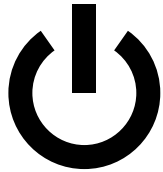


**Title:** The Bigger Picture

**Speaker:** Dustin Zerwas

**Key Verses:** John 11:1-53 (also consider Psalms 3, 5, 10, 13, 23, 46, 62; 2 Cor. 1:3-11)

**Summary:** God is always painting on a bigger canvas than we can see or imagine.



**Power Up:** Take a moment to prepare

Dustin speaks about suffering from profound, personal experience. But he admits suffering is universal. What suffering have you endured lately?



**Replay:** Take some time to watch

Note Dustin's three points: **1)** Start with prayer no matter the circumstances; **2)** Know God is with you in your sufferings; **3)** Use the platform God has given you in the midst of your suffering.



**Comment:** Take some time to talk

Dustin urges us to replace the question, "God, why?" with "God, what are you teaching me?" **What makes the latter question better?**

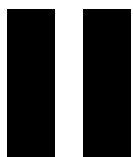
Dustin says, "God has promised to use your pain or suffering for a greater impact... God has a defined plan for your suffering." **How have you seen Him use suffering in your life for His good?** Be specific.

**Read John 11:1-53.** What does Jesus's two-day delay teach us about God's timing? What are the various responses to Lazarus's death by Mary, Martha, Jesus, and the crowds?

Isaiah 50:7

**Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.** Who best comforts you when you suffer?

"Your sufferings can be your greatest platform," Dustin teaches. **What are good ways to leverage the platform of suffering? What are ways to spoil the God-given platform?**



**Pause:** Take a moment to pray

Thank God for never leaving or forsaking us. Thank God for teaching us in difficult circumstances. Ask God for resolve to endure suffering so His glory, not our disappointment, becomes the most obvious outcome.



**Take Action:** Take a step forward

Prepare for suffering by cultivating a posture of prayer and praise. The book of Psalms provides a great model of prayer and praise amidst adversity. Read a Psalm a day for the next thirty-days. Memorize Psalm 23.

## Bonus Features | Additional Notes and Quotes from Dustin Zerwas

**Power Track Summary:** We all direct similar questions to God in difficult circumstances: Why is this happening? Will I be able to get through this? What are the next steps? Where is God amidst this chaos? Does He even care? Dustin's painful journey included the recent loss of his 13-year old son to cancer. But when Randy went home to God, God revealed how His great power is made perfect in our weaknesses. And this Power Track shows the importance of remembering God's bigger picture in our pain and the platform that may come from suffering.

**About the Speaker:** Dustin and his wife have nine adopted children; in 2017 their teenage son Randall went to be with Jesus after battling cancer. He is a youth pastor in Florida.

**BIG IDEA:** God is always painting on a bigger canvas than we can see or imagine.

"In life there are moments of suffering (that's a key word). There is a purpose for suffering. An opportunity to comfort people, to learn from what's taken place."

### **STEP 1: *Start with prayer no matter the circumstances.***

- Unanswered prayer and adverse situations do not mean God doesn't care.

"Instead of saying, 'Why God?' in suffering, ask 'What are You teaching me?'"

"Suffering is not easy. Life doesn't always fit into our plans. People hurt us...friendships and relationships fall apart...we fail and fall flat on our face. We have accidents...Life is filled with pain and suffering. The question is how should we handle suffering when it does come?"

### **STEP 2: *Know God is with you in your sufferings.***

Isaiah 50:7

"God has promised to use your pain or suffering for a greater impact... God has a defined plan for your suffering."

"There are a lot of tough days. But there are some good days that take place."

### **STEP 3: *Use the platform God has given you.***

"When you go through stuff people are looking at your life... [People] will put you under a microscope and say, 'Do they really believe they are a Christian?' You will fail in front of them... People are looking at your life. He gives you a platform."

**A simple but powerful prayer:** "Lord, here I am... I give you my life... Use me..."

The greatest thing in life is... being used by God. You don't waste your life in serving God. He gives us opportunity to invest in other people.