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THE NERVOUS SYSTEM: A DEFENSE OF PAIN

Pain is one of those things we all wish we could avoid. It interrupts everything; it's uncomfortable, and it usually shows up at the worst times. But when you really sit with the idea of pain, not just the feeling, but the purpose behind it, you start to see that it isn't random or pointless. Pain is actually one of the main ways the body protects us. It's built into the nervous system with intention. For me, that intention reflects design... intelligent design. God didn't create our bodies to be careless or unaware. Pain is part of the system that keeps us alive. So instead of seeing pain as something that's just bad, I've learned to see it as a message. A warning. A sign that the body is paying attention. This defense of pain isn't about pretending it's easy or acting like it doesn't hurt. It's about understanding that pain has intelligence, purpose, and value, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The first part of this design is something called nociception. It sounds like a big word, but it's basically the body's builtin danger detector. We have special nerve endings, nociceptors, that sit in our skin, muscles, joints, and organs. They're constantly watching for anything that could harm us: extreme heat, freezing cold, too much pressure, chemicals, or actual tissue damage. The moment something crosses into danger, these nerves send signals to the spinal cord and brain. What's wild is that this happens before we even consciously feel pain. That's why you pull your hand away from a hot stove without thinking, or why your body shifts when you step on something sharp. The body reacts instantly because the system is designed to protect first and process later. People who are born without nociception show us exactly why this matters. They break bones without noticing. They burn themselves because they don't feel heat. They get infections because they don't sense injury. Their bodies don't have the alarm system that most of us rely on every single day without realizing it. Nociception is not punishment. It's prevention. It's a safety mechanism God built into us so we can survive in a world full of things that can hurt us. See how much God loves us

But pain isn't always simple. Sometimes it doesn't go away when the injury heals. Sometimes it lingers or becomes something constant. This is persistent pain, pain that lasts longer than two or three months, also called chronic pain. Persistent pain happens when the nervous system stays in "alert mode". The brain and nerves become overly sensitive, almost like a smoke alarm that keeps going off even when the fire is out and it can get annoying. The nervous system can "learn" pain the same way it learns habits. Repeated signals strengthen pathways, and the body starts responding as if danger is still present. This kind of pain can come from inflammation, nerve damage, long-term medical conditions, or even stress. Even though persistent pain feels frustrating and exhausting, it's still the body trying to protect itself, just in an exaggerated way. Persistent pain is real. It's physical. It's not imagined or all in someone's head. It reflects actual changes in the brain and nervous system. Understanding this can help us respond with compassion instead of judgment. It reminds us how powerful and sensitive the nervous system really is. Pain is never just physical. It's shaped by our emotions, memories, beliefs, and past experiences. The nervous system doesn't work separately from the rest of who we are, it listens to everything.

Stress, fear, and anxiety can make pain feel worse. The same injury can feel completely different depending on what's going on in your life. On the other hand, feeling safe, supported, or grounded can reduce pain because the brain interprets the situation differently. Two people can have the same injury, but feel different levels of pain. That's because the brain filters pain through meaning. Culture, upbringing, trauma, and personal history all influence how we interpret what's happening in our bodies. Pain can even trigger memories, especially if the body has felt something similar before. This shows that pain is a whole person's experience, body, mind, and spirit. Our perception of pain reveals how deeply connected the nervous system is to our emotional world.

As much as we dislike it, pain teaches us things we wouldn't learn otherwise. It forces us to pay attention to our bodies. It teaches boundaries, when to stop, when to rest, when to heal. Pain helps us learn what is dangerous and what is safe. It also creates empathy. Everyone has experienced pain in some form, and that shared experience can help build compassion. It helps us understand suffering, patience, and the need for gentleness. Even chronic pain, as difficult as it is, reflects the body's attempt to protect, not harm. Pain is not a flaw. It is a survival tool

intentionally designed for us. Without pain, we wouldn't grow, learn, or understand our own vulnerability. Pain reminds us that our bodies matter, that they deserve care and attention. God wants us to take care of the temple that He's given us.

Pain is hard. It interrupts life, challenges us, and sometimes feels overwhelming. But it is also necessary for survival and growth. Nociception, persistent pain, and the emotional layers of pain all show how complex and intelligent the nervous system is. Pain deserves respect because it keeps us alive, aware, and connected to our bodies. Even though we may not want it, we rely on it more than we realize. Understanding pain helps us appreciate the wisdom built into the nervous system, and the purpose behind it. Pain is not the enemy. It's a messenger, a teacher, and a protector, a reminder that we were created with intention, and that even discomfort can carry meaning.

Love, Marley