

God's Presence in the Midst of Pain and Suffering

That cold winter day, I prayed, and prayed, but inside I was not praying, I was screaming. Heal her! You can. You did it before; do it again. Throw some crumbs my way. Nothing! In the face of face of pain, sorrow and despair, we eventually begin to question everything. Naomi lost her identity through pain; Job lost wealth, respect, and the desire to live; for Jeremiah lost a future, friends, and joy. As we face suffering, pain, and unanswered prayers, what happens to our faith? Does suffering alter who we are? Even when suffering occurs, can we still see God as a good and loving Father? Join Jelena on this journey to greater maturity and the reasons for believing through the crucible of suffering

Jelena Sivulka was born and raised in Serbia, where she got her master's degree in psychology and a master's degree in theology. She became a Christian 30 years ago and a few years later got involved in ministry with her husband Greg, planting churches, distributing humanitarian aid, and partnering with Joni and Friends, serving people with disabilities. Jelena has also worked as a counselor in Serbia's schools, social centers, medical clinics, and she is currently teaching Biblical Counselling at Baptist Theological College in Novi Sad, MENA Regin, and doing Ph.D. research on the topic of Mental Illness and Suffering. She is the founder and director of the non-profit organization Hana's Hope. She has been blessed with three children: Benjamin, Sara, and Hana, who has autism.

I. Plead for crumbs

A. Understanding the problem of suffering

1. Different kind of pain
2. The psychology of suffering

B. Diversities of suffering

1. Suffering as consequences, story of David
2. Suffering of betrayal, story of Jeremiah
3. Suffering of loss, story of Naomi
4. Suffering of mystery, story of Job

II. Unique invitation, fellowship of His suffering

"Life is pain, Highness. Anyone who says differently is selling something."

The Princess Bride, 1987

A. Different kind of World

B. Different kind of Pain

C. Different kind of Father

“God whispers to us in our pleasures,
Speaks to us in our conscience,
but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” C.S.Lewis

III. Life changing lessons

A. Learning to Weep

1. Importance of mourning
2. Learning the language of the soul

B. Learning to Walk

1. Find joy in small victories
2. Never underestimate the power of God's Gym
3. Story worth telling

C. Learning to Trust

1. Think
2. Thank
3. Love

D. Learning to Hope

1. Meeting Him
2. Seeing Him
3. Living with Him

IV. Story from a broken vessel

“One day very soon, much sooner than we think, God will close the curtain on sin, sweeping suffering and all its pain and tears away forever. Until that time, He permits what He hates to accomplish something mysterious and wonderful which He loves: Christ in us.”

Joni Earickson Tada

Suggested Readings:

Keller, Timothy, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2013.

Langberg, Diane, *Suffering and the Heart of God*, Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2015.

Solomon, Lon, *Brokenness*, San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate Publications, 2006.

Sittser, Jerry, *A Grace Disguised*, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004.

Swinton, John, *Finding Jesus in the Storm*, London, UK: SCM Press, 2020.

Nouwen, Henry J.M., *Can You Drink this Cup?*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2006.

Tada, Earickson J. & Estes, Steven, *When God Weeps*, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997.

Tada, Earickson J. & Bundy, Steve, *Beyond Suffering*, Aqoura Hills: Christian Institution on Disability, 2011.