



BELOW IS EXCERPTED from Dr. Bob Schuchts' book, *Be Healed: A Guide to Encountering the Powerful Love of Jesus in Your Life*, with his permission and Ave Maria Press. For more transformational stories and solid, truly impactful, Spirit-filled insight and guidance: [JPll Healing Center Store](#).

# MEANINGFUL SUFFERING

by Bob Schuchts (from *Be Healed*)

**Formed in the school of hard knocks during years on the streets as a drug addict, my brother Dave constantly challenged my idealistic views of scripture. He challenged me to explain how Paul could find joy in suffering (cf. Col 1:24).**

**For many years, all Dave knew was the anguish of suffering;** he really didn't believe anything redemptive could come from the suffering he had experienced. None of it had brought him any closer to God. Quite to the contrary, his deadly sins and wounds became the catalyst for him running away. Even after his powerful healing through the sacraments, Dave wondered how in the world St. Paul could boast of his joy in the midst of suffering. Like most things, Dave had to find out for himself, the hard way. But once he mastered it, he became a powerful example for me and our entire family.

**Soon after Dave's Christ Renews His Parish experience,** my mom discovered she had four free airline tickets to fly anywhere in the world and had to use them before the airline went out of business. So she invited Dave, Margie, and me to accompany her on a three-week vacation to New Zealand. The entire trip turned out to be another beautiful providence from the Father. We relived the forgotten joy of our childhoods, jumping on trampolines, enjoying great belly laughs together, and taking in the beauty all around us. It was a glorious resurrection experience after many years of suffering as a family.

**After the vacation, Dave was refreshed** and decided he needed to restore his relationship with his daughter, Sarah, who was five years old at the time. Though they both tried, things didn't work out with Sarah's mother, but they agreed that Sarah could begin to live with her dad part of the time. It was indeed a new beginning and seemed almost like a fairytale ending after the difficult years of suffering and desolation.

**But the fairytale soon turned into a nightmare** as Dave found out he was terminally ill with HIV/AIDS. In the early 1990s, AIDS was a death sentence. Dave suspected he had contracted HIV through a heroin needle, but he still held out hope that somehow it would not develop into full-blown AIDS. These hopes began to fade in the fall of 1991 as AIDS symptoms gradually began to appear in Dave's body.

**Since we were spending the first Christmas at his new house, Dave**

decided to wait to confront his fears until after Christmas. He did not want to ruin Christmas for his daughter and everyone else. The day after Christmas, he and I sat outside on his porch alone. I could tell he wanted to tell me something and didn't want anyone else to hear. He began by telling me about his doctor's appointment the next day. "I am afraid the doctor is going to confirm my worst fear, that I do have AIDS." Before I could say anything, Dave continued, "But I have been praying about this, and I have a surprising peace inside. For a long time, I have been praying for a purpose, and I believe God is showing me this may be my answer. My purpose may be to become someone with AIDS, living for Christ." I sat there dumbfounded and in awe. He was answering the question neither of us had been able to answer: how St. Paul could find meaning and purpose in his suffering. And sure enough, for his remaining years, Dave did just that.

**Watching Dave decline over the next two years** was both agonizing and inspiring. Though his body was wasting away, day by day his spirit was being renewed by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 4:16).

Gradually, Dave went from a healthy 200 pounds to a frail 130 pounds, but his spirit bore the power of Christ in the midst of weakness (2 Cor 12:8–10). He became a living and dying witness of Jesus to each one of us. No one was more affected than my brother Wayne, who at the time was not practicing his faith. Wayne and Dave had always been close, and when Dave could no longer take care of himself physically, Wayne took him into his home. More than anyone else, Wayne saw the grace, joy, and love with which Dave suffered. In return, Wayne found his own heart opening as he took care of his dying brother.

**"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Cor. 12:9**



### DR. BOB SCHUCHTS

Dr. Bob Schuchts, Ph.D. is the founder of the John Paul II Healing Center (JPIIHC), and offers conferences throughout North America to bring about transformation in the heart of the Church. Bob spent more than 35 years as a therapist and adjunct professor, while also volunteering in local parish ministry. He retired from counseling and teaching in 2014 to devote full time to serving through the JPIIHC. Bob is the

author of *Be Healed: Encountering the Powerful Love of Jesus in Your Life* and several other published resources (including books, talks and workbooks) available through the John Paul II Healing Center. His latest book about unity and healing in marriage is called *Be Devoted*. Bob was married for 42 years until his wife's death in 2017. He is the proud father of two daughters (and their husbands) and eight grandchildren. He and his family live in Tallahassee, Florida.

To learn more about Dr. Bob, his ministry, and upcoming events please visit [jpiiihealingcenter.org](http://jpiiihealingcenter.org).

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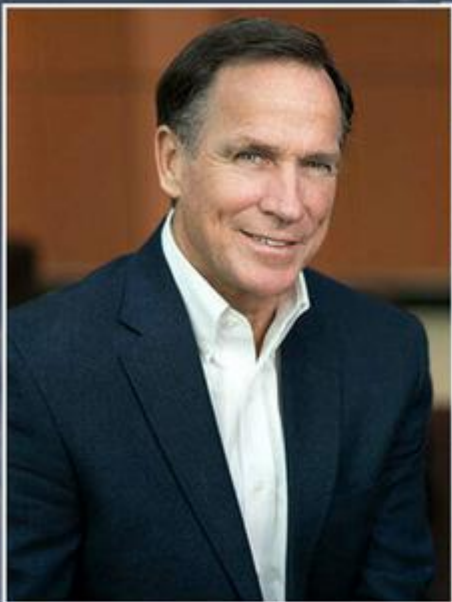
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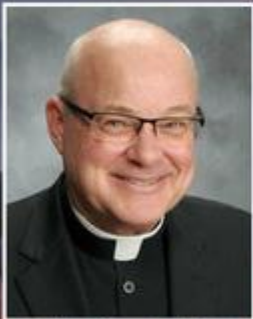
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