Lilias Trotter on Dry Wells

You've likely never heard the name Lilias Trotter. Born in 1853 to an upper-class family, she could have been one of England's most renowned painters. But she left her life of ease and privilege to take the good news of Jesus to the people of the North African desert. Despite huge cultural and logistical obstacles, Lilias succeeded in introducing Christianity to a stridently Muslim world in Algeria. But that success didn't come without frustrations and failures.

Once, Lilias and her colleagues needed a well for a house they were building. After several weeks, the shaft was nothing more than a 200-foot hole in the ground. Local residents, skeptical of the newcomers, challenged their faith. "Why doesn't God give you water if He is pleased with you?" they asked. When the well finally produced, it yielded much more than water. All the stone, sand, and gravel they would need for the construction of the house came from the hole they had dug. As Lilias put it, "The house has been dug out of this well!"

Sometimes it seems the only good we glean from a bad situation is the resulting character God instills in us. That tempts me to say, "Enough character already, Lord!" Many times, though, we discover a hidden benefit to our trials. Joseph found that captivity vaulted him to positions of God-honoring prominence.

Joseph graciously told his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it [his enslavement] for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20). Likewise, the apostle Paul's imprisonments resulted in five letters we now have in the New Testament. Paul was practicing what he preached. After all, he wrote, "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Are you enduring a frustrating "dry well" experience? Keep digging. The effort you're expending may be building your house.

Tim Gustafson in Soul Journey http://www.gospelcom.net/rbc/sj/today.php