

How to Be Content When Times Are Tough

No one is going to be bubbly when times are tough, but neither do we have to be discontent. When I was in business, I was surprised to learn we can be content in the depths of suffering—even severe, agonizing suffering.

The issue? Our circumstances don't have to determine our contentment. Paul wrote, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through [Jesus] who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:12-13, NIV). If we are in the center of God's will for our lives, we can bear up under any amount of stress. He will be with you.

Even in my darkest hours, when it seemed the full force of my adversaries and my own sins would surely crush me completely, there was a peace and a knowing that I was in the center of God's will for my life. It didn't happen at first, but only when I humbled myself, confessed and redefined my ambition.

This peace came even when I was still under the heavy hand of His discipline. But when we are out of God's will, then even unbridled success can taste sour and bitter.

The Holy Spirit teaches us all things and reminds us of everything Christ told us (see John 14:26). In a mysterious, unexplainable way, He tells us when we are in the will of God—even though our emotions may be overwhelmed with sorrow.

You've heard of "sweet" sorrow? The Holy Spirit is the author of sweet sorrow. In the depths of our calamity, pain, anguish and suffering, the Spirit of Christ ministers to us and tells us that what we are facing is part of God's plan for our life—a plan for good, not evil (see Rom. 8:28).

One of the most remarkable statements ever made by a human being was that of the apostle Paul when he wrote, "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

Even when we cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel, and even though our emotions are frayed, we can know contentment in hard times by the inaudible voice of the Holy Spirit. "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings ... because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:3,5). We can delight in the fellowship that comes from sharing in Christ's sufferings. With a God so gracious as this, shouldn't we let Him be the boss of our lives?

You can trust Him. Seek His will. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Do not be faint-hearted. Delight in your circumstances. God is with you, He is good, and at just the right moment He will deliver you.

Until every church discipled every man ...

Patrick Morley *is the chairman and co-CEO of Man in the Mirror Ministries. For the original article, visit .*