Strength from the Struggle

Greg was enjoying a beautiful hike through the woods with his 6-year-old son Jeffrey when they came upon a butterfly in the process of emerging from its cocoon.

"What is it doing, Daddy?" little Jeffrey asked, watching intently as the butterfly struggled and fought to free itself from the silky fibers.

"This butterfly was once a fuzzy caterpillar," Greg explained to his curious son. "We are watching the final stage of its transformation into a beautiful butterfly."

"But the butterfly is having a hard time getting out," Jeffrey observed. "Daddy, can I help set it free?"

"No, Jeffrey," Greg said tenderly. "The butterfly is supposed to struggle. If we try to make it easier, this butterfly will never fly, because his wings get strong as he struggles to get out."

That lesson for Jeffrey is instructive to us.

It is our nature to want to find the easiest path possible as we navigate difficult circumstances. Doing away with pain and hardship at all costs often becomes our primary focus.

When pain and difficulty endure, it is tempting to conclude that God is angry or disappointed with us and that we need to quickly find a fix, or else.

But God can use difficult conditions to strengthen us as we see firsthand that He is in control and we are not.

Many of the residents we serve, looking back across years of highs and lows in their lifetimes, can testify to this principle – that hardship made them stronger and more prepared to face whatever is thrown at them.

God allows us to face circumstances that we cannot handle on our own so that we understand our complete dependence on Him.

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter