

4 Ways to Deal With Difficulty, Stress and Discouragement

If you feel like you're about to **lose hope** and you don't know what to do, let me encourage you. Look at 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Paul was a man of great **faith**, and he says, "We are hard-pressed [troubled] on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; **persecuted**, but not **forsaken**; struck down, but not destroyed." All of us have felt like Paul did at one time or another.

It says we're troubled on every side—yet not distressed. Being **distressed** is when the stress and pressure on the outside get on the inside. It is possible to have **stress** come against you but to not be distressed by it.

Perplexed is not being sure what to do. He says, "But not in despair." **Despair** is when you don't know which way to turn. Ask God, and He'll show you what to do.

Faith doesn't say, "I never have trouble." Faith says, "**Trouble** doesn't have me." **Faith** doesn't say, "Bad things never happen." It says, "I'm going to win. Jesus is on my side."

Now, in 2 Timothy 3, it says, "In the last days there will be trouble." The devil is trying to defeat us and destroy us. First Timothy 4:1 says in the latter days, some shall depart from the faith. Whenever you're going through a trial, your faith is on trial. The devil's trying to damage your faith.

If you depart from the faith, then the great trouble in the last days—the hard-to-bear problems—will defeat you. God has provided something to handle the stress and trouble: the ability to walk by faith.

There is no better way to get out of stress, to handle hard-

to-deal-with people and problems, than to believe God. All things are possible to them who believe. In the last days trouble will come, and faith will come. The devil comes to steal, kill and destroy but Jesus came that we would have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Look at 1 Peter 1:7. What's on trial? Your faith is. Why? Because the devil wants your faith to fail. When your faith fails, you can't do anything. Satan tells you, "Go ahead and put your shield of faith down. It doesn't work anyway." He'll try to penetrate your hope. So we need to learn how to not depart from the faith.

When you're dealing with difficulty, stress and discouragement, follow these steps:

1. When you haven't seen it yet, stay in love. The Bible says, "Whom having not seen, love." When you don't see your miracle, you tend to stop walking in love and stop loving people.

We begin to judge those who are getting their miracle. "They must have done something wrong to get it," we think. The good news is if they've received it, you can receive it too. You're going to receive it too. Having not seen, you love. Love anyway.

2. Stay believing. "Though now you see Him not, yet believing." Keep believing even when you don't see it.

3. Stay rejoicing. Rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Love makes our faith work. The devil wants you to get mad. He wants you to lose hope. Stay focused on your job. Walk in love, and you'll never fail. The devil is trying to get you in strife. He's working overtime to create strife.

The key to living victoriously is to stay in love even when you don't see God—when you haven't seen Him come through for you.

Faith isn't about what you've done or believed in the past.

It's what you believe now. Faith is now. It's not about how you used to rejoice. Are you rejoicing now? It's not what you said, read or believed. It's what you're saying, reading, believing and doing now.

People leave their first love. Love makes faith work. It causes our faith and hope to arise. Love causes us to never give up on God and what He said. I'm staying in love. I'm believing.

We're troubled on every side but not crushed. I might be persecuted, but God never left me.

4. Receive the outcome of your faith. And in the end you will receive what you were hoping for. Stay in love. Keep believing. Keep rejoicing anyway. If you stop the process, you stop the end from coming. Keep the process working so you don't depart from the faith. Love people who aren't lovable. Keep rejoicing, and you will receive the outcome of your faith!

Gregory Dickow is the founder and pastor of Life Changers International Church, one of the largest churches in the Chicagoland area. He also is the host of The Power to Change Today—an international television ministry that reaches a potential audience of more than 900 million households weekly.