

CHAPTER 7: God's Jewels **(Joni Eareckson Tada)**

Getting Started

Did you bring a piece of diamond jewelry with you? Have someone pour cleaning solution or warm water with detergent in one or more bowls. Place your jewelry in a bowl and let it soak.

Read aloud together the following affirmations from the True Woman Manifesto:

We glorify God and experience His blessing when we accept and joyfully embrace His created design, function, and order for our lives.

Suffering is an inevitable reality in a fallen world; at times we will be called to suffer for doing what is good—looking to heavenly reward rather than earthly comfort—for the sake of the gospel and the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom.

All of us have experienced varying levels of difficulty and perhaps even endured actual periods of suffering. Joni’s chapter challenges us to embrace suffering as God’s means of refining our lives so they can reflect God’s glory.

Have individuals read the following Scriptures referenced by Joni: Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:16–18; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:21; 4:1; 5:10; 1 John 2:5–6.

Pray that the Lord will minister grace to each woman in areas of their life where they may be hurting, and that He will use their trials to conform them to the image of Christ and to prepare them as precious jewels that shine for Him.

Now, remove your jewelry from the water. Using the toothbrush, gently scrub the diamonds and the metal (gold, silver, platinum), removing the impurities. Rinse the diamond with warm water. Let the fresh “sparkle” remind you of the way God uses hardships and trials to clean and polish our lives.

Talking It Over

1. What insights in this chapter did you find particularly encouraging or helpful in relation to suffering?
2. According to Joni: *“Trouble is what squeezes the lemon inside of us, revealing the stuff of which we are made.”*

Can you think of a time when God used a painful situation to open your eyes to an area of sin you had not yet recognized? How did God work in your life through that refining process? What counsel would you share with a woman going through a similar circumstance?

3. Joni shared an example of applying Psalm 119:153 during the night when she was awakened by stabbing pain:

I decided to grit my teeth and drastically obey rather than collapse into selfishness and fear and claustrophobia. I began whispering the Word of God into my anxious heart . . . I yielded to Him, and He changed me . . . It's through obeying in small, yet great ways, that God miraculously changes you.

How have you experienced the power of God's Word to help you make it through difficult times and to change you in the process? How have you experienced freedom as a result of obeying Him, even in seemingly small ways?

4. Joni refers to God's hammer of refining as evidence that He is "committed to do good toward you." How can periods of suffering be viewed as something "good"? Refer to one or more of these passages to guide your thinking: Jeremiah 32:41; Romans 5:20; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 12:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 5:10.

5. Jesus said: "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more" (Luke 12:48). How might this Scripture apply to those who have been entrusted with blessings? With pain?

6. Joni poses a probing question: *If God expects me, a quadriplegic, to be actively engaged in my own sanctification, what does He expect of you?* As you consider Joni's determination to let God sanctify her through her pain, what do you think the Lord may be saying to you?

7. One of the most difficult aspects of suffering is the tendency to view this period as a season that will never end. Put suffering into an "eternal perspective" by reading and discussing Matthew 13:43 and Romans 8:18.

Making It Personal

1. How did this chapter influence or challenge your perspective on suffering? Can you honestly say that you desire more to be conformed to the image of Christ—to become a “treasure that shines”—than you desire a life free from pain?

2. Joni states: *If you really want to be like Christ—you must learn to hate sin. . . . God takes one form of evil—my suffering—and turns it on its head to defeat another evil—my sin and self-centeredness.*

Affliction is one tool God uses to help us develop a hatred for sin. Consider these Scriptures: Psalm 119:67, 71, 75, 92 in light of this principle. Can you think of instances when God has used suffering in your life to expose your sin? Have you developed a hatred for that sin?

3. Are you in the midst of a season of pain? Have you found yourself struggling with questions of God’s goodness . . . His purpose in this . . . whether it will ever end? Why not lay your questions before Him today, and then choose to trust His commitment to “do good toward you” (Jeremiah 32:41)? Will you entrust yourself to Him as your faithful Creator in doing what is right (1 Peter 4:19)?

Living It Out

1. Joni mentioned how serving in a ministry to aid the disabled and needy helps her to focus on others:

If you want to increase your capacity for joy, if you want to increase your service and worship in heaven, if you want to enlarge your personal estate, don’t focus on the chisel in your own life. Focus on others who need to be quarried out of the dust and dirt of this world.

Who can you serve today? Consider how you can minister to others who are in greater need than you.

Looking Ahead

1. Psalm 78:1–8 lays a good foundation for Fern Nichols' chapter on leaving a lasting legacy through prayer. As you read this chapter, consider how God wants to use your life to have an impact on the next generation.
2. Read through the next five “We Will” statements (#6–10) of the True Woman Manifesto with the supporting Scriptures.