

**The Hidden Price of Greatness** by Ray Beeson & Mack Hunsicker, Tyndale House Publisher, Carol Stream, IL: 1991. (54 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

Introduction

### **1. Rough Road Leads To Greatness**

Seneca, the Roman philosopher and statesman, said, "It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness." [Page xiii]

### **2. Suffering Leads To Our Development**

God takes no pleasure in our pain. However, he takes great pleasure in our development. Suffering is never the goal; it is the road. [Page xiii]

### **3. Grief Leads To Greatness**

"Grief has always been the lot of greatness. It is an open secret." Missionary and author Lettie Cowman. [Page xiii]

*Section One: People Pain*

*Chapter 1 From Prodigal to Pillar. Showcase: Monica & Augustine of Hippo*

### **4. The Joy of Friendship**

Augustine and his friend Alypius sat in their small home reading. There was nothing sweeter to the two men than pouring over their books in one another's company. [Page 4]

### **5. God's Work Takes Time**

Human reason wouldn't do it that way. We prefer quick fixes, easy answers, and clear-cut, cause-and-effect explanations. But God is a God of surprises. He is a God who allows us to be deeply hurt that we may be more deeply healed. He is a God with time to wait for grace to take root in our hearts and minds (2 Pet. 3:9). He is a God who, as pastor Jack Hayford says, works in the dark. [Page 8]

### **6. Conversion Is a Process**

Richard Foster comments in his analysis of Augustine's search, "We, today, in our preoccupation with the crisis of conversion, often forget the importance of the pilgrimage that precedes and follows conversion." [Page 9]

### **7. The Cost of Commitment**

Sometimes well-meaning people cause seekers serious spiritual damage when they encourage them to come to Christ for his forgiveness before their wills have bowed to his. All of us need to rediscover the cost of commitment (repentance and redirection of life). Otherwise, we birth pseudo-believers who make no attempt to put away their old lives of sin. Not only does this stunt their spiritual development, it provides a deadly obstacle to other seekers who question the lack of Christian character they see. [Page 13]

## **8. A Heart of Flame, Love, And Steel**

Augustine's motto may prove helpful: ... "To my God, a heart of flame; to my fellow men, a heart of love,; to myself, a heart of steel." [Page 13]

## **9. God Forgives**

The nineteenth century Scottish minister Alexander MacLaren warned Christians:

You cannot think too much, too [negatively], of your own sins, but you may think too exclusively of them, and if you do, they will drive you to madness of despair.

My dear friend, there is no remorse which is deep enough for the smallest transgression; but there is no transgression which is so great but that forgiveness for it may come. [Page 14]

*Section One: People Pain*

*Chapter 2 A House Divided. Showcase: Susanna & Samuel Wesley*

## **10. God's Presence Is Sufficient During Trials and Suffering**

Susanna could say with assurance, "None know what they can bear till they are tried.... Surely, the manifestation of His presence and favor is more than an adequate support under any suffering whatever." [Page 18]

## **11. The Danger of Pride, Power, and Performance**

It seems sometimes that everything would be fine in our relationships if it weren't for the pressure points. Like a speck of grit in the eye or a pebble in a shoe, conflict usually comes along that annoys us. These trouble spots divide into the categories of pride, power, and performance. We have trouble yielding in areas that strongly connect with our identity and cherished beliefs (pride), our control over circumstances (power), and our ability to act effectively (performance).

When these areas suffer, we often try to reinforce our sagging morale by increasing our demands upon others and venting our frustrations emotionally. [Page 18]

## **12. Suffering Promotes Spiritual Growth**

"Though man is born to trouble, yet I believe there is scarce a man to be found upon earth but, take the whole course of his life, hath more mercies than afflictions, and much more pleasure than pain. All my sufferings, by the admirable management of Omnipotent Goodness, have concurred to promote my spiritual and eternal good.... Glory be to Thee, O Lord!" - Susanna Wesley [Page 23]

*Section One: People Pain*

*Chapter 3 A Sea with No Shore. Showcase: Francis Schaeffer*

## **13. The Importance of Unity among Christians**

At his death in 1984, Francis Schaeffer was acclaimed as an evangelical thinker who had left his mark on the church. His bitter experience with the separatist movement

had a great impact on the nature of that mark. In all his books, he taught that Bible-believing Christians must not put up walls between one another. The only valid wall was between those who accepted the Bible as the absolute Word of God and those who did not. Even with the latter group, he insisted that an attitude of love must be maintained and the door of dialogue kept open.

In keeping with that position, Schaeffer remained quiet about his denominational membership so that he could minister more effectively to all Christians. He avoided using sectarian terms. In his book *The Church before the Watching World*, he wrote, "We must practice an observable and real oneness (before God, before the elect angels, before the demonic hosts, before the watching liberals and before the watching world." [Page 28]

#### **14. Struggles from Within**

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1) [Page 29]

#### **15. The Twin Tempters, Pride and Power**

We say we want purity and holiness in the church, more spiritual leadership, a return to biblical authority. We may even begin our fight with clean hands and hearts, but then the twin tempters, Pride and Power, rush to help us win. Before we realize it, we torch part of the body of Christ without much remorse. [Page 29]

#### **16. Church Discipline Done In Love Leads To Growth of The Body**

Love should be at the heart of church discipline. Members are mutually accountable for attitudes and actions that grieve the Spirit and damage Christ's body. Such disciplinary action causes pain, but it can be redemptive for everyone involved when restoration results. It provides an excellent opportunity to rediscover God's unconditional love and forgiveness, as well as occasion to display love for one another (2 Cor. 2:1-10)

This godly sorrow, or true repentance, never leads to death (2 Cor. 7:10). In a letter to a friend who had also been a casualty of the separatist movement, Schaeffer said, "I believe that the pain you have felt, and I have felt, is ... the pain of birth in a day of blessing, as the whole body is made more ready for the Bridegroom's coming. Surely the birth pains mean little if such a result is born through our dear Lord's grace." [Page 31]

#### *Section Two: Mental Anguish*

#### *Chapter 4 In Search of Sanity. Showcase: Alexander Cruden*

#### **17. God's Command to Comfort, Support, And Encourage**

... the Lord commands us to comfort, support, and encourage the feeble-minded, the fearful, and the distressed, and to affirm one another's gifts in whatever form they take. [Page 44]

## **18. Success Should Be Measured By Christ- likeness, Not Social/Cultural Norms**

God uses brilliant and attractive people like the prophet Daniel and Queen Esther. He also chooses servants like Jeremiah and John the Baptist whose appearance and behavior send shock waves through society. We need a new view of the kingdom of God and the diversity of its wonders. We need to realize that nonconformity is yeast for the bread of life. Instead of looking for the standard cultural marks of success and normalcy, we should be looking for the stamp of Christ-likeness. [Page 44]

## **19. God's Glory Revealed Through His Power and Wisdom**

At the time of his [Cruden's] last confinement in an asylum he said, "God by His secret power and wisdom [can] make it issue for His won glory and [my] good." [Page 46]

## **20. All Things Safe in The Hands of God**

Mental distress doesn't mean God has forsaken us. He is there in the prison of the mind, whispering messages of comfort and healing. In the words of a minister from Elizabeth Goudge's novel *The Scent of Water*, "If you lose your reason, you lose it into the hands of God. It's safe there, you know. It's the only place where anything is safe." [Page 46]

## **21. Boast Only Of God**

Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight. (Jer. 9:23-24) [Page 48]

### *Section Two: Mental Anguish*

#### *Chapter 5 Fainthearted Soldiers. Showcase: Charles Spurgeon*

## **22. We All Have Our Moments**

"The strong are no always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy." [Charles Spurgeon] [Page 53]

## **23. Our Limitations Leads to Our Dependence on God**

God often chooses people for special service because of their awareness of their own limitation. He knows they are most likely to remain dependent on his strength and guidance. [Page 55]

## **24. God Is in Control**

It is good to remember that the same one who called us to get into the boat is also able to take charge of the storm that rocks it. We will find ourselves unable to face tomorrow's demands if we do not rest today. [Page 55]

## **25. To Be Sensitive to All Suffering**

George Fox, founder of the Quaker movement, said, "I prayed to God that He would baptize my heart into the sense of all conditions, so that I might be able to enter into the needs and sorrows of all." He considered this baptism of suffering essential to authentic Christian ministry. [Page 56]

*Section Two: Mental Anguish*

*Chapter 6 The Ultimate Shame. Showcase: Helen Roseveare*

## **26. Increasing Numbers of Physical and Sexual Assault in the U.S.**

In early 1989, then U. S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said, "In the United States as many as 15 million women have been beaten, raped, or suffered other forms of physical and sexual assault, with the number rising by one million a year." An increasing number of men are sexually assaulted as well. Experts estimate that a rape occurs every six minutes somewhere in America. [Page 63-64]

## **27. God Identifies with Human Pain through Christ**

One of the most healing truths a victim can learn is that God in Christ fully identified with human pain. The words breathed into Helen's heart that night in the Congo ("as a lamb to the slaughter" (take Jesus out of the stained glass window and put him back where he rightfully belongs in the midst of our agony. "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised" (Isa. 53:3)

Perhaps we struggle so hard with the injustice of human suffering because we don't fully comprehend how completely God identifies with the shame and agony we experience. The cross has become an abstract religious symbol in our culture. It's easy to forget that Jesus endured the most degrading form of execution his world had to offer. [Page 64-65]

## **28. God Is Near**

Because Jesus said yes to the cross, those who suffer shame and violation can be assured of his presence in their pain and his healing for all their wounds. We have a God who became "like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.... Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb. 2:17-18).

And victims are tempted to self-pity and suicide, to obsession and revenge, to loss of faith and denial of God's existence. For some, God becomes the ultimate source of blame, the divine enemy. For others ... God becomes the ultimate intimate companion. For all victims, God is either closer or farther away. [Page 65]

### *Section Three: Broken Bodies*

#### *Chapter 7 Crucified with Christ. Showcase: Blaise Pascal*

##### **29. God's Correction**

"Lord, you gave me health to serve you, and I have made an utterly profane use of it. You now send me sickness to correct me.... Lord, I confess that I have esteemed health as good, not because it is an easy means to serve you usefully... but because by its favor I could abandon myself with less restraint to the abundance of life's charms, and better enjoy their deadly pleasure."

[Blaise] Pascal cried out for God's correction. "Grant that in this illness I may consider myself as in a kind of death, separated from the world, stripped clean of all the objects of my attachments, alone in your presence...." [Page 75]

### *Section Four: Shattered Dreams*

#### *Chapter 10 Bound in Chains. Showcase: Richard Allen*

##### **30. The Favor and Love Of God**

Richard Allen pointed out to slaves that, no matter how their masters and mistresses treated them, they could experience "the favor and love of God... which will be a consolation in the worst condition... and no master can deprive you of it." Jesus Christ's triumph guarantees us a place in heaven, where, as Allen said, "the power of the most cruel master ends, and all sorrow and tears are wiped away." [Page 115-116]

##### **31. Knowing Christ Makes a Difference in Our Lives**

When Richard Allen became a child of God through faith in Jesus, he received a new heart of love. He could look at his master and see a man who needed Christ, a man who had terrible financial problems, a man who struggled to do what was right. He didn't see an enemy any more.

Allen worked harder after his conversion because he wanted his master and any other observers to see that knowing Christ made a difference. This attitude won him favor and resulted in the master's conversion and the slave's release. If Allen had slacked off in his work or used his new Christian freedom as a weapon against his master, the results probably would have been much different. [Page 116]

##### **32. True Servant hood Is Knowing God Is Greater Than All That Is In the World**

Jesus is King of the Universe, yet he washed dirty feet. True servant hood flows from the inner strength of knowing that the One living inside us is greater than all that is in the world. We are released from the struggle for preeminence of power. We owe no man anything but love (and that is everything!) [Page 117]

### **33. Know When to Speak and When to Be Silent**

As Christians, we are to avoid self-commendation. We should long to be like Christ who "was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Often this is the correct response, particularly when our personal reputation or status is the only thing at stake. But this isn't how Jesus handled all criticism. Frequently he responded in order to bring sharp confrontation between truth and error (Matt. 12:1-13)

When false charges defraud an entire group of the respect they deserve, an answer is especially in order. Paul countered the criticism aimed at his ministry because of the threat it represented to the church's well-being. He knew that unscrupulous people sought to discredit him so they could usurp his leadership and thus take advantage of the people of God. He wrote to the Corinthian church. "We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart" (2 Cor. 5:12) [Page 118]

### **34. Stay Focused on God**

Nehemiah, the city builder [gives] ... us a guide for dealing with critics and oppressors, it would probably offer the following advice: Don't be afraid: remember the Lord (Neh. 4:14). Exhibit your faith in God by confident action (Neh. 4:20). Don't be distracted from God's work (Neh. 6:2-4). Don't run, and don't sin; renew your strength in God (Neh. 6:8-11). Give God time to put your enemies to shame (Neh. 6:16) [Page 120]

#### *Section Four: Shattered Dreams*

#### *Chapter 12 Sentenced to Scrub. Showcase: Gladys Aylward*

### **35. God Gives Us Gifts and Abilities for His Purpose**

It's important to remember that the Lord's spotlight also illuminates our gifts and abilities. He delights in affirming and nurturing the unique talents he has given us. Gladys couldn't learn from a book or behave like a refined lady of society, but she could "spin a yarn" that became a net to catch people for Christ. Her simplicity, dramatic flair, and imagination made her an effective missionary as no classroom could. [Page 139]

### **36. God Is Hope for the Hopeless**

During Gladys's harrowing journey out of war-torn Yangcheng with more than one hundred orphan children, she grappled with despair as never before. After passing a sleepless night, she faced the morning with no hope of reaching safety. A thirteen-year-old girl in the group reminded her of their much loved story of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea.

"But I am not Moses," Gladys cried in desperation. "Of course you are not," the girl said, "but Jehovah is still God!" [Page 141-142]

## Section Five: Divine Silence

### Chapter 13 Running Ahead of the Spirit. Showcase: George Whitefield

#### **37. A Prayer for Humility**

Early in his ministry, he prayed, "Lord, show that Thou dost love me, by humbling and keeping me humble as long as I live. The means I leave to Thee." [George Whitefield] [Page 152]

#### **38. Ask God for Discernment**

John Wesley cautioned, "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions or revelations to be from God. They may be from him, they may be from nature, they may be from the devil. Therefore, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be from God." [Page 154]

#### **39. Silence Is Golden**

Often silence is the best way to respond to what we believe is a special message from God. Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, we can treasure up God's promises in our hearts and wait to see how he will fulfill them (Luke 2:19). When we feel the Lord wants us to share what he has spoken to us with others, we should do so in a way that encourages the listener to seek God personally rather than accepting us as an ultimate authority. [Page 155]

#### **40. Guidance from God Is Not a Tightrope**

But when we get off track, he must sometimes shout to us through our pain, as C. S. Lewis so aptly put it.

George Whitefield wrote in his journal, "Suffering times are a Christian's best improving times: for they break the will, wean us from the creature, prove the heart."

In spite of our capacity for deception, we must not give way to fear. This is summed up well by John White in his book *The Fight*:

"At the back of your mind you may feel that following Christ is like walking a tightrope. One false move and you're done for. Yet if the sheep strays a little, the Eastern shepherd, who knows his sheep by name, will not abandon him to his false course. He will call him, and if the sheep fails to respond to the call, he will go and fetch him. Guidance is not walking a tightrope." [Page 156]

#### **41. Safe in God's Arms**

... we can be confident that the safety net of God's grace holds firm to keep us from destruction. Through trial and error we grow in strength and skill. "If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand" (Ps. 37:23-24). [Page 156]



## **42. Steps to Spiritual Greatness**

- Confirmation. Submit the messages you receive from God to the testing of trusted spiritual counselors.
- Caution. Refrain from sharing the secrets God whispers to your heart. Wait for further insight and guidance.
- Confession. When you mistake your own thoughts or desires for God's voice, humble yourself and accept a course correction.]
- Courage. Regardless of how many times you misunderstand, doubt, or disobey, keep listening!

I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. (Ps. 27:13-14) [Page 157]

### *Section Five: Divine Silence*

#### *Chapter 14 Out of the Ashes. Showcase: Dwight Moody*

## **43. God's Provision**

"God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves." [Dwight Moody] [Page 165]

## **44. Stay Focused on God's Will**

The apostle Paul warned that good soldiers don't entangle themselves in distracting duties, and prize-winning athletes don't break the rules (2 Tim. 2:4-5). Many Spirit-filled Christians find themselves with serious "leaks" through directing their talents and affections in too many directions. [Page 165]

## **45. Faith and Trust in God Alone**

"Why should God have to lead us thus, and allow the pressure to be so hard and constant?" asks another remarkable servant of God, A. B. Simpson. Because "he wants us to stand, not with a self-constituted strength, but with a hand ever leaning upon his, and a trust that dare not take one step alone."

God puts us in the school of trial to teach us this trust. Simpson continues, "The lesson of faith, once learned, is an everlasting acquisition and an eternal fortune made; and without trust even riches will leave us poor." [Page 166]

## **46. Strength from God That Can Move a Mountain**

A Spirit-transformed Moody was able to say, "When God wants to move a mountain, he does not take a bar of iron, but he takes a little worm. The fact is, we have too much strength. We are not weak enough. It is not our strength that we want. One drop of God's strength is worth more than all the world." [Page 167]

## **47. God's Plan Will Proceed with or without Us**

We have difficulty admitting that the Lord can achieve his purposes without us. Certainly he wants us to give our best, but he also wants us to recognize that we have nothing to offer him that didn't come from his infinite riches. When we are gone from the scene, his work will still proceed as divinely planned. [Page 167]

*Section Six: Death, the Final Enemy*

*Chapter 16 A Grain of Wheat. Showcase: David Brainerd*

## **48. The Redeemer's Kingdom**

As he [David Brainerd] thought of his weakness and the end of his mission work, strong encouragement began flowing into his heart. Something he had realized several months earlier and recorded in his diary came alive inside him: "The Redeemer's kingdom is all that is valuable in the earth, and I could not but long for the promotion of it in the world. I saw also, that this cause is God's; that he has an infinitely greater regard and concern for it than I could possibly have." Yes, God would finish what he had begun. [Page 183]

## **49. The Hope of Eternity with Our Lord and Savior in His Time**

In late September he revived enough to correct a small volume of his writing for publication. With that accomplished and all his personal affairs set in order, Brainerd felt his work was done. "O, why is his chariot so long in coming? I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy angels," he cried out again and again. [Page 184]

## **50. Home with The Lord**

On October 9, 1747, David Brainerd's deepest longing was granted. He entered God's eternal glory. Though only twenty-nine years old, his race was finished. The outcome was up to God. [Page 184]

## **51. Overcoming Obstacles**

Brainerd's father died when he was only eight years old. His mother died when he was fourteen. Though he inherited a sizable estate, he lost the parental love and affection that is so essential to a child's happiness and security.

In his book *Creative Suffering*, noted Christian physician and counselor Paul Tournier makes some interesting observations on deprivation. He relates the startling fact that a large portion of the greatest world leaders share the experience of having been orphans. This is confirmed in numerous studies of high performers. As many as three-fourths of those who become celebrated achievers are estimated to have suffered serious emotional deprivation or hardship in childhood.

Commenting on this phenomenon, Tournier says, "The person matures, develops, becomes more creative, not because of the deprivation in itself, but through his own

active response to misfortune, through the struggle to come to terms with it and morally to overcome it." [Page 186]

### *Section Six: Death, the Final Enemy*

#### *Chapter 18 To Die Is Gain. Showcase: John & Betty Stam*

### **52. God's Holy Purpose**

The Bible relates dozens of stories that leave us asking, "Why did you do it that way, Lord?" Why should God choose Abraham and Sarah to parent a holy nation after they were withered with age? Why did he appoint Moses, a stuttering fugitive, as leader of a bold slave uprising? ....

God doesn't respond with apology or extended explanation. He simply says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). He also leaves us with his promise to bring beauty out of ashes and joy out of mourning (Isa. 61:3). The Lord guarantees that his plan for us is good and that nothing will ultimately thwart it.

Still, only the heart convinced of his love and committed to his will endures in spite of unanswered questions. [Page 210]

### **53. The Sacrifice of Believer's Is Crucial to World Evangelism.**

The kingdom of God grows through Christians' dying. It seems a paradox that the death of Christians could be the key to church growth. Yet as surely as the cross of Christ was essential to our salvation, the sacrifice of believers is crucial to world evangelism. That is as true today as ever.

In fact, the rate of Christian martyrdom has risen dramatically in recent years. The World Evangelization Research Center estimates that there were approximately 35,600 Christian martyrs in 1900 compared to an estimated 325,000 in 1989. Martyrdom is a fact of life in at least fifty countries. The Center concludes from its research that out of the two thousand or so plans for global evangelization by A.D. 2000, "martyrdom is probably the most potent and significant factor of all."

Our response should not be to seek martyrdom, but we should not avoid it either. The display of love at great cost so completely shown on Calvary's cross must also be displayed in the lives of Christians. We love because Christ first loved us; we love as he loved by laying down our lives. [Page 212]

### **54. Christ's Example**

A. W. Tozer said it well: "While Christ was the perfect example of the healthy, normal man, He did not live a normal life. He sacrificed many pure enjoyments to give Himself to the holy work of moral rescue. His conduct was determined not by what was legitimate or innocent, but by human need. He pleased not Himself but lived for the emergency; and as He was, so are we in this world!" [Page 215]

Beeson, Ray & Ranelda Mack Hunsicker. *The Hidden Price of Greatness*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1991.