

S.H.A.P.E. E – Experiences

Have you ever said these words, “Now I know why God allowed that to happen to me”... or “Now I know why I went through that trial”...?

When we are going through certain experiences in life, we don’t always, in the moment, see the reasons as to why. We can’t see from God’s sovereign perspective! But sometimes, later in life, **He allows us to catch a glimpse!**

You’ve probably heard it said that “God does not waste an experience/suffering in our lives”. It is true, but how can we be sure?

God’s Word tells us & it is revealed all throughout Scripture!

- Joseph and his brothers – **Genesis 50:20** – “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...”
- The Apostle Peter – **Luke 22:31-32** - “And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”
- The Apostle Paul – **Philippians 1:12-14** - “What has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel...”

Maybe you’ve also heard, “Our wounds often become our greatest ministry!”

Hear this perspective clearly revealed by the Apostle Paul - **2 Corinthians 1:3-7**

- **“So that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God...”**

Where God has met us in our places of need, He can use us to meet others in their need as well... We can share in our sufferings & share in our comfort!

Our shared experiences, and sufferings, allow us to comfort others with

- **Encouragement** – We know what helps b/c we know what helped!
- **Wise counsel** – We’ve been there, done that, and have learned so much!
- **Listening ears & hearts** – Answers are not always the most helpful!
- **Fervent prayers** – Acknowledging together our greatest help!
- **A compassionate spirit** – Our hardships are not just about us!

We’ve been talking about our SHAPE, and how God has uniquely shaped us for a purpose... This is often clearly seen in the E – Experiences!

Take out your bulletin insert or scan the QR code on the screen...

All our lives have been affected by one or more of these life experiences! **They’ve changed us, not by chance... but by God’s fatherly hand! H.C. # 27**

“All things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand.”

Dan’s story... which is really God’s story, in and through Dan’s life:

- Abortion...
- Divorce...
- Second home & second parents...
- Public school, private school, & home school...
- Heartbreak...
- Hospitalization...
- Dysfunctional Family...
- Alcoholism...
- Miscarriage...
- Extended Physical Illness with a child...

The list could go on, & it will go on, b/c **we live in a broken & fallen world** One that God is still redeeming! The hardships will continue to come, but God’s goodness & providential work in, & through, our life experiences will too!

God doesn’t waste a hardship/suffering/experience in our lives, and neither should we! Again, “Our wounds often become our greatest ministry!”

And not all our experiences are difficult ones! God can use the real positive experiences in our lives too, to further His purposes in the world!

- I shared about that winter camp retreat that God used in my life back in high school to lead me to the calling that He had for my life!
- I went on 4 overseas mission trips in my young adult life that transformed my worldview... & shaped my passion for God and people!
- Getting the chance to lead worship in college w/ little experience & minimal talent... God is still using that experience & utilizing me in such ways!

God uses every experience in our lives to SHAPE and mold us, and to SHAPE and mold others through us and our experiences as well!

Are we giving God Lordship over every aspect of our lives, even our experiences, so that His glory is made known & His Church is built thru it?

Our experiences/SHAPE are more about God than about us! Will we say as Paul said, “What has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel”?

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