

Pain

n/a

Ready:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

-Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

Set

I'm sure you can remember some part of your physical training program that you thought was surely designed to kill you. Maybe it was a set of "gassers," or running the lines on the court, or a 10-minute run. These torturous drills were always at the end of a hard practice. My least favorite was a timed quarter-mile run at the end of a season-starting football practice. Coming around the last turn my legs would burn like they were on fire, and it would feel like someone had stabbed me in the side with a knife. I was certain the coach's goal was to kill us. But those coaches weren't overly interested in how much we hurt that day. They were looking ahead to the season and were getting us ready for not just our first game, but our last game, as well. And throughout the season, as our bodies became better conditioned, those quarter-mile runs at the end of practice weren't as painful. They were still difficult, but they weren't as painful. The pain of that day made us better prepared for the season ahead.

Sometimes we mistake God's promise not to harm us as His promise that we will have a pain-free life. In reality, mental and emotional pain is a part our growing process. We watch a parent, grandparent or child die. A relationship comes to an end. We lose our place in the starting lineup. We fail a class. All of these are painful, but God knows, just like our coaches, that pain doesn't necessarily equal harm. It sometimes equals growth and conditioning.

Today's pain may be preparing us for tomorrow. That's where the part about "a hope and a future" comes into play. Although God has put each of us in the place where we are to do His work today, He's looking down the road to where we will be days, weeks and even years from now. He wants us to be ready not just for today or tomorrow, but also for our last day here. We just have to keep in mind that even though conditioning can be painful, it is beneficial.

Go

1. What pain do you have in your life?
2. Can you see how God can use it to make you stronger or better prepared for tomorrow? (It may help you to talk with someone you respect in the Lord.)
3. Do you know someone in pain today whom you could encourage? (Think of it like cheering your teammates on during a hard practice.)

Workout

Romans 8:18
James 1:12
Job (the entire book)

Bible Reference:

James 1



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