

# **Soul Strong Study – Week 6 “SUFFERING”**

**Lucinda Secrest McDowell**

**(Chapter 5 “Overcome Pain” in Soul Strong)**

**“I allow my scars to open new doors of service.”**

***In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them.***

***In his love and mercy he redeemed them.***

***He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.*** Isaiah 63.9

“Are you also hesitant to share broken places? In a world where strength is valued over weakness, who doesn’t want to at least appear whole? But our partnership in suffering with others can bear much fruit. Until we own our broken places as part of who we are, we can never fully experience the ordinary gifts of grace offered again and again with the goal of growing into compassionate ‘wounded healers.’ Will you embrace the gift of being broken today?” – Lucinda Secrest McDowell in “*Ordinary Graces*”

## **Suffering**

***“For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.”*** 2 Corinthians 1.5

“Suffering is having what you don’t want and wanting what you don’t have.” Elisabeth Elliot, 1977

*“She [EE] said she did believe suffering was necessary for us to know the cross in our own lives (Philippians 3.10) That we must suffer for the Lord even though we don’t seek out the suffering, nor do we have anything to do with choosing the fashion it will take. Sometimes this means allowing ourselves to be joyfully inconvenienced, not seeking our own way, but serving others. Daily prayers can be an opportunity of laying down our lives for someone else.”* Lucinda Secrest, Diary Nov. 1977

“Suffering is never for nothing. Now how do I know that? The deepest things that I have learned in my own life have come from the deepest suffering. And out of the deepest waters and the hottest fires have come the deepest things I know about God. And I would add this, that the greatest gifts of my life have also entailed the greatest suffering.” Elisabeth Elliot in “Suffering is Never for Nothing”

## **Choices**

***“Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets.”*** 2 Corinthians 7.10

“Your healing hangs on the hinge of this life-changing choice... it is the choice to find strength in your struggle. It is the choice to find hope in your hurt. It is the choice to choose the direction of your life and the demeanor of your spirit. In short, it is the determination to make the best of the worst.” – Les Parrott

“Suffering is inevitable, but how we respond to that suffering is our choice... We are fragile creatures and it is from this weakness, not despite it, that we discover the possibility of true joy.” Bishop Desmond Tutu

God’s joy looks darkness in the face and proclaims that light is more powerful. We are invited to choose and experience joy in the midst of our circumstances.

## Abigail

***“So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.”*** 1 Peter 5.10

Abigail had accepted her painful marriage and determined to live with integrity, against all odds. “She did not allow the circumstances of her life to determine what she would become. Rather than becoming hard, bitter, cynical, or stagnant, she allowed God to chisel away at her character, making her brilliantly beautiful against the dark background of a difficult life.” – Ruth Haley Barton

## Restoration

***“You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth.”*** Psalm 71.20

“Your past sins do not define you. Your painful scars do not define you. Your present sufferings do not define you. They are just shards of brokenness that God will use to knowingly refine your beauty. The restoration from broken into beautiful is neither easy or instantaneous. It demands a yielded heart and can be quite painful, but it comes with great reward.” – Gwen Smith

**Lucinda’s Affirmation in Tough Times**  
**“Sweetheart, this is hard. Breathe deeply.**  
**Remember how much God loves you.**  
**This did not catch Him by surprise.**  
**Open your hands to both release to Him and**  
**receive from Him. You are not alone.”**  
~Lucinda Secrest McDowell

## Scars

***“I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus.”*** Galatians 6.17

“To walk with God in suffering is to know sorrow, confusion, frustration, and doubt, but also, in time, to find the comfort our souls most long for and cannot find anywhere else. Suffering gives us new eyes, it teaches us to see in the dark. And what do we learn to see? Light, hope, joy, even God Himself, in new and profound ways.”  
Tish Harrison Warren, “Prayers in the Night”

“Jesus mends. He sutures. He slathers salve on the injured area and wraps it in holy bandages presoaked in mercy. Then, under His divine touch, wounds heal. Even wounds that cut bone-deep or leave raised-welt scars. His mending is artistry. Restoring is His specialty. Renewing broken things is His heart. Reclaiming shattered souls – repairing tattered lives – His preoccupation.” – Cynthia Ruchti

***Hast thou no scar? No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?  
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land; I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.  
Hast thou no scar?  
Hast thou no wound? Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,  
Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.  
Hast thou no wound?  
No wound? No scar? Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,  
And piercèd are the feet that follow Me. But thine are whole; can he have followed far  
Who hast no wound or scar?*** - Amy Carmichael

Suffering  
Choices  
Abigail  
Restoration  
Scars

### **The Overcoming Process**

1. Name your pain.
2. Give God your suffering.
3. Do the next thing.
4. Share hope.

### **Closing Prayer – singing over you**

Oh let the Son of God enfold you, With His Spirit and His love  
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.  
Oh let Him have those things that hold you, And His Spirit like a dove  
Will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Oh come and sing the song of gladness, As your hearts are filled with joy  
Lift your hands in sweet surrender to His name.  
Oh give Him all your tears and sadness, Give Him all your years of pain  
And you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

Jesus oh Jesus, Come and fill Your lambs  
Jesus oh Jesus, Come and fill Your lambs - John Wimber 1979

### **Small Group Discussion**

1. What was one thing you took away from working through Ch. 5 “Overcome Pain?”
2. On pages 93 and 94, there were several opportunities to confront and name your own pain and struggles. Were you able to do that? Does anyone feel comfortable sharing some of your answers? Why do you think naming the pain is an important first step?
3. I told the story of Fanny Crosby on pages 96-98 – how she overcame her blindness and stayed *soul strong*, enabling her to touch a world through her hymns. What inspiration did you see in her story? How does a person move from being a victim to being an overcomer?
4. In the biblical story of Naaman and his search for physical healing, I offered five steps towards healing that I have learned (page 104-105.) As you think of a situation in your own life, what step are you on this process?
5. In these past two-plus years, most of us (figuratively) opened the greeting card which said, **“Sorry, the Lifestyle you ordered is currently out of stock!”** How are you overcoming your disappointment, pain, and losses during this season?
6. Pray over the sisters in your group.

**HOMEWORK – Please try to complete chapter 6 “Extend Kindness” before we gather again next week. Pray for those in your group and remember I’m praying for you!**