



# NEW DIRECTION Mustard Seed

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*Dear Friends,*

As you may imagine living, eating, and working with teenagers, on a mountain top farm with the rising of the sun and the setting of the same was the perfect classroom for learning about human nature. It was in this setting that I, as a counselor, came to understand more deeply about the issue of suffering in ways a textbook could never teach. Each child who came to live on that farm had incurred various forms of suffering evolving into their troubled state which led to them coming to live on the farm. What each of them believed, personally, about the issue of suffering was as important to understand as were the facts surrounding that issue.

When we first began, it was with court ordered boys on weekends. Many of these young men lacked skills of emotional regulation and therefore would have meltdowns or blowups whenever they found themselves faced with the discomfort which comes from any new situation outside of their normal realm of experience. We were befuddled to oftentimes find them desiring to flee back to the Gathering Place as soon as possible to swaddle themselves in comforters.

As the years progressed we found low pain thresholds (physical and emotional) to be a constant dilemma within many of the youth with whom we lived. It is through struggle we grow. Many of these teens, as well as their parents, were bound in the lie of struggle being bad. Consequently this created an arrested life journey for those living according to that malaise.

The population living on the farm was a cross section of the youth of America. Their low threshold for pain was actually a result of the indoctrination of two specific tenets of our culture during their lifetime: immediate gratification and constant comfort.

What complicated the matter of helping them work through the deeper issues of soul wounding such as parental abandonment, various forms of abuse (sexual, emotional, physical, spiritual), neglect, rejection was their present lethargy regarding active investment in the day set before them.

Proverbs 29:18 says “without a vision the people perish.” Another translation says “without a vision people cast off restraint.” (“cast off restraint means that without the guidance of divine revelation, people abandon themselves to their own sinful ways.” David Jeremiah) As the years progressed we saw, across the board, an eroding of personal enthusiasm for a day much less a future.

Not all who came to live on the farm had been abused or neglected as children.....but all had been profoundly influenced by the molding and shaping of the culture.

How much greater the pressure from that shaping is occurring today with the constant drip-line of technology. We must be mindful that whatever has the greater platform in our lives influences our mindset which, at the same time, becomes our heart set.

Paul Brand, a pioneering orthopedic surgeon in the treatment of leprosy, spending the first part of his medical career in India and last part in U.S. : “In the United States..... I have encountered a society that seeks to avoid pain at all costs. Patients lived at greater comfort levels than any I had previously treated but they seemed far less equipped to handle suffering and far more traumatized by it.”

Years prior to our moving onto the farm I found myself entrenched in a season of suffering. Although miniscule compared to that of those with whom I would be working, it was nonetheless a suffering to which I found myself entrapped. It was not the series of events but rather my repeated thinking of “this was not supposed to happen” that created the staked tether. There were two specific, life changing teachings placed before me by the Lord which became the catalysts for my being able to move forward.

The first was this print of Jesus holding a lamb. I was tenaciously holding fast to a situation afraid to surrender that over which I had no control. Because the situation involved a loved one who was a prisoner of the evil realm at that time, I believed that surrender meant throwing my hands up and releasing him to Satan. The Lord kept bringing me back to the story of Abraham and Isaac and impressing upon me that I needed to lay this person down as on Mt Moriah. One day a friend, who had no clue of this challenge that had been set before me, gave me this print which served as a visual of Truth: “these are the hands to which you would be surrendering your son”. That day was the day of entrusting my son into the care of the Lord.

The second was my release from the ever revolving rumination of “this wasn’t supposed to happen” and “if only.....” The Lord impressed upon me to write the word IS on note cards and place them in prominent places such as my mirror, the dashboard of my car, my office desk. The significance of which was: like it or not this was my reality and Jesus is the Great I Am of that reality. John 14:6 :“I am the Way , the Truth and the Life.” In essence what I was working through were the stages of grief, acceptance being the last stage. It is one thing to reach “it is what it is and I cannot change it” but quite another to release all aspects of what encompassed those losses into the hands of the One Who promises to use all of these pieces for good. (Romans 8:28)

This was preparation for what I would next step into, prior to the farm, which in retrospect, became the foundational premise of the years which would follow working with others who had great loss in their lives. I began working with a client who had suffered unconscionable degrees of all areas of abuse from the hands of her parents as a tiny baby until she fled at the age of 13. So great was her abuse it manifested in bizarre behaviors as an adult which landed her in a psychiatric hospital for years. Whenever she had flashbacks she acted out and was restrained to her bed and shot up with Thorazine which knocked her out for a period of time. Years later was when she asked if I would be willing to meet with her. Her diagnosis of Multiple Personality now referred to as Dissociative Identity Disorder, was something about which I had only read a paragraph in graduate school. But she was a born again believer as was I, so I asked if she would join me in praying about whether we were to work together. We both heard “yes”. Thus began a surreal journey of this



woman and I walking together. Since this was early on in my practice I had few clients so oftentimes I could devote 20 or so hours a week working with her. It was through that time I learned that healing occurs incrementally as we walk with the Lord. And it is in safe, trusting relationships with others who are called to walk alongside us, the barriers can begin to come down. Rather than being sedated so as not to remember, true healing facilitates bringing those violations of the soul to the Light, the reality of those pieces handed over to God, and release through the forgiveness of those who have sinned against us. This client was the first of many to whom I would give a copy of Jesus holding the lamb. I am so thankful to report that she became fully integrated in Christ and went onto live a full life. Much like the woman at the well she never hesitated to tell others about the Gospel.

We live according to what we believe. It was through working with this woman, I came to believe from a deeper vein that Jesus Christ is the same today as yesterday and that only He can bind up our soul wounds and release us from the snares of the enemy. What is written in scripture, Truth, trumps the rigid framework of what are man's psychological theories of disorder.

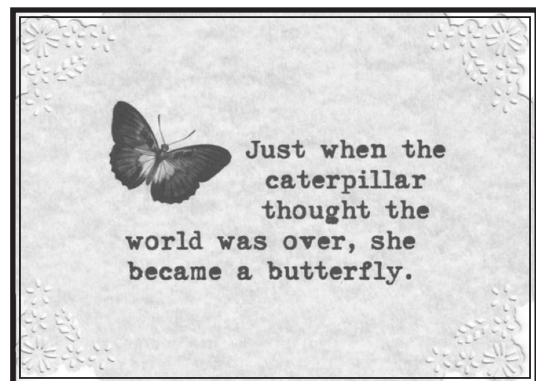
I also learned that there is a work that we must do in collaboration with the Lord as we walk through and out of our seasons of suffering. Those two prepositions "through and out of" are vitally important. So many with whom I work don't want to do "the working through" but desire to be astral projected from point A to point P. Consequently they remain stuck.

As I reflect back over these past 22 years since my husband and I first stepped out on faith to begin New Direction Ministries, now with the addition of the Mustard Seed Project, I am ever thankful for the manner in which I have been able to counsel folks. First of all with being able to counsel with Christ as the center and secondly with no financial restrictions governing how long I can work with a client. Many of those who seek help are, like I once was, stuck in the middle stages of grief. Those who are clients of the Mustard Seed are in need of far more than mere counseling. Our goal is to walk in close relationship with them, through and out of, their entrenched thickets as they embrace God's vision of Hope for their futures.

When we first meet with potential Mustard Seed clients we begin with hearing their stories always mindful that each has a uniquely different narrative. Those with whom we agree to walk in long term

commitment all are similar to one another in the sense that they are suffering survivalists who have pushed forward as best as they can on behalf of desiring a better life for their children than they, themselves, had. Some incurred abuse and neglect as children, never having opportunity to sort through the pieces which, in turn, uncannily kept being repeated as adults. For a season or two for some, substance abuse was their form of swaddling and numbing their pain. There came a time in each of their lives, when they realized this was bringing greater pain and they made the conscious decision to choose life over numbing. It is interesting that most are employed either in child care or nursing care: entrusted with the care of others as they, all alone, bear the heavy burden of raising their own children.

Some of these ladies need legal representation for child custody. Some need a season of income supplementation as they pay off debt or move to better housing. Most all of them need opportunity to sit and begin relinquishing the bits and pieces of loss to which they have clung. Along with this is beginning to examine mindsets that are continuing to hold them captive; most centering around lies they have believed about themselves as well as about God. "I am worthless" and "God doesn't care because if He did....." Of course there are many "shouldn't have", "should have" and "if only's" which are keeping them immobilized from moving forward. I am so thankful to have learned lessons in my own darkness which now have become tools in helping others.



On the farm we had a compost bin with three sections. The first was where the cast-offs were put: vegetable and fruit scraps from meal preparation, weeds, grass, leaves. On a regular basis this was to be turned over with a shovel, exposing the lower layer to light and water. After a while, in order to make room for more scraps, this pile was turned into the second bin. Again there was a consistent turning of what now was looking a bit more like soil than scraps. Eventually this was placed in the third bin which became the most

amazing fertile soil for plants. Much the same with our handfuls of suffering. If we simply clench them tight fist they become toxic to us. But when they are turned over and relinquished once and for all to the Great Recycler.....they become a source of strength.

Suffering is a reality of living in a broken world. Some suffering is incurred from the sinful hands of others. Some suffering is the result of the consequences of our own choices. I believe it is only when we understand the significance of the Person of Jesus as the Suffering Servant and the beautiful words "Jesus wept" when He encountered the pain of Martha and Mary upon the death of their beloved Lazarus, that we can accept how much He is the answer to this issue of suffering. He didn't weep because He was helpless. He wept because of His compassion regarding the pain of these ladies.

We are so very thankful to know it is not up to us to fix the problems of those with whom we walk. Ever more thankful to know Who is able.

*"He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken; smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53: 3-6*

Thank You For Walking With Us as We Walk With Others

All of us at the Mustard Seed



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