

Tuesday, April 1, 2025



**HARD-WON**  
**WISDOM!**

 LISTEN



*Day 24*

*“Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures.”*

—PROVERBS 2:3-4 (NLT)

## Reflect

We will never be able to make total sense of the pain and suffering we endure. But, somehow, we may find little bits of hard-won wisdom in the midst. These precious gems do not erase the pain or justify its presence. People have had many ways of describing these unlikely (unasked for) takeaways. Like Abraham Lincoln, who tried to make sense of the death of his son and live with courage in the light of what he knew. This kind of wisdom was the “delicate fruit of a lifetime of pain,”<sup>26</sup> his biographer noted. Sometimes we can only mine a couple of true things, and the rest of it is still garbage. We get to choose if we sift through the garbage to find the gems. As Rabbi Steve Leder says, “If you’re going through hell, don’t come out empty handed.”<sup>27</sup>

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26 Joshua Wolf Shenk. *Lincoln’s Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled his Greatness*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt ,2005.) 192.

27 Steve Leder in “Don’t Come Out Empty Handed.,” April 4, 2023 in *Happens*, presented and produced by Kate Bowler, podcast, 53:03, <https://katebowler.com/podcasts/dont-come-out-empty-handed/>.

## *Respond*

If you were to name a delicate fruit that you gleaned after a season of terrible, what would you say? What is the wisdom you have gained out of the terrible? Reminder: these “lessons” do not erase or justify what you went through. No need to play mathematician on this one.



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# Blessing for the life you didn't choose

*Blessed are you when the shock subsides,  
when vaguely, you see a line appear  
that divides before and after.  
You didn't draw it,  
and can barely even make it out,  
But here you are,  
forced into a story you wouldn't write.*

*Blessed are you in the tender place  
of awe and dread,  
wondering how to be whole  
when dreams have disappeared  
and part of you with them,  
where mastery, control, determination,  
bootstrapping, and grit  
are consigned to the realm of Before  
(where most of the world lives),  
in the dream promising infinite choices,  
unlimited progress, best life now.*

*Blessed are we in the After zone,  
loudly shouting:  
Is there anybody here?  
We hear the echo, the shuffle of feet,  
the murmur of others  
asking the same question,  
together in knowledge  
that we are beyond what we know.  
May you see a glimmer of possibility  
in this new constraint,  
that small truths will be given back to us.*

*We are held.  
We are safe.  
We are loved.  
We are loved.  
We are loved.<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. "For the Life You Didn't Choose" in *The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days*. (New York: Convergent Books, 2023). 188-189.