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“Birthing Pains”

Matthew 24:8 Jesus says, “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pains” (of the intolerable anguish and the time of unprecedented trouble.) (AMP)

I have learned that whenever I am experiencing “birthing pains” or tests or trials back to back – I am getting close to the breakthrough that God has for me as I live for Him. Don’t let these seasons distract you from the fact that you’re so close to where God is leading you.

In this current season of your life what do you believe you are carrying? What vision or promise has God impregnated you with? Take a moment to share.

“ALL these things...”, Jesus goes on to describe in Matthew 24 birthing pains as tribulations, death, hatred, offense, betrayal, persecution, deception and lawlessness.

With the above description in mind, think about the season you are currently walking through, what type of “birthing pains” are you experiencing?

It is during times of temptation, doubt, deceit and persecution that we have to hold on to the word of God. What are some strategies that you use to defeat the enemy and continue to persevere through the pain and distractions?

In 2 Thessalonians 1 Paul commends the believers of Thessalonica for standing firm in faith despite the false teachings that were presented to them. In verse 3 Paul attributes their steadfastness to two things:

1. Ever growing FAITH in times of trouble
2. Their LOVE that abounded toward one another

Often times when we have waited for a long time we begin to grow weary in well doing. It is in these times that we lose sight of what the Lord is doing or lose confidence in what HE is able to do in our lives and the lives of the people around us.

However, when we decide to exercise our faith, to water the seeds of righteousness, we produce perseverance. When we make the connection between faith and perseverance we are able to then renew our confidence in the Lord and all that HE is able to do in and through us.

What are a few ways we can be intentional about growing our faith in times of trouble?

Matthew 24:10, Jesus says, “And then many will be offended, will betray one another and will hate one another.”

The word *abound* means, to exist in large numbers or amounts. So when Paul said that the Thessalonians were abounding in love toward one another that means that they were choosing to love despite their circumstances. 1 Corinthians 13 tells us that love is patient and that it perseveres. Maybe there is a boss at work that is unkind to you, maybe someone has offended you, you are experiencing “church hurt”, or possibly a deeply rooted family dilemma that is causing you a lot of pain. How can you persevere in love despite the lies of the enemy that tell you to be offended and that you are justified in your feelings?

Before you sin against your brother or sister because you are hurt or because they offended you, ask God to renew your love for them. Pray for them, and believe that God will rekindle the affection you once had for them. This is what the Thessalonians did, they were in the midst of false teaching and mass confusion, it would have been so easy for them to betray one another and to become offended and bitter at those who were around them, but instead they chose to abound **(exist largely) in LOVE.**

Take a moment and ask God to reveal anyone that you should be praying for, maybe there is a coworker or family member that God is calling you reconcile with... write their name/s down or keep a mental note and be intentional about lifting them up in prayer. If you feel lead, take a moment to share:

In Matthew 24:13 Jesus goes on to say, “But the one who endures and bears up (under suffering, birthing pains) to the end shall BE SAVED.” (AMP)

Sis, God has put something so special inside of you, the pregnancy (process) is uncomfortable, your body is changing and you no longer can think of only yourself, the birthing hurts. But in due season, if you do not faint, you will reap a great harvest, do not give up! (Galatians 6:9) Your present suffering will be repaid with future glory.

The Message gives an appropriate interpretation of a prayer by David in Psalms 119: 1-8,

You’re blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by God. You’re blessed when you follow his directions, doing your best to find him. That’s right – you don’t go off on your own; you walk straight along the road he set. You, God prescribed the right way to live; now you expect us to live it. Oh, that my steps might be steady, keeping to the course you set; then I’d never have any regrets in comparing my life with your counsel. I thank you God for speaking

straight from your heart; I learn the pattern of your righteous ways. I'm going to do what you tell me to do.

In your quiet time:

1. Pray Psalm 119 over this season of your life.
2. Read 2 Thessalonians (3 chapters) meditate on God's Word and ask Him how, like the Thessalonians, you can begin to walk out your purpose/vision with unwavering faithfulness and abounding love!