

Dignify Your Trials

Dignifying a trial means to accept it and go through it without it without complaining.

In the fall of 1979, less than three years after starting my ministry at Westminster Chapel, I began a series of sermons on the book of James. Shortly afterward, I took my family on a vacation that included a trip to Disney World. We had been there the previous year and discovered a pizza parlor in Kissimmee, Florida, that served the best pizza I had ever eaten. So I promised my family I would get them pizza there again.

After we checked into our motel, we went to the pizza place, about six blocks away, and put in our order. A good while later I went to the counter and asked about the pizzas, which had not come out yet, and a new man who had just started his shift claimed he did not have our order. Without bothering to apologize, he demanded, "So what do you want?"

Somewhat disgruntled, we ordered again. By the time our pizzas finally came out, we had been there 45 minutes! I did not smile as I paid for them, nor did I control my tongue.

To make matters worse, it was pouring rain when we got back to the motel, and when I attempted to retrieve my pizza from the back of the car, the bag it was in got drenched and the whole pizza fell out into a foot of water. I assure you: My verbal response to this situation was not my finest hour.

I realized that if I wanted to eat, I had to go back to the pizza parlor and reorder—and face the man to whom I had not been the epitome of Christ-likeness. But an amazing thing happened during the return drive. My mind went immediately to James 1:2: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (NKJV).

I said to myself, "Either what I preach is true or it isn't," and suddenly the phrase "dignify the trial" came into my head. I immediately determined to dignify that trial—and every other one God might allow me to have.

I apologized to the man at the pizza place. He made another pizza, just like the one that had been ruined, and didn't even charge me!

I thought about how many years had gone by (I was 44 then) during which I had done nothing but murmur, complain and grumble through every trial that came my way, however great or small. I felt so ashamed! But I vowed that day to make an effort to dignify all future trials, and I have sought hard since (I'm in my 70s now) to keep my vow. Laugh if you will, but it all began with the pizza incident!

Dignifying a trial means to accept it graciously as being a gift from God, go through it without complaining and let it last as long as necessary to accomplish God's purpose in it. All trials do end! When the trial is over, we have either passed or failed in the sight of God.

If God says, "Well done," we receive not only His affirmation but also an increased anointing. What determines our grade? Our words.

People hear our words. Our families hear our words. The angels hear our words. God hears our words. And He says in His Word that "'men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken," (Matt. 12:36, NIV).

I don't know about you, but I can't think of anything scarier than having every careless word I've uttered in my life thrown up at me on that day. This is a warning we should take seriously. Were we to believe it literally, it would go a long way in helping us control our tongues—a surefire way to dignify whatever trials we face.

Consider the wisdom of these words: “Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird of the air may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say” (Eccl. 10:20). We must rely on God to give us what to say at times when we are at our weakest; then we will have a minimum of unguarded comments to explain when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:10).

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