

# Truth-Filled Tips to Help You Find the Treasure in Your Times of Trouble

Think back to the times you've made some significant step forward—overcoming a bad habit, developing a new skill, learning a significant new insight, or breaking free from something negative in your past. Did that forward step come when things were easy? We don't usually grow in comfort, but your troubles lead to transformation.

There are countless examples of this everywhere. A tree whipped by constant wind on a mountain or by the sea becomes resilient and strong. A child only learns to walk by falling down and getting back up over and over again. The transformation of your character into Christ's likeness won't come primarily in the good times, but in the troubles you experience.

I hear from people often; "Where is God? Everything is going wrong. Why doesn't He fix things when I ask Him to?" It's not that God enjoys your or anyone else's pain; He weeps when you weep. He hurts when you are wounded. He feels what you feel (see Heb, 4:15). And one day, He will wipe all your tears away, forever (Rev. 21:4).

But in the meantime, God uses the troubles we experience to transform us into the people He created us to be. This is not "whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Instead, it's God taking what the enemy meant for harm and turning it into something good for His glory. (See Genesis 50:20) Talk about creativity! It's only His creative power that could do this.

You and I can either become bitter through the troubles we experience, or we can choose to cooperate with God in the transformation process He wants to accomplish. That doesn't

mean we go looking for trouble! But our choices impact how that process happens.

Here are some things to know and do when facing trouble.

### **1. Don't be surprised.**

Peter wrote, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you." (1 Peter 4:12) In truth, we should perhaps be more surprised if everything is going smoothly. What did Jesus promise His followers? Trouble! "In the world you will have trouble." (John 16:33)

The promise of the gospel is *not* that everything will be alright here and now; it's that God will make everything right in the end. Of that we can be assured. We know the end of the story! But until then, expect serious trouble. And in the meantime, don't forget the rest of Jesus' promise: *peace*. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Trouble – and peace at the same time.

### **2. Seek God's Perspective**

Some of our troubles come because of bad things other people do to us, either intentionally or otherwise. Some of our troubles come because of the sin in our own souls, and the decisions we make and actions we take. Some of our troubles come because we still live in a warzone, and we get wounded in the crossfire between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Sometimes it's "all of the above."

Which is it? Are your troubles because you're doing something wrong, or because you're doing something right? Sometimes it's both. You need God's perspective to figure that out. Take the time to intentionally seek His perspective on your troubles. Seeing things that way will change everything for you.

### **3. Inventory Your Own Heart**

Whether or not you had any role in causing your troubles, take time to inventory your heart before God. Troubles don't make you a certain way, but they do reveal what's inside you. When you get squeezed, what leaks out? If you don't like what you see, the quicker you acknowledge it the quicker God can work His transformation in your soul. Sometimes trouble is the way the Holy Spirit puts His finger on something in you and says, "Here, let Me have this!"

The point is not to apportion or take on blame. The point is to inventory what the troubles tell you about yourself. Are you still chained in some way to your past? Is there still bitterness, hatred, laziness, fear, selfishness and so on in your heart? Is there something you can learn from this trouble, regardless of who caused it? To whom do you turn by default when tough stuff happens? What does God want to show you about yourself through this process?

### **4. Take Action**

Troubles don't leave you the same, but your choices have a lot to do with the kind of impact troubles have on you. The same sun that hardens clay softens wax. Bring your troubles before God. Cry and beg and shout if you wish; David did that a lot in the Psalms. But then intentionally ask God for what He would have you do next.

Perhaps you need to seek healing from some wounds you've long neglected. Perhaps there's a difficult skill you need to step up and learn. Perhaps you need to take ownership of something you've not wanted to deal with. Perhaps you need to set some difficult boundaries with difficult people. Perhaps this trouble is sensitizing you to some people God needs you to help. Perhaps you need to learn a deeper way of embracing God's comfort and grace daily. Whatever it is, seek God's direction for what step to take next.

Whatever your trouble, learn all you can from it. Determine to find the treasure in your troubles. Don't waste your sorrows; they're too valuable. (Check Paul Billheimer's classic booklet on the subject.) Doing that will assure that your troubles lead to transformation.

And in the meantime, keep eternity in view. Stick around on God's side, and your tears will one day be wiped away.

**Your Turn:** *How do you normally respond to troubles? How can you improve the way you extract the treasure from your troubles? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

**Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley** is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the Fully Alive kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

*This article originally appeared at .*