expression of thankfulness that blesses your heart and witnesses to those around you. You need to acknowledge with a strong believe the paradox Gods’ strength is most perfect when you are weak.

In summary

After going through all these reasons as to why you suffer, we can now courageously say that nothing happens to you, it happens for you. All the pain and suffering comes for a season and for a reason. Try to see the positive in negative events. Go through your struggles victoriously and leave a legacy of

character and growth attained through hardship. Make history with your struggles. Tell yourself that everything will be ok at the end, and if it is not ok, then it is not the end.

Let God use you in your pain to mend the broken world, because in most cases, He uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. Let Him use you in your weakness, even at your lowest point, when you feel worthless. “But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” 1 Corinthians 1:27

In His loving wisdom which no man can understand, God is teaching you powerful lessons through your suffering that will strengthen you for future experiences and tasks and help to prepare you for your place in His eternal Kingdom. In your human capacity, you will never completely understand why God allows some pains and situations to take place.

But you can have faith that suffering is not in vain, neither is it meaningless. God always desires the best for you. He knows that the best view comes from the hardest climb, and that’s why He wants you to climb higher in faith. God is constantly creating within you qualities of character that cannot be gained except by overcoming difficulties.

He also uses suffering to draw your attention to some changes you need to put so as to be exactly where he created you to be.

The words of Psalms 23:4 gives a good reminder that God is there through the storm even if He seems far during the

darkest times. “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” Remember that God in the book of Isaiah reminds us that He knows each and every one by name, He knows your ways and whatever you go through, whether through the waters of fires.

He is in control, and none of these will make you perish. “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." Isaiah 43:1-2. And above all, always remember there is nothing in this world that happens in vain and nothing is permanent. Yes, at one point we do live in a world of hurt, struggles and pains, but it won't always be that way “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1

Chapter III

How To Heal From Pain And Suffering

Pain and suffering can hit you hard until you feel weak and left with no strength to bear it. It's ok to ask God to take away suffering; Jesus did. As accounted in the book of Mark 14: 36 "Abba, Father," He cried out, "Everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me.

Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." In many cases, He does not take away the cup of suffering. Just as He did with Jesus, He calls you to choose the path of suffering for the sake of others, and for His ultimate glory.

He promises to relieve you of the suffering after a little while. "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you." 1 Peter 5:10

All of us experience pain. It might stem from losing a loved one, losing a job, ending a relationship, being in an accident, or undergoing any kind of trauma. Don't get lost in

your pain and don't even hide your scars, know that one day your scars will make the best out of you and your pain will become your cure.

The best way to deal with pain as we are now going to see is to face the pain head-on and work through it, embrace your struggles and learn to control every response to your suffering. Pain and suffering is really unavoidable in life, however, "how" we deal with it is what will make us or break us. The secret of going through pain is learning how to use your pain and suffering for your good instead of having pain and suffering use you. If you are able to do that, then you are able to control your life too. If not, life controls you and it surely makes everything difficult for you.

Change your perception and know that if you believe you are entitled to a life of comfort, then a life that consists of suffering is simply unfair, but if you believe that life is about growth and that growth entails a degree of pain and suffering, then there is nothing unfair about it, it is just normal. And God's unfailing and unconditional love sees you through the pain because He is infinitely compassionate and benevolent.

Many breakthroughs and successes in life that are good and important require immense suffering. A great companion of suffering is sacrifice. As we saw earlier God does not force you into the choice, but He gives you free will and time to choose. He did not promise you pain free life in your choices, He made it very clear to all "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save

it.” Luke 9:23-2. Choosing the path to follow Jesus is not easy or comfortable, but it is worthwhile because the suffering you experience in this life is nothing compared to the joys of spending eternity with God. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Even after going through all the pain and suffering, do not forget to keep your hope alive for better days. Let your tears always end with some sigh of relief, knowing that God does not cease to be God because of your suffering, He still remains God and can change every situation that you go through. David recorded 150 sacred songs in the bible which we call “psalms,” at times we call him the psalmist, they frequently contain his cries to God for help and relief from suffering.

In most cases, these psalms always end with the psalmist showing his hope in God, and the assurance that in a while the pain will be gone. It is this same hope and assurance of God’s unending love and mercy, that we are going to insist as we continue talking about suffering. An example of a psalm that starts with anguish, but ends in hope is psalm 13.

O LORD, how long will You forget me? Forever? How long will You look the other way? How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand? Turn and answer me, O LORD my God! Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.

Don’t let my enemies gloat, saying, “We have defeated him!” Don’t let them rejoice at my downfall but I trust in Your unfailing love. I will rejoice because You have rescued me. I will sing to the Lord because He is good to me.

Acceptance

Acceptance in our case here means that you stop trying to deny your reality and you acknowledge it as it is. Acceptance does not mean that you approve of a situation or that you don't want it to change, or you like it that way. It also does not mean that you have forgiven.

It simply means accepting that things are the way they are, and then trying to come up with the means of solving the issues. Suffering is an inevitable part of life, and it's impossible to avoid or eliminate it. Don't shy away from the challenges of life, embrace them, learn from them and always rise above them.

Without obstacles you cannot make any progress and without winning battles you cannot talk of victory. Sometimes, you might not find a solution to a problem, understand that not all problems have solutions, some are a new truth to be accepted and lived, like a divorce.

You cannot force anyone to love you again, but you can learn to live without them and accept the fact that some things will never go back to the way they used to be.

Accepting also doesn't mean resigning yourself to suffering. Coming to terms with the fact that as a human being you have to expect a certain amount of pain and suffering in your life, may make it easier to cope when pain comes your way. It's about reducing your own suffering, like if you are

going through domestic violence, acceptance in this case means acknowledging that the abuse occurred.

You were hurt, you are in pain. But that doesn't mean that you have forgiven the person, or you should continue suffering in abuse. It means you are now ready to get a solution.

Forgiveness is optional in all cases, but acceptance is necessary for moving forward, and it opens avenues for solutions. Acceptance is simply about whether or not you want to continue spending so much time and energy experiencing all of these painful emotions about a situation, or you need to get help.

Once you accept the reality, your anger tends to decrease, and your spirit calms down. The painful situation loses the power it has over you and no longer controls you. With time, the suffering goes away, but the pain still remains, though now it becomes manageable.

Somebody who has had an accident and had the leg amputated, for example, has the pain of losing the leg and suffers the trauma of living with the condition. After acceptance, living becomes light and worthwhile, although the pain in the leg still remains, but it is managed by medication.

Acceptance also, doesn't mean giving up or being passive about a situation. I know of this man who was an alcoholic, the family did everything to get a solution to his drinking problem. The last time I checked, the man would drink and make noise along the streets calling out names, sometimes the drinking would affect his health and he would need to be hospitalized. When I asked the wife what was happening to him, she said that they were no longer doing anything and that they had

“accepted” the situation. In this case she was simply telling me that they had given up on him.

Acceptance doesn't happen overnight. More painful situations will take more time and practice. Like in cases of death and divorce. Sometimes, you may try to accept, then after a while, you find yourself getting back to the previous condition of complaining and ruminating about a painful situation. Do not judge yourself for not being able to accept your reality easily. Just avoid situations that are likely to trigger your mind to blame instead of acceptance.

Acceptance is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced over time. You have to start small with situations that are less painful. Like in cases of betrayal from a not so close friend, or the loss of an opportunity, or fighting a curable disease. This helps you practice and builds your confidence and ability to face more complicated situations.

You can start with accepting that you're stuck in traffic, and there is nothing you can do about it. You must have seen those rogue drivers who will make everything complicated on the road by using wrong lanes and making the traffic worse or hooting aimlessly, and others with all the lack of manners try to shout at the motorists ahead of them.

When you practice acceptance, you let yourself move on, nature takes control and all you can do is flow, you become open to opportunities, and nothing seems to worry you anymore. you are at peace with yourself, the people around you and even the universe in general.

You can't pretend you're fine if you're not. Get honest with yourself. Take control of your mind. Negative thoughts

will never give you a positive life. Accept the fact that something is not right, accept that you are going through pain and suffering, be honest about how you feel. Tell it as it is, first to yourself, then to God, talk to Him for He is closer than a brother.

Lament and cry just as we see in the bible in the books of Psalms, Job, or Lamentations. Go to a place alone and talk to God, even if you are angry with Him, say it all. Talk like you are talking to someone physically. There's no shame in what we feel and it is better to let it out than swallow it and wallow in it.

Understand that pain is inevitable, it's part of being human. But by practicing acceptance we can avoid some needless suffering. Sometimes, we might avoid our pain, pretend it isn't present, or turn to unhealthy behaviors like talking alcohol, which may later develop to addictions. In other cases, we might ruminate about our pain without doing anything about it.

Most of the times, as human beings we come up with two coping mechanisms to deal with pain, either we try pushing suffering away so as to avoid it, whether through painkillers, entertainment, intoxicants or we try holding onto suffering and using it as a means of getting attention and sympathy. These two options create an emotion of push or pull, deny or indulge, pretend or accept. In the end, the best way to deal with pain is to face it, go through it, live the emotion over time and overcome the suffering. Accept that you are not everyone's favorite and remember that you become unstoppable when you work on things that people can't take away from you, things

like mindset, character, personality, transparency and your entire wellbeing.

Life can be unpredictable, and sometimes you are faced with difficult situations you can't change no matter how much you may want to. Learning to tolerate uncertainty is a big leap towards healing from your pain. In life we learn that some wounds don't heal with time, you just have to learn to live with them.

After you have tried to get solutions to your problems and find no solutions then just know that they are no longer problems, but truths to be accepted and adapted as a new way of life. The first step towards dealing with pain and suffering and looking for healing is accepting things as they are. After accepting the present situation then it is easier to come up with strategies and see what can be done or what cannot be done about a certain situation.

Some of the pains that rob you of your peace are out of your control. Your mental state will collapse if you're always trying to control the uncontrollable. You can have peace of mind and deal with your pain by understanding that sometimes, things are outside of your control.

You may be diagnosed with a terminal illness; it can be difficult to face that reality, but it's essential to do so to gain peace of mind, since it is out of your control and of no use to worry over it. Facing such hard times head-on can help you go through the emotion and eventually learn to accept the situation, and deal with your pain, before it pushes you to suffering. It's natural to worry about a parent's illness, or feel dismayed and angry at a loss. But when you fixate on those

feelings, they can eventually take over, disturbing your peace and making it more difficult to cope, yet in the real sense, they are situations you can't change

Avoiding situations, pretending things are different and okay, or harboring anger and bitterness will not help you in dealing with your pain. Ignoring emotions to just get on with things generally doesn't help. Suppressed emotions can intensify, leaving your inner peace highly disturbed and causing more suffering.

The point is accepting not suppressing! It's natural to want to turn away from pain, so it can take time to get in the habit of acceptance. But as it becomes more natural, you'll likely find yourself feeling more at peace. Take ownership of what you can, such as your behavior and attitude, and learn to accept the things you can't, like, other people, natural disasters, time, and so on.

Listen To What God Is Communicating

Although God may seem silent regarding a specific request or petition, remember that He is in a constant state of communication with you. His silence speaks a lot. That's why at times in life we need silence, we need a retreat, we need to go to a quiet place and listen to God's voice. At times, God already gives an answer to your prayers, but you are in a lot of noise and you don't recognize His quiet still voice.

The Bible is full of specific answers about what is right and wrong, as well as information about God's character and His intention for you. Shut all those other voices who tell you what you are and what you are not, and listen to His voice as He speaks to you in His world, and through the people around you. Sometimes, all you can do about your pain is to leave it in God's hands and rest, letting Him to do the rest.

The bible is the written form of communication of God to us, it is the manual that all the solutions to understanding and dealing with our pains and sufferings. It has the answers to all the questions that you have, you only need to discover it.

Ask God to speak to you through the Holy Spirit, who lives inside of you, as you read through the scriptures so that you can be able to make a quick connection between what you are reading and what you are going through. God speaks through the still calm voice at the bottom of the heart, sometimes this voice within you keeps reminding you that there

is more to who you are than your pains, listen to it, possibilities and breakthroughs are being revealed to you.

God is using the battles that you are fighting now to prepare you for future blessings. Things can suddenly and unexpectedly turn out to your favor, miracles do happen, stay open to God's will, believe and trust in God and do the right thing, He is able to do a lot more than you can ever imagine. "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly, than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us" Ephesians 3:20

Find Joy In Your Suffering

It's natural to focus on your immediate pain, anxiety or fear. But on another level, something much greater is being accomplished. Life has everything in it, probably all the answers to your questions on pain and suffering, but your perception limits you to see what you allow it to see. Things are not always as bad as they seem, but sometimes a change of perspective helps you to see the light.

Learn to turn your problems into opportunities by finding the positive in your suffering, as we saw in Chapter II of this book. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, wrote of a process of growth that starts with anguish and leads to absolute confidence in God. "And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" Romans 5:3-5.

Endurance and character are not easy to come by. It takes a whole process of ups and downs, pains and sufferings, which always give you the strength to remain steadfast and exercise your faithfulness as you suffer. You only develop this kind of strength which is crowned with perseverance and hope, by working through the severe challenges of life. Just as physical

endurance is built by exercise, spiritual endurance is established in troubled times.

No matter what precautions you take, or how well you try to organize your life, or how hard you work to be healthy, wealthy, comfortable with friends and family, and successful with your career, something will inevitably ruin it. Suffering will always find its way into your life. Periodic suffering in all areas of life is normal.

Every good marriage has periods of discord and uncertainty, some natural arguments have to come up. Jobs, homes, neighborhoods, and communities enter and leave your life based on need, interest, and a variety of other factors, which are often based on suffering. You may find yourself doing some types of jobs, not because you like, them but because of suffering with your bills and you are left with no choice.

You may have to move to new neighborhood, even if you don't like, but you choose what is affordable. You need to find joy in all these situations that you cannot control, otherwise you will live frustrated in pain. The way you conduct yourself in the face of hardship reveals who you really are at your core, your values, beliefs and commitment to continue to faithfully follow Jesus carrying your own cross as He commanded, even when life seems unbearably difficult.

Consider it pure joy, and you shall be able to victoriously come out of it. Endurance and character are not easy to come by. They are forged in difficult times, giving you the strength to remain steadfast and exercise your faithfulness as you suffer. As Proverbs 24:10 states, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."

Everybody goes through suffering, but let us learn “*how to suffer well*.” Learn to live through your pain meaningfully and purposefully. You are healed of a suffering only by experiencing it to the full and suffering becomes beautiful when anyone bears great calamities with cheerfulness, not through insensibility, but through greatness of mind. You have more power to change your situation than you realize, by being joyful even when life hurts. Remember, you get what you give.

Give the world joy and a smile and before you realize it, everyone will be smiling back at you; people will start to react differently to you when you smile at them. These kinds of positive feedback loops can make a big difference in overcoming your own suffering, rather than being entrenched in it. By finding joy in your suffering, you lessen your pain and that of others

Right now, I can say I consider pure joy what I went through otherwise, I would not have tangible content to write in my books, nor give in my motivation retreats and seminars. Yesterday’s scars made me a star today in my line of duty.

Look At The Greater Achievement

I once enrolled for the gym, but it was short-lived. I remember the words on the entrance of the gym- “no pain no gain”. Well, I started well, but one day I will tell you about the ending. A lot of exercise and stretching of muscles is needed to keep you healthy and fit. It is not for the faint hearted, but for those who endure to the end, we see the evidence in their bodies and their lifestyle. You are putting your body through pain and struggle. But it’s also beautiful, because it helps you to become fit. The journey to attain your purpose in life is the most difficult, but also the most fulfilling. You need to pursue a meaningful life, not an easy life.

To reap the best out of anything in life, you have to put the effort. To be a great singer, you have to put in work, sing every day and train your breathing. Watch other singers, analyze their style, and keep your voice healthy. All of that work could be seen as “suffering”, but it will be the price you pay to be a star.

For me to be able to write, I had to go through a lot of “suffering”; forgo my social life that was taking up my time, forgo small things like siesta, read so many books, and research, write about everything and anything; even if nobody up lauds my works, forget about the leisure of sleeping anyhow, and be extremely disciplined with time and money. All this made me the writer, and speaker I am today. I could have opted to relax and take it easy like any other person around me, just

idle, take naps and not do much, unfortunately I would never have realized my purpose in life.

I was reading about the life of the famous “Mr. Bean”, which I bet anyone reading this book knows. His story talked to me a lot about endurance and hope. Before experiencing the joy and success of being recognized worldwide, he suffered. Rowan Atkinson (Mr. Bean) was born in a middle-class family and suffered terribly when growing up, because of his stammering. He was also teased and bullied in school because of his looks. He was marked and rejected, and as a result, he became withdrawn, shy and lonely.

Nobody saw anything good coming out of him. Admitted to Oxford University, he started falling in love with acting, but he still couldn’t perform because of his speaking problem. He, however, felt the urge to follow his passion against all odds, so he enrolled in a comedy group, but still, his stammering could not let him be.

Many TV shows and acting groups rejected him, but he never stopped to believe in himself. He had a great passion for making people laugh, so he decided to leave everything else, and focus on that aspect. He decided to look at the greater picture of his suffering and chain his pain for his good. He started producing skits without talking, seeing that talking was not allowing him be what he wanted to be.

Nobody in the film industry, in their most fluent speech, has been able to beat the records set by Mr. Bean, in his acting without saying a word. He saw the greater benefit of his suffering and focused on that, not the process but the end. Endurance and perseverance made him sail through the

sufferings of the rejections and disorders, to be the star that he is. He kept his hope alive and his desire burning, and that gave him the strength to forge ahead. Paul made the point in Romans 5:5; that as we grow in the qualities of endurance and character, we build a foundation of genuine hope, unshakable confidence in God's love and the anticipation of His promises. Hope is a powerful resource that is the result of tested and proven endurance and character. Hope is our sure footing when life seems slippery, based on our certainty that even in the hardest of times, God has not forsaken us. Hebrews 13:5.

Pray

When life gives you more suffering than you can stand, kneel; for the strongest battles are won on your knees. Just because God seems silent doesn't mean you should doubt Him or stop praying. Have faith and let God act on your case. He tells us in Mark 11:24 "Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

It is not easy to fight your pains and struggles physically. You need to turn to God. Physical strength can never permanently withstand the impact of spiritual force. Whenever you feel like things are not working out, or they will not work out, remember, to you it may be impossible, but to God, all things are possible. Mark 10:27 "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'"

My faith in God reminds me that when he speaks, all protocols are broken. It doesn't matter what you are suffering from, when you believe, it shall be possible to overcome. This verse always lifts my mood and gives me the extra motivation that I need to face each day.

For many people, especially Christians, God is a source of comfort and strength, and through prayer, they enter into an intimate relationship with Him, and begin to feel a secure attachment. There is nothing as fulfilling as being at peace with

your creator and the divinity. I'm a Christian, so prayer is paramount to me. It might not be for you, and that's okay. But if you're a person of faith, I encourage you to make regular time to communicate with your maker and calm your spirit, striving to always keep your faith larger than your problems. The word of the Lord is rich with so many verses that calm the spirit. Actually, the Bible is the ultimate "manual" to finding a solution to any form of suffering.

Regardless of your faith tradition or your relationship (or lack of) with God, you must internalize one important truth: The universe does not revolve around you or me. We're small, and our time on earth is limited. There are much bigger things going on. Prayer reminds you to sit in your smallness and helps you remember that you need help from a divine being getting through each pain. Prayer can foster a sense of connection with the Almighty, and this offers emotional comfort and trust, resulting in fewer symptoms of anxiety disorders.

The same God who raised the sun and gave you joy, is the same God who brought the darkness and shall see you through until you dance in the light again. He is a God of seasons and times, as is clearly stated in the book of Ecclesiastes 3:1: There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. In Job's life, and especially when he begins his suffering, you do not hear anything from God until in chapter 38, (Job 38:4). God is in control, and has been all along, otherwise we would have been dead, because He is the same one who controls even your breathing. He heard Job's cries for help. In trust, He waited for the perfect time to speak. Wait for

the perfect time and He shall answer you cry. Isaiah 60:22
“...At the right time, I, the LORD, will make it happen.”

God has not forgotten you, and your suffering is precious to Him. Remember, it says in the book of Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose”.

He is crafting you and molding you into the best vessel for His glory. He sees you; He weeps with you; He holds every desire and prayer you’ve ever given Him in the depth of His Heart. He has a plan that is bigger and better than you want for yourself. Remember, sometimes we don’t get what we pray for because God has packaged something more valuable than what we desire.

When you pray, do not ask God for an easy life, because that will be deceiving yourself. That life doesn’t exist. Pray for the strength to endure what you are going through, and to be able to see the positive side of the pain. One day, the storm will cease, and God will surely give you an answer to your prayer and heal you.” I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you.” 2 kings 20;5.

Be Grateful And Celebrate Every Achievement

Realize that, even in your most difficult moments, God has given you much to be thankful for and hopeful in. Find a way to track your progress and celebrate small benchmarks.

Those small moments and steps, made you who you are, they are the same small steps that will count in your success. The fact that you did not achieve your goals and that caused you the pain and suffering that you are going through, doesn't make you a loser or a failure. You are going to fail, you're going to suffer; but those moments should be seen as learning experiences. You will grow from them and bounce to greater heights.

Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. We have lost great moments of happiness and peace of mind by being ungrateful.

Have you ever asked yourself how many people struggling day in day are out, just to be like you and have what you have?

Well, they are many. You need to really be grateful for all that the universe has given you, even before you complain of the pain of not having what you want. When you discover the value of what you have and you learn to appreciate the small

things in life, then your mind is at peace. Remember all the good things you have in your life. Every day, think about the things you're grateful for having, or write down the good things that happened to you that day that you feel grateful for.

You could be grateful for having specific people in your life or certain opportunities. Unknowingly, the good that you already have is the foundation of all abundance. Just be happy with what you have, even as you pursue what you want. The practice of gratitude is powerful and transformative, it centers you in the present, and it reminds you to stop complaining and whining and internalize your blessings, counting them one by one. Stop suffering, thinking about what you don't have, and first appreciate what you have.

Learn to write down three to five things you're grateful for every day, beginning with "*I'm grateful for...*," after sometime, when you learn to look at life as a blessing, then the list will no longer be countable. Gratitude is a foundational practice for a life of peace. Sometimes, you have to take a moment and pause, to remind yourself that even though life hasn't been perfect, there is so much to be grateful for. Try gratitude when you first wake up, and right before you go to bed. Don't forget to think of your own life, where you have come from and where you are. It has not been easy, but you have to appreciate those small wins and baby steps, because they are the reason you are where you are.

You may go through heartbreaks. Maybe the love of your life left you, it hurts, but celebrate the lessons you got that made you better to handle another relationship. St. John Calabria used to say, nothing is a coincidence in life, all is God's providence.

I love his spirit, even in the middle of the pain and suffering, it is not in vain, it is not mere coincidence, or routine; it is Gods works and providence for something better. Being grateful helps to shift your perspective and general overview of everything. Naming your blessings, and being grateful for them, isn't ignoring reality; it's accepting the greater reality that, while things may be hard, there is just as much blessing as there is suffering.

Detach Yourself And Let Things Go

It is highly recommended to put some distance between you and what is causing your pain and suffering. Try to distance yourself from things and situations that do not align with your wellbeing and growth, without the guilt of being misunderstood. Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great. It could be a situation, a place, or even people.

You have to let go, even if you lose all your friends, worry not, you shall still have an opportunity to make more friends. Accept that loneliness is the price you pay when you start to improve yourself. There is a common saying among the Kamba people of the eastern province of Kenya that can be translated as, “if you want to get rid of flies, then you have to let go of the basket that has meat”.

Be a curator of your life and slowly cut attachments, until you are left only with what you love, what is necessary, and what makes you happy. Detaching and letting go of toxicity in your life is a big step in loving yourself and attracting peace and healing to your life.

Identify whatever triggers your pain and detach yourself from it. There are people who are not happy in their relationships and friendships, sooner or later, these are the next patients in mental health clinics, because they hold on to what causes them suffering, instead of letting go. It is a hard aspect, but food for thought.

Many people find it hard to let go, especially in cases of heart breaks. But I must say, when people feel like it's time to walk away from you, let them walk, in fact let them run. Because it's better for them to healthily walk away, than continue holding on to you, causing you pain and suffering.

Never waste your precious time following somebody who consciously made a decision to walk away and they are already moving on. Understand the concept that people come into our lives for a reason and for a season, and once this is achieved, then they have to go and move to the next person, to the next stage, to the next level, to the next opportunity and blessing; not everybody that we bond with is meant to stay in our lives forever.

If you are rejected, accept it, if you feel unloved let it go, if the other person chooses someone or something over you, move on. Remember, every "no" from someone, could mean a "yes" from someone better. You may be rejected by the person you want, so as to end up meeting the person you need.

If you don't let go of the past and make peace with it, it'll haunt you for a lifetime, and cause you pain. That negative energy will weigh you down. It will deter you and hinder you from leading a life of fulfillment and achievement. Peace and the past negative memories can never be never at par, in order to have peace we must learn to let bygones be bygones.

Life isn't always fair, that's for sure. You might have gone through very painful childhood traumas and past, but then, for how long will you hold to that? Sometimes, bad things happen to us, even though we've done nothing wrong. We could spend our whole lives getting revenge for all the injustices that happen

to us, but revenge rarely brings peace, actually, it causes more suffering. Letting go and detaching yourself from toxicity is having the self-control to not let the pain take over our thoughts and actions.

It is about accepting an injustice for the sake of your mental health. Get rid of the guilt feelings, this is a negative emotion that removes peace of mind. It is also a toxic emotion, and it literally weighs you down. Challenge the reasons for your guilt to make sure you aren't placing unnecessary pressure on yourself. If something doesn't happen the way you want it to, don't blame yourself. Remember that there are things you cannot control.

The more stressed you become about the past, the more you lose control of your thoughts. When you let go of the past, you begin to open up new spaces in your life to build and become who you want, create the space you need so you can fill it with your growth.

Ruminating (thinking the same things over and over) and worrying, make you feel helpless and anxious. Never ruin a good day by thinking about yesterday. What is done is done, and what is gone is gone. One of the many life's lessons is always moving on. It is ok to look back to see how far you have come, but keep moving forward. Learn to control your thoughts, and decide where you fix your attention.

Pay attention to the thoughts running through your mind and get off your past. Redirect these thoughts to something actually true, and pleasant, and good to think about at the present moment. Letting go, is sometimes not easy, whether it's guilt, anger, love, loss or betrayal. Moving on and embracing

change is never easy, we fight to hold on, and we fight to let go. With persistence and resilience, letting go becomes possible.

Detaching also involves setting aside small moments, where you take a break from tasks, chores, and life's daily stressors. Or it may include removing yourself from the situation that's causing you to feel stressed. You can take a holiday, a vacation. That's why we have off duties from work to freshen up and refocus.

If someone cuts off communication and detaches from you, don't worry and be happy, because God takes people away from us because He heard conversations that you did not hear, He took them away for your own peace of mind. When there are so many enemies fighting you, be happy and strong, and have the courage to slowly detach yourself from the toxicity. Remember, the enemy would not be fighting you, if you had nothing to offer.

Live Through The Pain

Develop the willingness to wait with confidence for God to take care of you in a difficult situation, and the determination to overcome your fears, to continue to follow and trust in God. Remember that little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortune, but great minds rise above it. There is a familiar adage which says, “Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.”

This explains the fact that we cannot avoid pain, we have to live through it, but we can avoid suffering from the pain. The surest way to avoid suffering, is by going through the pain and knowing that nothing is forever in this world, sooner or later, an ending will surely come. If you are alive, you will experience pain, and every human being has their own capacity of how they experience and handle pain. A simple flu can send someone to a bed in a hospital, while another suffering the same goes on with their normal daily chores.

There is pain that, no matter how we try to maneuver, we still have to go through it; there is no escaping. For example, for the longest time, I have suffered from menstrual pains, which leave me sure of being in bed for at least 3 days and doing almost nothing, while for others, life goes on even with the same pain.

And then there is suffering, which we can do something about. Before accepting my situation, I would cry and lament and be sad, but now I take the days as they come, because there

is little I can do, and it is only for a while. I do not suffer any more, but I still experience the pain.

Living through the pain means that after accepting the presence of the pain, then you can come up with strategies of going through it, and eventually overcoming it, bearing in mind that it all starts with the brain, with your perception and with your thoughts. Whatever you feed your brain, is what it gives back. If you stimulate your brain with positive thoughts, then it gives positive attitude, which in most cases brings peace and joy.

Negative thoughts on the other hand, breed negative attitude, which in turn breeds feelings of resentment, failure and sadness. Suffering is all about perception and interpretation. It is your mental and emotional relationship, to what is first perceived as an unpleasant or undesirable experience.

Your stories and beliefs about what is happening, or did happen, shapes your interpretation of it. When things don't go as planned, some people believe that they are failures, while others understand that as God's plan in their life. Unfortunately, there are times you make plans and execute them, and forget that God also has plans for you, and they may not align, and that His plans will always take the lead, even when it is against your wish.

I have a problem with the people who put on a plastic smile and pretend that all is well, yet their hearts are in deep pain and suffering. I need to tell somebody today, that it is okay. It is okay if things don't go as planned, it is okay to go through the painful emotion you are going through right now, it is okay to be upset and annoyed, it is okay to miss someone dear to you,

it is okay not to be happy, it is okay to feel that pain. None of these things are new to human beings. We are not meant to be happy all the time, neither do we have to be sad all the time.

We were created to experience each and every emotion existent on earth, fully and deeply, as part of living and growing. Avoid spending a lot of time thinking about what will happen in the future, let the future remain in the mind of the gods, and concentrate on what is in your control; the present time. If yesterday was a painful day, let it be, it is gone all the same.

Live today as it comes and worry not about your tomorrow; live each day at a time. Have you been putting off that beach vacation with your family or friends because it "isn't the right time"? or "work is too busy right now"? Forget that! You deserve a chance to live in the moment and embrace peace. Do it now that the emotion is set for that, otherwise if you put it off for another day, it might happen that the emotions of that time will not match your desires, that's how complex the world of emotions can be.

Remember that finding peace of mind isn't about erasing every uncomfortable emotion or thought. It's about bravely living the emotion of each moment. Numbing, suppressing and avoiding disappointment and anxiety will only make everything worse.

Don't run from or judge your feelings. Instead, be compassionate and curious. Sometimes, simply giving yourself permission to call it like it is – a spade is a spade not a big spoon- will allow you to feel tremendous relief. To get the best out of yourself and for your well-being, you have to live each

day as it comes, some days bring pains, sadness and failures, others bring joys and victories, always trusting and believing for better days, for they surely come. It gets darker before daybreak, but the sun eventually shines.

If you attempt to push away your pain, whether it is physical or emotional, you always find yourself suffering even more, because you are forcing the brain to live against the truth. We have said it time and again, that pain is to be lived through, not to be brushed off. You cannot pretend that a loved one did not die, yet they died, you need to live through the grief. When you accept and start living through pain, you start to discover a point of stillness and peace right in the middle of the suffering.

Have A Strong Support System Of Friends

One way that God often shows He is present during your suffering, is through other people. Like we always say, angels still exist in the world. In times of deep pain, people come your way to offer empathy and comfort, oftentimes, they come when you need them most. God sends people in your life to make you realize how wonderful you are to the world, even in your pain.

He knows exactly when to bring those people into your life, and remind you whom you should reach out to. If you have experienced the pain of depression, or struggled with rejection, you know that talking to someone helps you feel heard and not alone. The people don't need to talk a lot, just being there to listen to you is enough help and therapy. Even a stranger who has walked the path before you can offer a shoulder to lean on. These are the people God sends to help you at times when you have no one to turn to.

Have friends who are ready to be with you in all the stages of life, friends in need and friends indeed. Have friends who bring the best out of you, not the ones who bring the beast out of you. Associate with people who reciprocate your energy, who celebrate and appreciate you. Be wise in choosing friends, because not everyone is worthy being called a friend. Share your worries and fears with the people you trust. Don't take all the burden by yourself. Talking about your pain helps you unburden yourself and feel less overwhelmed, a problem once shared is halfway solved. Having a solid support network can

improve your ability to cope with pain. I am one very lucky person when it comes to my support system. I have had very close and committed friends for the past so many years, that at times when I am going through struggles in life, they carry the heavier burden than me.

When I hit rock bottom in 2022, I almost lost myself. Friends came together and decided to help me out of my situation. I could hardly reason neither act with rationality, my support system came in handy. One of my friends made sure that I had all the basic needs and took care of my transport from one point to the other whenever there was need, another acted as my personal assistant, he made sure that he went through all the offices where I was meant to respond, took care of all my documents and legal processes, I only came in where signing was necessary.

This man of God is courageous, none of my relations and friends was willing to take the risks to help me recover from my pains, but he did, for the love of service, for the love of God and for the love of the church. Another friend, Jacinta Mutisya, made sure that I had food and never lacked.

Every week, she would buy the perishables like bread and milk, and monthly she would buy the dry foods and cereals. If the prices of any food stuff went up that time I had no idea, she made sure that all was provided. My good sister, Ann Katiku, I always lack words to describe this girl, she gives me the strength to move forward when I feel like giving up.

She took care of me until I could stand on my feet, cooked for me, washed my clothes, forced me to eat and kept me company. At one point, she forgot about her cares and worries

and her children who needed her more, and focused on me and my wellbeing. One day I will write a book about this girl Ann.

I always say that I suffered, but I can tell you, mine is just a tip of the iceberg. Ann is a strong woman. She has been through rejection, childhood trauma, raised by the same grandparents who took care of me, and knows the pain of being tossed from one relative to another.

One thing I am always grateful for her life, is that God blessed her with a caring and God-fearing husband, Mr. Stephen Mailu, who understands her psychological state, otherwise we would have lost her. Just as we said in the previous chapter, she understood very well my pain, since she has been through it and knows exactly how to handle me when weak, or any other person going through a psychological disturbance.

This is my network and my support system, I am sure, and can take a bet, that these friends that I described, can take a bullet for me. They are the people who know, not only my glory, but also my story. They make my pain light, and my suffering insignificant. They are the people who saw me at my lowest point, and instead of offering judgements and distance, they gave their presence and grace, and above all a shoulder to lean on. They are the same people I have dedicated this book to, and I honor my sister Ann, as a way of reciprocating her love for me, by making her the model cover photo of this book.

Healthy friendships are the foundation for a still mind and overall wellness, and offer a sure support in times of pain. One of the true joys of life is sharing life with others, and knowing that others “got” you. You feel less alone, and understood, and

this allows a fantastic sense of well-being. Real friends find you in pieces and leave you in peace, whereas the wrong friends find you in peace and leave you in pieces. Make an effort to connect with the right people. Healthy relationships involve honesty, trust, respect and open communication, and they take effort and compromise from both people. Partners respect each other's independence, can make their own decisions without fear of retribution or retaliation, and share decisions.

I could write a whole book on this, because I have seen people fall into wrong company and wrong relationships that interfere with their peace of mind completely, causing them pain and suffering, and eventually chronic depression that may need medical intervention. If you want to maintain a sober and peaceful life, try maintaining close and good relationships.

It gives such a good feeling. The point is not about how many relationships you have, but rather the quality of these relationships and friendships. Emotional intimacy, support, active listening, and company are all important. When these are missing in your life, it could lead to feelings of emptiness and loneliness. Human connection is one of the most powerful antidotes to that low-grade anxiety that might be robbing you of your peace of mind.

I was once very active on social media with so many friends, but not healthy ones. In the year 2018, I suffered loss of my grandmother and went through PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). The woman who was always beside me, and who is behind the woman I am today, was no more. I felt like we still had a lot to share before she left. But the worst part of

it was that I did not see her last moments, I wished to see her last day. I was totally broken and in pain, and needed a shoulder to lean on. I used to be in countless groups, and we would contribute for this or the other. But I felt like everyone was less concerned about what I was going through.

Apparently, people got “busy”, and I buried my grandmother with only four of my close friends. I would see in social media many of my friends going on with life, like nothing happened to one of their own. That was an eye opener for me to revise my relationships, and know who to truly call “friend”.

I knew I needed to get friends who make me better not bitter, friends who would not only smile with me, but who would be with me when I could no longer smile. I did a total cleanup of my friends list and found peace.

Unhealthy relationships may contribute to a toxic social environment that can lead to stress, pain, suffering, depression, anxiety, and even suicide. It is important to recognize the warning signs or the red flags, and find ways to reduce or avoid relational toxicity. People with healthy, positive and supportive relationships are more likely to be happier and healthier.

Creating and maintaining good connections with others can also help to combat loneliness and improve mental health issues, such as stress and anxiety

Embrace Change And Look At Pain And Suffering From A Different Perspective

Change is like a rest and it always bring some feeling of resistance at first, then gradually, people adapt to it. Sometimes in life, you do not need to recover from your pains and sufferings, but they come to transform you. Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.

It means that so many things that you are used to and you have faced have to be modified at one point to adapt to the changing world, when that time comes, be brave enough to try something new. Great things never come from comfort zones, think big, believe big, act big and change your life for bigger things.

Change is always happening. Sometimes, the change is for the “good”, sometimes it’s painful. But you can never know the ultimate outcome of a change. Everything in life is a reflection of a choice you made. If you want a different life, make a different choice.

So much of your happiness and healing depends on how you wish to see the world around you. Whether the glass is half full, or half empty, will be determined by your view, and whether the number in front of you is a 6 or a 9, depends on how you want to view it. Actually, we don’t see things as they are, we see things around us as we are, because we are what we think. Sometimes, you just need to shift your mindset and

perspective in order to see more clearly and better understand situations. Regardless of the pain that you are dealing with, always be clear about the good and positive things you have as a person.

Always keep your eye on the bigger picture. Will you feel this way next week or a year from now? Will your current experience of life seem as important? What benefit will this dark moment that I am experiencing right now have on my life a few days from now? Shifting your perspective, from the current state to a broader view, will help you to clarify what you really want and need. Remember that there is much more to your life than what you see and touch.

Never forget to keep the bigger picture in mind and to be grateful for all that you have. When you do so, you will be rich in the best way possible. Have you ever heard of blessings in disguise? Well, I love this concept. You will need strong spiritual convictions to understand it though. It simply means that there are some very painful situations that come to our life, to open our hearts and minds for greater things. It pains in the present, but when you look at it later you notice that it was worth the pain. By changing perspective, you can also gain greater insights and gain deeper healing. It is a healthy exercise if you want to be empathetic, rational and more compassionate towards others. It is not only about seeing things differently, but also seeing from the point of view of the other person.

It's like the common language where we say "putting yourself in other person's shoes." A change in perspective can bring a transformative change in your life. Viewing every situation in a new light can open new opportunities as

unexpected miracles are hidden in every moment. It's like you have been in darkness and once lights are on, you notice that all through, you had been thinking wrongly about a rather simple situation. Viewing every situation in a positive light can help you to deal with it in a better way, it is an eyeopener to many other dark moments, and it gives instant peace and a feeling of satisfaction. A very real part of you exists independently of your immediate concerns, pains, sufferings, problems, and frustrations. If you feel overwhelmed, step back, and observe the way you experience things. Learn also to see things from God's view, remember He has a plan and a purpose for everything.

What might seem horrible today, may in the long run turn out to be just what you need to take you to the next step of your life. If you can learn to lean into change, rather than resist it, you will discover new horizons and new perspectives of dealing with your situation, knowing that every pain gives a lesson and every lesson changes a person.

Pain is a great motivator of change, it is pain that makes you change so many things, including your lifestyle. If everything in the world was perfect, you would never learn and you would never grow, you would all be stagnated in one place, moving around like robots and zombies; I bet life would be meaningless.

Make a change, take up the challenge without fear, and sail through your pain and suffering, knowing too well that you are not alone. "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10

Know That It Is Not Permanent

Life is constantly changing, moving, flowing, nothing stays the same. Nothing lasts forever, be prepared for an ending to your pain. The bible talks of times and seasons in the book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 3. When you understand well the biblical records about times and seasons, then you will worry less.

We believe that suffering is for a while and at the end of the dark night, the day always breaks with its light. Sometimes in life, you have so many pains then lots of joy. At some time, there will be pain, and at other times, there will be pleasure; pain is not an isolated or permanent state, just a part of a greater.

It's tempting to always ask yourself so many rhetoric questions, but don't try to understand your pain or figure out what or why it is happening, and when it will come to pass, just give it time. Time answers all questions and heals all wounds. If you feel like you're in a dark room with no windows or doors, don't bounce off the walls fighting it. Just feel it. Take a deep breath, let the storm be.

It will bend you, but it will not crush you. "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share

in the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.” 2 Corinthians 8: 9-10.

Dare to believe that you are able, and that you can overcome. Through your pain and suffering, you'll find a lesson to learn that will make you a better person. Each experience; good and bad, makes you grow. Live for today and enjoy every moment, because no situation is permanent. Capture the best that life has to offer you.

Keep Your Mind Engaged With Positivity

Develop the ability to see your situation from God's point of view and the good that can come from your pain. Nurture your mind with great thoughts, because heroes come from having heroic attitudes. Try shifting your attention from the rather painful and stressing situation, to something better.

Change the way you think about yourself. Realize that thoughts are assumptions, and not facts. But negative thoughts are very dangerous and harmful in life, because you become what you think. Every great achievement in life started with a thought, and every great failure in life also started with a thought. With time you will realize that if you change the way you look at things, the things you look at also start to change.

When uncomfortable feelings such as failure arise, change your focus and reflect on the areas of your life where you are doing well and feel fulfilled. Take a moment and appreciate yourself for having made it through. With time, you will realize that there are many things that are going right in your life, compared to the ones going wrong, it is more of a mindset than a reality at time.

Thoughts affect your mood and one thing that makes people feel restless, anxious, suffering and stressed out, is when the mind is polluted with negative thoughts and energies. Learn to nurture your mind with great positive thoughts, it is actually from heroic thoughts that heroes are made, because what you

think is what you eventually become. What you are right now, you once thought of it, then you became. A strong and positive self-image is the best possible preparation for peace of mind.

Try to remember your past victories and see yourself as a winner and a victor in the midst of every dark situation that you may find yourself in. Often, our biggest critic is the nagging voice in our head that keeps popping up and reminding us of what we are not, and what we cannot do, hence making it hard for you to feel relaxed and content.

When these imaginary voices speak, try to challenge them by speaking the “I am affirmations”: I am able, I am a winner, I am beautiful, I am more than a conqueror, and such.

Make it your mantra every day to speak a positive phrase about yourself. By affirming yourself, you will gain a sense of control over your emotions. Believe in yourself and remind yourself regularly that you are able, and that you will be okay despite your pain.

If you are pessimistic, you are conditioning yourself to have dark moments and bad day. By the time you notice it, things in your life are already wrong. Every time you have a negative thought, replace that with a positive thought immediately, and see the bright side of your pain.

Move your mind to a more positive mental state. If the negative voices tell you that the task is challenging, convince yourself that if others have done it, then you are no lesser human and you can do it too.

Speak positive words into your life every single morning. Think big about yourself, think healing, think success, think peace, think happiness, always start the day with positive

energy. I am inspired by Bob Marley, when he sung about emancipating ourselves from mental slavery and freeing our minds, he reminded us that none but ourselves are capable of freeing the mind, and once the mind is free, then peace is achieved. It all starts with the mind, free your mind now from your suffering and pave way for peace and healing.

One day, I was chatting with Jacinta Mutisya, and complaining how God had been unfair to me and making me suffer. I was telling her of how I was so low, that I had to take a holiday to Mombasa Kenya for one week in a hotel where it was on all-inclusive package. I cried and lamented. When I came back after the holiday, I needed a prayerful time of some meditation on my spiritual life, somewhere all serene and alone.

I took a flight to Lodwar, in the Turkana province of Kenya for another week. Thanks to the Bishop of Lodwar Diocese, Rt reverent John Mbinda for the opportunity. As I was narrating this with tears rolling down my eyes, my friend Jacinta was laughing. I could not understand what was funny in my plight.

We are age mates, she had been to Mombasa only once by and by bus, we had actually gone together back in our campus days, she had never been to a 5 star hotel I had been to countless, she had never boarded a flight, not even a local one, I can't count my flight journeys, she had been to Lodwar and it took her two days by bus, and by the times she arrived, she had to be on bedrest for some days because her legs were swollen, I took a flight.

All that I was complaining about to her there were things she always desired and never got, they were her wish list and

prayer points. I realized how blessed I was, I realized how grateful I should have been instead of reciting a litany of complaints. We analyzed the comparisons and laughed that at the end, nobody could remember how the stories started. When you learn to count your, then you realize that what you are calling pain is actually a blessing. Jacinta, I promise one day I will be a blessing to you, I shall pay for your first flight.

Do Not Compare Yourself With Anyone

The earlier you come to the realization that everyone is unique and everyone is blessed differently, the better for you to deal with your suffering. We are living in the era of social media which can make it hard to feel good about yourself when everyone's accomplishments and victories are all you see. You forget to understand that not everything online is true, and so many people are even living fake lives just to attract fans. You rarely get to see anyone posting in social media about their pains and struggles, or setbacks, they only post their success. It is easy to get sucked into comparing yourself with such people.

I post my writings on social media, but I never post how I am reading all manner of books up to the wee hours of the morning to get facts right, it's a struggle. And I know there are people who go through worse. Consider taking periodic breaks from social media, so as to be able to focus on your life alone. I personally took a break from social media from 2018 up to 2022. It was during this time when I focused on myself and discovered a lot of potential in me. This is when I developed my art, designing and writing skills.

When you notice yourself falling into the comparison trap, remind yourself of your victories, remind yourself that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Philippians 4; 13" For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength". Comparing yourself to others or having low self-

esteem can also drive feelings of suffering to the extreme. You may start to think you've never really succeeded and aren't good at anything. Your inner voice might be saying you've failed at life in general. Live your life and let others live theirs.

Remind yourself that another person's accomplishment does not take anything away from you, nor should it reflect on you. If you're going to compare, look at your past self to see how far you've come. Consider others as role models, or examples to better your life.

Have your own definition of success instead of looking to external measures, like looking at others way of life and their own success. Think about what traits you have that you and others around you don't have, and work on improving them.

List the times you have been able to overcome pain and you were able to persevere in the face of sufferings and obstacles. Keep this success list handy when you're feeling down and almost tempted to compare yourself or think that other people are better than you.

Understand that everyone's journey is different and everybody is unique in their own way genetically, physically, emotionally and in a general overview, nobody is like the other. Comparison is the thief of your joy and inner peace and causes your more pain than you could imagine, focus on your own experience, feeling and purpose because it is about you not others.

Once you learn that, then you will stop comparing yourself to others and be at peace. The more you compare, the more you lose yourself and your identity. Forget what everyone else is doing or saying and focus on you. You all have our paths to

follow, and you are all learning and going through life at your unique pace. So, what makes you think that the other person is better than you, yet you are born different?

Comparing yourself to others is actually toxic for so many reasons, the most damaging being the mess it does to your self-worth. You feel "less than" when you compare, you feel like you are not good enough, and that somehow you are obliged to do better.

Too much comparison leads to unhappiness and low self-esteem. You become frustrated with yourself for "not being good enough", or angry with others. This is a terrible place to be in. One that leads to depression and anxiety. It is living in other people's realities and abandoning your own.

You'll have greater peace by focusing on comparing yourself today to who you were yesterday, than by comparing yourself to someone else. The feeling of insecurity vanishes when the comparison game is only played with yourself. Strive to become a better version of yourself, but don't beat yourself up for not attaining what others have attained.

Focus on your journey and lose the pain of comparing yourself to what you think is going on in the lives of others. Your happiness lies in following your path, not in the feeling of being the same as other people or lesser than them. Nobody has the "marking scheme" of life. Let everyone live their own way and find their own peace. Michael Learns, in his song *Sleeping Child*, puts it very well. That you need to build your own paradise and live in it as you like. Everyone has a way of building their own paradise and going by that.

Forgive Yourself

Remember that you are not perfect, and everyone makes mistakes. Replace “I should have known” with “now I know better”, and forgive yourself, because self-shame and self-sabotage destroy you completely. Your journey has molded you for your greater good, and it was exactly what it needed to be. Don’t think that you have lost time, it took each and every pain and suffering that you have encountered to bring you to where you are now.

And you are still travelling to greater heights where you will have the best view of everything. Do not shut down or grind your thoughts thinking of how bad you are. It is true some of the pains and sufferings you go through are as a result of your own poor choices and decisions in life. For example, a teenage girl who runs away from home, leaves school and goes to live with a boyfriend.

Life may seem good for her for a while, but then the consequences start knocking in one by one: teenage pregnancies, diseases- especially sexually transmitted ones, lack of money to pay bills, break ups etc. The list is endless. In most cases, such people after the realization of their mistake, start blaming themselves for everything, they see themselves as failures, find no meaning to life and may end up doing the worst, if not helped to find peace within themselves and forgive

themselves first, then other people who may be the cause of their suffering.

Holding a negative perception of yourself can lead to feeling quickly defeated by challenges, since it can seem like proof of what you already believe; that you're not good enough.

Realign your understanding of life and accept that we all have our pains and sufferings, and all that matters is how you learn from your pain and move on, so as to bounce back, and heal. Find a way to forgive the people who have hurt you also, even if they do not show remorse. This can be hard, but holding on to a grudge does not harm them but you.

Forgiving yourself also means investing in self-love and self-compassion. Don't be too harsh on yourself, life must continue no matter your predicament. If you're hard on yourself, it can validate your feelings and make you believe that you are what you are not.

Normalize the fact that it is okay to fail in life, but it is also okay to try again. It is okay to be sad, it is okay to mess; before anyone's glory there has to be a story and that is your story. Own it and move on. Take courage and face the reality ahead, forgetting the past; by holding on to past mistakes, you can't go far. Remember the saying by William Faulkner "You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore."

Forgive Those Who Have Hurt You

Can you forgive someone who has hurt you so profoundly, as to have caused deep-seated damage to your body, heart, mind, and soul? Well, unresolved conflict can be a huge source of your pain and suffering. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness, and as you may know, bitterness is the poison you drink, hoping someone else will die.

When you forgive, you realize that it does you better than the other person, because you are able to heal from your suffering. When you forgive someone, you directly forgive yourself. Bearing a grudge against someone who has hurt you is not just about what they have done to you, it is about what you have allowed to happen to you, and this may adversely damage your inner peace.

Forgiveness sets you free, because you no longer become chained to a situation that saps your energy and takes the life out of you. It allows you to take your power and energy back.

The energy and emotion you have so deeply invested in a certain situation is now free to be directed to something that is positive for your growth and emotional, psychological, and physical health. This may also allow you to see the situation in a different view. Instead of focusing on all the negatives, forgiving may allow you to remember all of the positives that once were, and probably still are there.

Humanly speaking, it pains to be hurt, but believe you me, it pains more to carry a grudge. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you no longer feel the pains, it means that you no longer want to continue letting the pain control you and rob you of your peace of mind.

Sometimes or even most of the times, the people who hurt you will never apologize. You do not need to sit and continue waiting for an apology that will never be, because your healing and moving on should never be tied to an apology, but your decision to be determined and carry on with your life freely.

Forgiveness does not mean ignoring what has been done, or putting a false label on an evil act. It means, rather, that the evil act no longer remains as a barrier to moving on with life. Forgiveness is a catalyst creating the atmosphere necessary for a fresh start and a new beginning.

You can feel the emotion, cry, express yourself as a person; but don't dwell on that, because determined people do not weep for long. When you forgive, you allow resentment and hurt to be replaced by healing. You are taking an action that will correct your life, wellbeing, and bring healing.

Most of you, at one time or another, have experienced a situation where you have felt that someone you cared enough about has caused you pain, anger, and sadness. This could be due to an innocent misunderstanding or a contrived betrayal.

When someone does you wrong, work through it, and remember forgiving doesn't mean that you should continue associating with that person. Forgive, learn your lesson, and walk away free. It would be imprudent to continue having an association with the same people who deeply hurt you.

Forgiveness breaks the bonds that tie you negatively to another person.

You can forgive, while not forgetting. What happened to you happened. There's no denying that. And you should not try to pretend that everything is back to normal. It isn't. You may forgive someone, and opt to never see them again. That's your choice, after all is said and done. It's a matter of whether or not you can ever trust that person, or set of circumstances again.

You can focus on becoming stronger, establishing your own integrity, and building your own character, so that you know yourself well enough, to never allow yourself be caught in a situation of terrible compromise and pain again.

Forgiving helps you move forward, especially on your relations with people. It encourages compassion, and you are able to relate to others as part of the human experience.

You feel for others as you do for yourself, because you have been in their shoes and know how it feels to fit there. It is a path to peace. Of course, forgiveness doesn't always come easily- with a snap of your fingers. It's often a long and emotionally demanding process that goes beyond simply saying, "I forgive you." Forgiveness involves compassion and empathy, not to mention acceptance.

Help Someone Who Is Suffering

When you experience pain, it's easy to isolate yourself and believe that no one has it worse than you do. I always thought so, but when I started interacting with people and listening to their story, I realized that my problems were somebody else's walk in the park.

Helping just one person heal from their suffering may not make an impact to the world, but it changes that person's world. Ever gone to a hospital and while at the waiting bay, you realize that there are people who are really sick and suffering out there; very serious cases waiting to be attended to, and you feel like your ailment is a joke to the medical fraternity and it would be better if you just went back home?

That is how it feels when you help people deal with their pains and sufferings, it lessens your pain and gives you the strength to bear it with faith. No one needs to suffer in isolation, we all need each other in the highs and the lows of life, as human beings, and as the Christians that we are. As Romans 12:15 says, "Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep." It is an instruction we get from God to respond to the cry of those who are weeping, even if we are also in pain ourselves.

While whatever pain you are experiencing is unique to you, and everybody has their own way of reacting to different situations of pain, helping another person reminds us that all

human beings share the capacity for joy and suffering. Having contact with someone else who is also having a difficult time, and offering them simple kindness, can be a great relief to your own suffering.

Talk to a homeless person down the street and listen to their story, in this way, you will learn to value your home and your room, even if it is not the best, it is better than being in the streets. Volunteer in a children's home around your area, give your services and listen to these children's story and how they ended up there, you will learn to appreciate your life with all your pains and struggles.

By helping people, you find peace and healing within yourself. You cannot help people and make them happy, yet continue dying in pain; helping brings unexplained joy. Every day choose to do a good deed for another person, make it a habit.

Helping makes you get out of your own shell of problems and think about the other person. It helps to bring out the humanity in you. By seeing and understanding the problems of others, you come to a conclusion that there are actually many people around you who are in dire need of help than you are, this makes your situation feel light and bearable. Helping other people who are needier than you are, gives a permanent and contagious smile to both of you, and at the same time gives relief to a rather heavy heart.

Help someone in need, be kind to strangers. It's a good feeling to see someone smile because of you and their smiling back brightens your day and gives peace. So many people are hurting in this world. When someone hurts you, recognize that

they're in pain, not that they evil or mean-spirited. In response, do something kind for them. Remember that you are not the only person going through pain in this world. I have seen people, especially in government offices, being very rude to people. This used to pain me in the past, but with time, I came to realize that these are human beings who have a lot going on around them, in their families, workplaces, financially and as such, they also need an act of kindness and a caring response from you.

Be Creative Engage Your Brain

Sometimes, suffering comes because you obsess over negative thoughts and your pains and you can't get to think of anything else. During such times, it helps to give your psyche and soul a jumpstart by doing something different, that engages your brain, like art and creativity. Invent something. Try out something new like a new recipe, bake. Go for a walk. Engage in your passion, take care of your pets. Go gardening. All these activities help to deal with psychological pain and suffering.

Make something with your hands. Take your pain and make something beautiful out of it. Reminds me of the time when I made over 50 flower vases at the formation house of Our Lady Queen of Love in Machakos. I stayed there for some time when I was at the lowest point in my life, I would get stressed, and to avoid burn out, I would engage in some art. Most of the time, I made flower vases out of recycled materials and did gardening, taking care of the flowers in that compound. Whenever I see them, I remember how they were a tool to my dealing with suffering.

Whether you consider yourself creative or not, there's a bit of it in all of us. Expressing yourself through your creativity is important for your own development, not just physically and emotionally, but also socially and intellectually. One of the best things about art is that it's a powerful form of self-expression, you can share your pains and sufferings in form of art. It's an outlet in which you can share your experiences, thoughts,

feelings and other aspects of your life. People have been using art to express themselves since prehistoric times, and the fact that they continue to do so today, shows how important this function really is. When you are creative, you use parts of the brain that aren't usually in action for everyday tasks. Keeping yourself active and occupied is an antidote for mental health, as we had seen earlier.

Creativity is a remarkable outlet for stress relief and peace of mind. It helps improve your mood. When you finish a creative task, like writing, knitting, drawing, or doing anything creative, your brain is filled with dopamine, which is an all-natural anti-depressant that motivates you and activates your mood leaving you feeling good. Engaging part in a creative activity just once a day can lead to a more positive outlook and a greater level of happiness. It feels pretty good to be creative.

Try some art, do some research and invent something, get into occupational therapy. It will also improve your confidence. If you keep on creating over a longer period of time, you're probably going to get better at it. And as you start to notice your progress, you're bound to notice a confidence boost. Discover a new recipe, bake. Get a business idea and try it. Try writing a poem as a way of expressing your emotions. Get some crayons and try out painting. Give your room a new look by changing the position of your bed and everything else. Try some music beats. Simply avoid an idle mind when dealing with pain.

Some creative activities are so mind engaging, like creating patterns and embroidery, that is because they help you find your flow. The state where you're so absorbed in an activity that you forget all the painful and worrying thoughts

lingering in your mind. Reminds me of a time I would just sit and pass time with my good sister, Anastasia Katiku, idling and sometimes lamenting over the injustices of life. Nothing seemed to work for us and life had never been that unfair, we were suffering emotionally.

We could basically not see anything good from life, we would talk and lament up to the wee hours of the morning, then watch a movie, because as we said lack of peace of mind causes lack of sleep. If anybody called my phone at any hour of the night, I would be very alert; sleep was an alien word.

One day, my friend Jacinta invited me to accompany her to her friend who does knitting and crocheting. She knew I loved art, and to her it was a way of introducing me to this friend who would eventually nurture me into her skill. As we walked, on our way to her place, by the side the road, there was a man selling second hand clothes. My attention was caught by a table mat that was made of sisal fiber.

For some reason, I couldn't get my mind off that mat. We arrived at the lady's house, but all through the discussion and the introduction, I was lost in thought thinking about that mat that we had seen by the roadside. On our way back, I decided to buy the mat, it was actually a set of six mats made of sisal fibers. They looked ugly, dirty and creased. Without an artistic eye, nobody would imagine why I would waste a coin on such.

I tried explaining to my friend that something beautiful could come out of that, but with all honesty, she thought I was crazy. I went home with a clear vision of what I wanted. I had to buy a sewing machine the following day, still nobody understood what I wanted to do with old and ugly sisal. After

cleaning and ironing them, I now set my hands for work. I put a matching lace all around the mats to add some value. I crocheted some unique designs on them.

Later on, after putting them on an exquisite table, nobody saw sisal fiber, what they all saw was pure art. That was the birth of my venture “*unique home deco table mats*”, mats that I make using pure sisal fiber. The irony of it all is that, Jacinta, who discouraged me from buying and never saw the beauty, was the one who acquired that particular set of artistic mats, she could not let them go with anyone else.

I engaged my sister, Ann, in sewing. We would do it to a point that we would forget to talk about anything else, other than art and coming up with new mat designs. That was the end of our endless litany of complaints and heartache, it was the end of our pains and emotional suffering, we redirected our energies to creativity.

At one point, she asked me why I had not introduced her to sewing and designing before, because she became so much occupied, such that she never had time to remember her pains. There's nothing better than that moment of personal satisfaction when you're finished - not to mention the sense of achievement you get from creating something out of nothing.

It's impossible to be stressed or anxious when you're completely and utterly in the moment. Many people show a significant decrease in anxiety after their art-making endeavors, suggesting that creativity really can help people cope with pain and suffering.

You'll never know your true potential if you always stay in your comfort zone. As the old saying goes, it is better to look

back and regret what you did, than regret all those things you wish you'd tried. Start where you are. Push yourself to do something difficult each day. Sometimes, that may be something as simple as saying hello to someone new, or making a phone call you've been putting off, or trying out a new skill. The aim is to stretch yourself, learn and grow as a person.

Other forms of creativity that may engage the brain in times of pain and suffering may include: carpentry, calligraphy, embroidery and needlework, fashion and design, gardening, jewelry making, knitting, music, photography, taking care of pets, poetry, singing, writing...the list is endless.

Be Disciplined And Learn From Your Mistakes

Learn to do what you are supposed to do and not what you want to do. You can't compete with life and win. Some of the causes of pain and suffering as we have seen earlier are related to bad habits like addictions. In order to break from such habits, discipline is paramount.

You may fail several times in your adherence to discipline, but with time, you catch up with the routine. Self-discipline becomes very powerful when combined with goal-setting, passion, and planning.

Write down your goals once again and make sure that you do everything in your power to stick to them. Always finish any task you set, before moving on to start another. For some, the thought of setting a goal may be overwhelming.

Self-discipline is required to achieve optimal health when breaking a habit like smoking or rebalancing health issues caused by abuse. It allows you to stay focused and more motivated towards your goals and gives a higher satisfaction of accomplishments. It is like a muscle: the more you train it, the stronger you become. Lack of self-discipline can cause low self-esteem and intensify your suffering

Self-discipline is about making wise choices and following them. From the food you eat, to the amount of exercise you do, it is dependent on how disciplined you are. It is a feeling of being in control of yourself. Another important

aspect of self-discipline is being time conscious. You must have come across people who can't keep time and the worst moments are when you have appointments with them. They always cause inconveniences, both to themselves and the people they fail. Keep time and avoid unnecessary panics and sufferings. Be at peace respect your watch.

Failure is a fact of life. When you try something that is particularly difficult or new to you, in many cases, you are not going to succeed in the way that you had hoped. Failing is difficult and generally viewed negatively. If not well understood, it can lead to pain and high chances of mental and emotional breakdown, but in the bigger picture, it actually helps to strengthen mental wellness and resilience.

When you fail, you learn how to fail and sharpen your skills in that field. Failure is an inevitability in life, no matter how highly skilled you may be. It is important to fail, so that you can learn how to handle failure and not allow these setbacks leave you feeling crushed or lead you to give up.

We learn through our mistakes and our failed experiences. When you fall, you rise up and start again, but this time, with a little care that you don't fall again. Failure is supposed to be a stepping stone for the next opportunity, but not a base for our suffering.

Failure gives such negative energy, that if not dealt with, can lead to very low self-esteem and eventually a disorder or depression. It is good to know that even the most famous and successful people failed at some point in their lives, and they continue failing and getting up. See every failure as an opportunity to sprout with more vigor and experience. This will

definitely give you more confidence and peace. A healthy attitude towards failure encourages bravery. It's not you that is the failure.

Instead, it is what you tried to do that failed. There is a big difference. Just don't be afraid to try again. God never makes failures, He knows what He is doing and planning with your life, when He is finally done with everything and you have been able to persevere through the pain and the suffering, the result is always greatness.

Failure facilitates change and growth. It is easy to stay at your comfort zones when everything is going smoothly, but you run the risk of stagnating which in turn leaves you feeling empty or unsatisfied, but when you fail at something, you are forced to step back and rethink.

After failure, you can take a break to see whether you are going to try again and be successful at the same thing, instead of sinking into pain, or you will find a different way forward. Failure pushes you to rethink where you are, and make positive changes. It is not made to leave you suffering, but to push you to the next level in life.

Experiencing failure or loss allows you to better relate to others' struggles, increasing your capacity for empathy and compassion. This helps you to feel more connected to the world, and improves mental wellbeing and our ability to support anyone who needs our attention. You are able to place yourself in the other person's position and feel they pain.

People with *atychiphobia* (intense fear of failure) may avoid any situation where they see a potential for failure, such as an exam or competition. If you fear failure, it is hard to

progress since you rarely make moves. It can also mean being afraid of a failed relationship, a failed career or being a disappointment to others. It is impossible to live in this world while winning in every situation. Embrace failure and move on with your life. The energy wasted on the pain from failure, can give you enough psyche to see life from a better perspective and move on.

Fear of failure can lead to a broad range of emotional and psychological problems, including pain, shame, depression, anxiety, panic attacks or low self-esteem. It may negatively affect how you perform at school or work, or how you interact with friends and family members and cause emotional suffering. Still, with all these, failure is not, and should not, be viewed as the end of anything. Rather, failure is an opportunity for growth and a new start. Some failures come to teach us the art of patience. You need to listen to your inner voice after failure and see where, and how to restart, to avoid being burned by the same flame twice, which can also be devastating.

Live Within Your Standards And Save For The Future When Necessary

Money matters need to be discussed in depth, as they are a cause of so many evils and indecent happenings in the world, and compromise our peaceful coexistence, causing lots of pain and suffering. Saving provides a backup plan for life's uncertainties and increases feelings of security and peace of mind.

Savings also enable you to have financial independence, that gives you the ability to live without depending on others for financial support, and can also help you to achieve long-term financial goals and investments. You can do yourself a great favor by preparing yourself for some worst scenarios of financial pain and suffering, which may show up in some unforeseen situations like sicknesses, accidents, natural calamities, or sudden loss of a job.

Saving can also be in form of getting into an insurance scheme to cater for medical or educational needs, to avoid unnecessary pain and suffering when there is need. Saving money gives you a way out of the uncertainties of life and provides you with an opportunity to enjoy a quality life.

Putting money aside is always a good idea. If you can afford to save money regularly, do it. Putting aside a sum of money in a systematic manner can help you steer out of many hurdles and obstacles in life. Saving also helps in coming up

with proper budgeting to avoid impulse buying and financial stress and strain. When you know how much money you have available to save and spend, you can then decide on how to spend it wisely on what you need.

I have seen people spend more than they earn and I keep wondering how they deal with the mental strain that comes along with that, how do they even cope with the pain of knowing that they have debts all over.

Money buys choice, but it doesn't buy you the happiness that you crave, if not well budgeted, it might leave you suffering more than those who don't have it. Be content with the simpler things in life, that's where the real, long-lasting joy and peace of mind come from. When you apply this principle in your life, you will not only feel happier, but you will also instantly feel richer, and avoid uncalled for financial pain and suffering. Just let go of your excessiveness and get to know what matters most.

Living within your standards allows you to save money for your financial goals, and it also gives you a cushion in case an emergency arises and you need extra cash. It means learning to spend less on your lifestyle, than you generate in earnings.

To live within that threshold, spend less than you earn, avoid impulse buying and avoid trying to fit in to societal demands that care less about your earnings. Associating with the right relations and company can help you live to your standards, because you are likely to choose people of your level to relate with; birds of a feather flock together. Distance yourself from things and people that do not align with your demands.

Check your priorities and give your time and money only to what is necessary. Are you sure that all you have in your mind right now is important? is it a priority? Reminds me of how in our first year at the university, we would already be thinking of how the graduation day will be in the next four years, fantasizing about the day, forgetting to study for the exams just around the corner, thus heaping upon ourselves unnecessary pain and suffering.

Mixed priorities can really mess with your life and make you miss the mark. Take a step back from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, and think about what's truly important to you at that particular time. List all your thoughts and plan of activities and then classify them, with that guide, then you can start attending them as per the needs and priorities, starting with the most pressing and the most urgent ones.

Defining your priorities helps to ensure that you are steadily progressing toward your goals. You can remain productive and feel less overwhelmed by prioritizing your tasks and using your energy wisely. If you set priorities, you can also relieve stress, as you can proceed with daily routines in a prepared, efficient, and relaxing manner, without multitasking or overlapping activities.

People can also be set as priorities, though not everybody is a priority, so don't waste time on them. Avoid people who cause you pain and suffering. We say life is like a theatre hall, and we have the right to choose who takes the front seat, and who takes the back seat at your hall. Cancel meetings and activities with people who do not add value to your life, after all, you are not obliged to agree to everybody's requests. Don't

be too available for everyone otherwise you will lose your value.

Your decisions need to be prioritized also, so that your life can be in order. Maybe you are trusting God to get you to the university of your choice. Then the first thing is not to sit and subject your mind to unnecessary suffering, wondering if God will give you the chance. What is in your control is to study hard and get the best grades required to get there, then let God do the rest. Worrying and panicking will make you not study and as such, you end up failing to get the entry marks to the university, and the situation gets worse and out of your control. Set your priorities right and give yourself a clear guideline to which you always orient yourself, and which gives you security and a calm spirit while having everything under control.

Talk To Someone You Trust Or A Therapist

When you're in pain and you are going through suffering, go to someone who will listen to you, love you, and just be with you. This could be your mentor, your role model or somebody who you feel will be of help in the area that is leaving your peace disturbed. For example, if you are in business, look for people who have success stories in that field and talk to them. If in marriage, we have couples who could be of help. You need to identify these people for they come in handy when we need help in specific areas of life.

You cannot do life alone. For you to be strong again after going through pain, you need someone to hold your hand and show you some light. You need people who have been there before you, to teach you the tricks of the game. It is natural that in the face of adversity, you feel overwhelmed.

Crying and keeping your pain or worry, can plunge you into isolation that causes you a sense of loneliness and even depression. Your friends, family, and loved ones are there to support and accompany you even in the most challenging parts of your life.

However, a confidant or a spiritual director, somebody senior with an independent approach and with no blood ties, plays a different role. Go to them when you feel that it is no longer an issue to keep to yourself, but needs the help of another person. Having someone you trust at your side will help you

channel your emotions to leave your mind and body more easily. Not everybody is worth sharing our worries with. Be wise in selecting the right confidant.

Talking to someone you trust about something upsetting may help you to:

- Sort through the pain.
- Understand your pain more clearly.
- Look at the problem in a new or different way.
- Release built-up tension – this can help you to gain new insight into the situation that is causing your pain and suffering.
- Find out that you are not alone – you may find that many other people share your feelings.
- Identify options or solutions you hadn't thought of before.

Some situations can be overwhelming, like in the case of addictions, and you may need to talk to a therapist or medical specialist about your pains and sufferings, so that you can be helped into getting to the root of your emotions, creating new thought patterns, and reaching your goals. With some support, you will think less about your suffering and more about your positive attributes, and lessons learned from going through the tough times.

Conclusion

After every test in life, what follows is a testimony. With all the pain that I have endured, when I look back, I sometimes see pain, heartache, suffering and injustice, but when I look forward, I see strength, learned lessons, opportunities and most of all, pride in myself for having endured and conquered them all. To sum it all up, we can use the words of Apostle Paul to James and say “A man who endures trials is blessed, because when he passes the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.” James 1:12.

The most successful people, whom you might have known, are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of those depths. They learned the secret of not carrying the burden, but offering it to God “Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved” Psalm 55:22.

Every time you find yourself in pain, you are reminded that you don't have to handle life alone when times are tough. Instead, turn to the Lord who will 'sustain' you and help you get through it. Remember, there is tomorrow, there is life, the sun will rise again, and though it all seems hopeless now, it shall be well. “His anger lasts only a moment, but His kindness lasts for

a lifetime. Crying may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning“ Psalm 30:5

When you take your cloth to a tailor for sewing, in all cases, the tailor has to tear the material several times, then sew the parts together to come up with the pattern and the dress that you wanted. Similarly, you are like a cloth in God’s hands, for Him to come up with final design of you that can be used for His glory, He has to dismantle and disarrange you, so that He can arrange you to His perfect design. Just as the cloth feels the cut of the tailors’ scissors for a while, you also feel the cut of God in your pains and sufferings, but the end result is always fulfilling.

Life will always bring you pain; you have a choice about how much you suffer and how you go through the suffering. Don’t let the pain of the past steal the joy of the present. Life must go on. God helps you cope with affliction by delivering peace, hope, comfort, strength, and stamina, as you walk in harmony with Him.

Recognizing that pain and suffering is integral to your life and that there are other benefits to it, you accept it more and you actually suffer less. He produces goodness from your suffering, both in your life and in the lives of those within your sphere of influence. Life must continue, with or without suffering. At times you will come across very strong obstacles, and almost see no way, but do not always go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail and for sure you will win.

A famous saying by Maya Angelou goes, “You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated.”

Because God is not yet done with you and He will never leave you, until “He finishes giving you everything that He has promised”. Genesis 28:15. At the end, He shall reward you, because we know that life does not reward starters, it rewards finishers. Resilience is the key

You don’t have to be the winner, life is not a competition with anyone, but with yourself. Just keep limping through your pain and suffering, and finish the race. Then you can finally exclaim in victory like the letter to 2 Timothy 4:7-8 “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing”.

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