

There is Hope Radio
Why Not Become a Christian-Part Four, Transcript
PreacherRichD

Welcome to *There is Hope Radio*, our radio host is the Let's Get Real PreacherRichD of Creating Futures.

PreacherRichD: I have my friend Marty that's from, well, I won't say he's from Arkansas. He lives here in Arkansas now, in Graves Ferry, Arkansas where I live. And then my friend Bobby that lives in Issaquah, which is a suburb of Seattle, Washington.

PreacherRichD: And we're talking about suffering. We covered the objection that some people don't come to Jesus and don't want to be a Christian because of the fact that there's suffering in the world and that there's a God that loves and there's a God that's compassionate. Why does He allow suffering if He's a God that has power and control? Why does He allow suffering? The conclusion we came up with was a couple of things.

PreacherRichD: One is that whether there's a God or not, there's suffering on the earth. So if there is a God, can we not see that He could be grieving about the suffering as much as us? And that as long as there's free will, there will be suffering and God is not going to take away the free will of man. And then the second reason we were looking at why God would allow suffering is because good can come out of suffering.

PreacherRichD: And that's what we're going to talk about is how good can come out of suffering.

PreacherRichD: Bobby, I know your story. I know a lot of your suffering. I think you would say this. A lot of your suffering is your own choices. Maybe most of your suffering is your own choices. I don't know. I don't know how much was not from your choices based upon some of the lifestyle you lived in. And so why don't you just kind of touch on a couple of areas where, well, I guess for people that haven't heard before, just share about what, when I say a lot of your choices, kind of share what your background is and then pick a couple of stories where you can say that suffering became one of the greatest things that could happen in your life.

Bobby: Yeah. So I spent most, I spent the good, a good majority of my life. The first maybe a good 15, 20 years of my life using drugs and alcohol. And I used them to the extreme and an awful lot. And I mean, with that comes a ton of suffering. These were my choices. This is, this was my, my life without God. So I spent a lot of time being homeless. I spent a lot of the time being couch surfing. And, you know, I mean, if you could just imagine that the feeling of what comes with that, where, you know, you spend your last \$5 where you can either, geez, I need where your choices really are. I need cigarettes. I need drugs or I need food or I need shelter. You know, what is my last \$20 going to go to?

Bobby: And, you know, I mean, with that, a lot of that goes with all the struggling, not to mention all the failed relationships and the people that I hurt. You know, the people who I hurt were the people who I love the most.

Bobby: So, you know, that kind of suffering is really, really, really tough to deal with and to bear. And when you do that so much, so often it actually accumulates. And so over years and years and years, you know, I'd lost just any sort of sense of self-worth or direction or, yeah, I don't know. And that was just the thought day in, day out. And that's the feeling, that's the burden that I had to carry. And so I used drugs and alcohol to kind of suppress that. That's the background and part of a lot of the suffering that's gone on.

PreacherRichD: So then how can there be any good in any of that and how did any good come out of that? And once you came to Christ, does that mean there was no more suffering? Everything became perfect and life is just so good and never been depressed or discouraged since you came to Christ. And you have this unique relationship with them that none of the rest of us have, where since you came to them, it's just been a perfect life and been set free from any kind of suffering. Or maybe you have a different story.

Bobby: Yeah, definitely not. So this is about almost 10 years ago to the day, just here in the next couple of months. I had a really, really great encounter. I had an altar call and Rich asked if anybody wanted to come up to the altar and be forgiven. And I just didn't know that was a thing. I didn't even know that I needed to be or I didn't even know that I was carrying such a heavy weight. And so I did not having no idea what having no idea what was in store. I just didn't even think it would work.

PreacherRichD: You had no idea. Just to clarify this, you didn't have a church background. You have the idea of going to an altar. What does that really mean? You literally had no idea what was going to take place.

Bobby: Yeah, I just I had no clue. I mean, literally no. So I didn't even I barely even knew it. I only knew what an altar call was because I've seen it maybe once or twice in that same church for the weeks past. And I just remember thinking I'm way too embarrassed to do that. So I'm not going to do that. So I did it. And just because I don't know why not.

Bobby: I just was I just I had just been beaten up so bad where I just thought anything must be better than the way that I'm going. And so I tried it. And I just I mean, as soon as they started praying, they Rich touched me and Carmi touched me and I just started crying like a baby. Yeah. And that was probably the most, you know, that was the first major experience I had ever had, at least where I felt something. And I mean, I had miracles happen before, but, you know, I didn't acknowledge that it could have been God.

Bobby: But so that was the first experience I had with the power of God. And right then and there, there was a huge burden lifted and my life felt easier. And I just really it really allowed me to open up and kind of delve into this.

Bobby: But so that was my just to fast forward everything. That was my first experience there. And since then, I've had a ton.

Bobby: But my struggles today almost always come from not staying in relationship with that same power that has such magic and such a power. That is my struggle. Those are my choices that I make when I first wake up.

Bobby: What do I do? Do I seek God? Do I pray? Do I get in touch? Do I check in? Or, you know, do I turn on YouTube and watch political commentary or whatever? And that seems to be my main struggle, because when I when I stopped doing that, when I stopped staying in touch with Jesus, then my life really goes wonky. And then those same feelings that came back when I was using drugs and alcohol, the same feelings that I talked about earlier, those come back. And so my really the only piece that I have is 100 percent contingent upon my relationship with God, because I've found that there's nothing that gives me any sort of sense of peace inside other than that.

Bobby: So it's really silly to think about it. Like, on one hand, it's like, OK, well, I can dedicate some time to God this morning or I can watch YouTube. And then, you know, for some reason, I'll go to YouTube. Knowing its consequences, it's like touching your hand to a hot stove. And for you, when it gets that and it gets you into a desperate place. And when it gets you to a desperate place, there's some suffering.

PreacherRichD: And then for you, we talked about this in one of our other shows, that pain has been one of your motivators to get right with God and get things back in order. We talked about encountering God's love is the right way more than the suffering way, the pain way. But for you, part of suffering is suffering reminds you of the need to have a close relationship with God. Would that be accurate?

Bobby: Yes. And actually, that's a good point. I mean, that is something 100 percent. Yes, that does. But you did ask a question earlier. Was that I mean, how has this benefited me?

Bobby: And so all that pain and this recognition of this pain pushes me towards. So I was suicidal. I just left this relationship and I was in the back of my car. I was homeless. I was living in the back of my car and I was, I don't know, maybe nine months sober at this time. And I was just ready. I just I didn't want to live another day. And there was just this great line in this book. And I just prayed, OK, God, take away my suffering and I will help other people. That's the deal that I'm ready to make. I will stop living in self. I am ready to do that. And my pain literally immediately went from a 10 to a two.

Bobby: And right then and there, I knew how clear that was. So that has been for the most part, for the majority of my sobriety, at least, that has been my purpose for living is I go around and I work with other people who I can share those experiences with, who understand what it means to take that or your last twenty dollars and buy drugs or alcohol instead of food or pay your kids bill or whatever it is. There's a lot of people out there who know what that's like. And I'm living proof that a relationship through Jesus solves that. And so all of that struggling is worth every minute because there I have so many wonderful stories of families being put back together, men getting self-respect back, men living in a way that they never believed that they could ever live. And that's that's 100 percent through God and me maintaining that relationship.

Bobby: But, you know, I learned I went through it to learn a lot of the stuff. And that's that. So I'm very grateful for all the suffering that I've ever gone through.

PreacherRichD: OK, Marty, your story and you can do whether it's the son or some other stuff, but you share a couple of stories.

Marty: I'm telling you, I was an alcoholic, like I said. Well, still an alcoholic. I just don't drink now. I, too, was suicidal at one point. That's what got me sober. My life didn't really change a whole lot after that, except for the fact that I did meet my wife, who was a Christian woman. I also had a wonderful sponsor who told me one of the lines that I still use regularly today. That is every word in the Bible is either true or it isn't. And I often refer back to that and I choose to believe they're all true.

Marty: And then I did go to church as a convenience. That wasn't a happy time in my life. I mean, financially, there were always struggles. I was just going through the steps. I retired, moved out here. When we moved out here, we'd been out here a couple of years. I got a phone call one night that my son had been shot and was in the ER.

Marty: And I was able to contact my son, who still lives in Tucson with him. And he got to the hospital and he did get to see him before he died. The hospital was keeping him alive, barely. But he did end up dying over it. Actually, we were blessed that the individuals that were involved in it were arrested rather quickly. And ours is one, if you can call it a success story. I don't know that that's the right word. But it did get resolved in court in just over a year. There was a lot of struggle going through that, a lot of suffering. Every time we had to deal with court, there was struggling, there was pain. There was a lot of forgiveness that had to be given. And one of the things with that was, for my piece, and according to what the word says, we needed to forgive them that justice was going to be done not through us, not through the courts. But ultimately, God will have that say. There was forgiveness and there was a means to forgiveness through that. But just about every time we had to deal with the courts, I had to remind myself of that forgiveness because I wanted to take that back sometimes. Any time a parent loses a child, there will be continued suffering. I mean, you miss your children. So that's my suffering story.

Marty: If I go back six months before he was shot, God was doing something in me. He was moving me. We had met at the praise and worship. There was that spirit-filled happiness that you were talking about, Bobby. I felt it there often. And it's funny that you say we seek after it. I find myself continually seeking after it. Most days are good, but I think Christians overall, we know that feeling when you just know Christ, the Spirit's moving you and leading you and you feel the love. God's love.

Marty: Anyway, six months before I had gone into the local coffee shop and there was Christian music on all the time and I ended up volunteering there for a little bit. And I grew a lot. And I didn't know the reason I was put there. I figured I was helping, but there was so much growth in that time that I think it was preparing me to know how to handle the murder of my son and preparing me to walk as a Christian man in it.

Marty: When we talk about the growth and suffering or the peace and all that that we get in suffering, that's when I saw it. I saw it almost immediately after. It's like I think it was like three months in and I was like, oh, my goodness. I was being prepared to deal with this. Had I been where I was before that, I don't know that I would have handled it as I did. And just seeing that through the suffering I was able to grow and have an understanding was really impressive to me. I guess I don't know the word. It was eye opening. But there was peace in it.

PreacherRichD: And in the midst of this that you're going through, you say, one, that God prepared you. That's something to think about when people talk about suffering is a lot of times God does. He prepares us. We don't know what's going on, but he prepares us for something that's going to be coming up and gives us the strength to go through it. And then would you be able to say that now, Marty, if somebody has gone through the same situation as you or a similar situation, and it wouldn't matter if they lost a son through cancer or they lost a son through a murder or whatever it may be, that you have more of the ability to minister to somebody else and touch somebody else's life because of what you've gone through. And not just the ability, but actually there's something in your heart that that you can cry with them.

Marty: Well, yeah, whenever somebody goes through something, especially the same, I mean, if there was a family that had a child murder, I've got a map now on how to deal with it that I wouldn't have had before, you know.

PreacherRichD: That's a good way of putting it.

Marty: Yeah. You know, we can wander a lot, but somebody has to go before us and build a map to get us someplace. And I think that that's what's happened here, you know. And it doesn't have to be the exact. I mean, I can get you to the right state, I think.

PreacherRichD: Yeah.

Marty: I may not get you to the right house, but I can get you to a neighborhood.

PreacherRichD: Yeah. I mean, that's a great way of putting it. Because again, ultimately, God is the one that, you know, is the ultimate solution. It's not us. And no matter how much experience we have, we may be able to help people. But ultimately, it's the Holy Spirit working with them. But it's a lot better than if you haven't gone through something and to be able to minister.

PreacherRichD: So all of us have experiences in our life that there's been suffering. And out of it, because we're followers of Christ, because we have the Spirit of God living within us, because we want to honor His Word, we want to apply His Word, because we believe in His Word. So it's something that molds and shapes us, how we address and deal with suffering, how we address and work with people that are going through suffering.

PreacherRichD: And I think we do. We have a roadmap and we have a manual of how to work through those situations. And so what about people that don't have that? And if you

have an idea that suffering is bad, that suffering is evil, that no good can come out of suffering, instead of having positive stories that the two of you have of going through suffering, there's a story of bitterness, resentment. There's a story of vindictiveness, a story of you destroyed my life, whether it's a divorce or rather a rape, whatever it may be, is without understanding how God can use suffering for good and can turn things around, suffering can take you down a very deep hole. And I think everybody listening has gone in those deep holes at some point in time, because we all have gone through suffering. And so the good news is that through Christ, no matter what you go through, is that there can be victory in it.

Marty: And it doesn't have to control you, consume you, manipulate you, compel you to make foolish choices, that when you get the right handle on suffering and understand that God is in the midst of your suffering, that I would say we all could say we hope we never have to go through more than what we experienced, but whatever may come our way, that we know that God can empower us to get through it.

Marty: Would that be accurate to say? Absolutely. I'd say we have to get God to help us get through it.

PreacherRichD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so just on my own story is I can say there are so many things that I live for and do today that it would have never happened if I hadn't gone through the experiences I've gone through. I've had a financial loss. I've had separation from my son at one time, almost five years. And I look now and the relationship my son and I have now is much better than the relationship we had before we lost relationship. Does that make sense? Did I say that in the right way? We had a relationship. We lost the relationship. Now we have a relationship now again. And our relationship now is better than it was before we lost our relationship.

PreacherRichD: I think that there are just things that God allows to come our way. Everything that comes our way passed through his hands. He isn't surprised anything comes our way. And somehow he can turn that around in good.

PreacherRichD: So we're almost out of time, but I want to cover. I want to get some hard stories, not just our stories, but real hard ones. There's a flash flood that took place in Texas. There's at least 161 people that are missing or dead. That number is going to go up. The tragic story is it was young girls at a Christian camp where a lot of the victims of that flood literally had no way to escape it. Seems so tragic. How in the world can anything good, is there anything good that's going to come out of that? How in the world can anything good come out of something like that? What do you think? What do you think some of the testimonies will be? Anybody have any idea? Of the God that you know, what do you think some testimonies can come out of something so tragic?

Bobby: Well, I think that we can see similar stories about, you know, fathers and mothers who have lost their daughter and God got them through. That's going to provide testimony and strength for thousands of other people who will continue to do that and really honestly make the entire world better. I think that's something that goes underseen in a lot of tragedies. I mean, ask somebody who's coming to counter with DUI crash victims, and they

take their story about how their son was just driving home from a hard day's work. An alcoholic driver hit him and killed him, and then they go on to help thousands and thousands of people, and that's what they do for their life goal. I imagine that those people, this is the power of God. This is what God does. God uses things to make the world a better place.

Marty: Absolutely. Yeah, the scripture says all things work good.

PreacherRichD: There are always stories, you know, I was reading one about two sisters that didn't make it, but they were holding hands through it all. Yeah. I mean, it doesn't ease the pain any for the family.

Marty: I think when tragedy like this happens, even those that don't tend to pray will lift up a prayer for that just because they hurt for the loss. Sometimes we have to be broken down to dust so we can be rebuilt. And, you know, unfortunately, it is growth the hard way. But sometimes that's actually what needs to happen is we need to be broken down to nothing to rebuild. You know, there's families that are going to be so broken that they're going to have to seek something. And hopefully, you know, rather than turning to worldly things, they can turn to heavenly things. And in tragedies in the Bible, there's so much growth that takes place with the suffering. I kind of look at it.

PreacherRichD: Yeah, Bobby.

Bobby: How many millions of fathers have hugged their families? You know, it's like you see that, but how many millions of fathers have hugged their families?

PreacherRichD: Yeah, yeah, think about that. You see it, you hear people comment, I'm taking my family a lot more serious now. So how many, maybe there's families that will be restored.

Marty: And I can speak on that. After my son's death, I can tell you I held on to my wife a lot harder. We had to rely on each other as well to get through it.

Bobby: So I think I speak to that from personal experience. How many people are going through a lot less trivial things? You know, something like this happens, and it really puts things into perspective. Going like, wow, I've been really like, I've been really been angry running around because so-and-so's doing this at work. And then there are like real problems in the world. And then all of a sudden, I get perspective and I get clarity and I stop being a jerk. And I start being more like Jesus.

PreacherRichD: Yeah, and I think some people say, well, yeah, but it isn't fair. Why should these 132 people die so that the world could be a better place? And this is all I would say. They didn't have a choice in the matter. God is a sovereign God. He allowed it to happen. We'll never understand and explain it. Each one of those individuals that lost their lives. And was it worth it for the world to be changed? All I can say is for myself, everything I've gone through, it's worth it. Everything I've gone through. Some things I don't like. I don't like they happen. People have suffered. Bobby and I talked about this before. The problem is, is when

you're messed up, when you're suicidal, other things, others suffer with you. And sometimes you get through it and they're still suffering through those experiences because of what you've done. You know, it's hard to even think about that. That's something I have done that I've gotten through. Maybe somebody else hasn't because of me. But I would say that in the end, I'm willing to die for the sake of a change in the world. I would hope that everybody listening to this podcast that they'd be at a place in their life that they would say, you know what? If the loss of my life could bring something more positive in this world. What a privilege. What a privilege. And, of course, at the time, again.

PreacherRichD: Go ahead.

Marty: And I'll say, you know, since Devin was murdered, we have sowed many seeds to people that would probably not have been reached.

PreacherRichD: Yeah. And I've met some of those people.

Marty: You have met some of those people and you understand that some of them needed something. Yeah. They need a different direction, a different path.

PreacherRichD: And you've planted seeds to help them to get on a different path. And we're trusting God for that, to do that. Well, we need a closing prayer. I'll go ahead and close us there. You know, I just think if just one person grasps what we're talking about, it's all worth it. If just one person grasps it.

PreacherRichD: And so, Lord God, we just lift up all those who are listening. Lord, we know that there are some listening. They relate exactly to where our suffering is at because they've been there themselves or they are there right now.

PreacherRichD: And, Lord, there's others that maybe right now life is pretty good for them, but they're going to hit a hard spot in life. And they're going to go through a tragic situation. And I just believe, Lord, you'll take this message that we've shared the last two podcasts about suffering. And it's going to be something that you remind them. And they're going to say, you know what? I heard those three guys talk, and I thought they were crazy. But just maybe, just maybe, all this hope they talk about knowing Jesus is my Lord and Savior.

PreacherRichD: Just maybe right now in this tragedy, I need to grab hold of God. And I'm praying, Father God, that that will be the case. I'm praying that, Lord, maybe somebody right now is they just look at it. They've had a relationship with God, but they've allowed tragedy to come their way because of choices they made. And they're bitter. They're mad. They're blaming everybody else. And they're blaming you, Lord. I just would pray, Father God, that they would just get on their knees. They cry out to you and say, Lord, forgive me for my bad choices. Forgive me for judging your loving heart. Forgive me for putting you aside and that, Lord, I need you. The only way I can make it through this situation is for you to come back into my life as my Lord and Savior, as my loving Heavenly Father. And that, Lord God, there would be somebody that would have a testimony of how this podcast has done something dramatic in their life, changed their life. And then, Lord, help us, every one of us that are here on this call.

PreacherRichD: Help us to be vessels of honor for your kingdom in such a way that when we see someone suffering, we will intervene on their behalf. Whether it's just through prayer, whether it's through counsel, whether it's giving them a hug. That, Lord, we would just be more attentive of when there's something that somebody is going through and that we can be used for you to make a difference in somebody's life.

PreacherRichD: And so, Holy Spirit, do the work that only you can do in individual's lives for every listener that's listening. That you, Holy Spirit, can bring comfort where there needs to be comfort. That, Holy Spirit, you can bring peace where there needs to be peace. You can bring clarity where there needs to be clarity. You can bring hope where there needs to be hope. And so, Father God, do your work that only you can do in the lives of individuals. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

PreacherRichD: As we close, one last thought. Do each of you want to give one last thought or one word?

Bobby: Yeah, I got a last thought. Definitely, you know, this is something that helped me early on when I was a non-believer. Take a look at the way you've been doing it. What's the alternative? I mean, you can go on trying it your own way or try it this way because you just heard testimony of people who felt this. So, it's like, this is what happens when you try it this way. Or you can go on continuing doing it the way you're doing it. And you just really got to look at yourself and get honest with yourself and be like, wow, this really hurts. This is not working.

Marty: Amen.

PreacherRichD: Amen. Marty, last word.

Marty: I don't think we can fathom the love that God has for this world. I try to every now and then. And when we get that filled with His love, the feeling is just unbelievable, it's amazing and I pray for everybody out there, we have suffering and there is a lot of people going through disease, praying for healing, so I want to end by lifting those people up. When we pray, pray believing and have faith in it and I believe it will come and I give God all the glory. Thank you.

PreacherRichD: Amen So Lord we thank you. We thank you for the opportunity to be able to share in this message with others and again Lord we ask that they grab hold of what has been shared and they will be able to experience what we have experienced And just pour out your love. And we pray this in Jesus Name.

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