

## **Simply One Page-Pedaling Through Crush**

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision, my own editorial hand fueled by my one page intent. Mike Haddorff, 2513

Two decades ago, and just about this time of year our daughter and I rode our bikes through southern Oregon during what they call “crush time” in wine country. It’s the season when the grapes are harvested, sorted, and, yes, crushed. It’s not a violent process, exactly, but it’s firm, intentional. The grape doesn’t have a say in the matter. It gives up its form so that something fuller, richer, and lasting can emerge.

I remember pedaling past and walking within rows of vines heavy with fruit, the air tinged with sweetness, quietly aware harvest is about to begin. I couldn’t help but think, this is beautiful and brutal at the same time. The vineyard is alive with anticipation, but the grape’s future depends on being broken open.

I don’t like to think of life that way. But if I’m honest, the times when I’ve felt pressed, that is pressed to the point of breaking, those are the seasons that have shaped me the most.

There was a stretch, about ten years long, where I went through a crushing time of my own. Financial pressures from my business came down hard. It felt relentless. I carried the weight of what I owed, of what might collapse, of what I couldn’t fix. And while I wouldn’t choose to go through it again, something changed in me during that decade.

I became less quick to judge and more ready to listen. I learned to see behind the tired eyes of a struggling business owner. I stopped offering pat answers and started offering presence. That’s not something I read in a book. It came through the crush.

There’s a strange paradox hidden in the vineyard. Sweetness doesn’t come in spite of the pressing. It comes through it.

And maybe that’s the hope. That the seasons that squeeze us, whether through grief, loss, fear, or failure, can become the very soil where compassion grows: where grace begins to ferment, where character gains its depth and soul finds its voice.

### **Think About:**

What part of your story might be pressing hard right now? And what might be fermenting quietly beneath the surface?

It seems like somehow, and in someway, the brutalities of living can reveal the beauty within.