

What You Do Not Need When Going Through a Tough Season

Everyone reading this has gone or will go through many different challenges that grip you to the core. Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33, MEV). He wasn't prophesying doom over us, but letting us know in sober awareness that we will be hit with various circumstances that will seek to overwhelm us and erode our faith.

This past year brought deep trials to my family that challenged every place in our hearts. It included major ministry changes, relational difficulties, financial hardships and other pressures that sought to drain our energy. In just one year, we ended a season of pastoring, started a new ministry focus, had our van totaled, our condo flooded and we had to quickly get acquainted with hotel living for over eight months.

This all happened while a complicated cleanup process ensued. Even as I write this, the details are still being worked out to finish all that is needed so we can get back home.

At times our emotional wits were stretched to the edge. Pioneering new ministry avenues and juggling major changes, while being consistent to invest in our marriage and live faithfully to nurture our children through this, we often ended the day collapsing in exhaustion. Just living in a hotel with two very energetic children was challenging enough. Our days were filled with endless errands, insurance phone calls and genuine attempts to stay in touch with our daily responsibilities.

Although we love the direction God has taken us and do not regret any of the decisions we have made to pursue our call and passion, that doesn't mean that the journey is

without intense seasons of pain, trauma and heartache.

As part of my life journey and what I do in working with people, I like to equip others to be helpful and nurturing sources for those going through deep challenges and pain. But these are four things a person does *not* need when going through these challenges:

1. Pity – Having pity on someone is not the same as compassion. Pity just makes us feel bad with no resolve. Compassion moves us into action, to do something or simply be someone that is part of the healing process.

I don't need pity. I spent five years getting free from self-pity, so when I detect someone giving me pity I want to run out of the room. It's already hard enough that I am going through something. Pity just wants to keep me in the junk and focus on negative things. If you have pity, you may create an emotional bond, but you won't help someone overcome. I need someone with faith who knows how to love.

2. A quick answer – You also don't need a quick pat on the back with a fast answer. I know people mean well. When they come up to you and say, "How are you doing?" and you tell them what's really going on, they were not ready for your answer. So we have to give people slack.

But jumping to give a quick Scripture or cliché saying is sometimes the worst thing to do. It can quickly reveal a lack of compassion or emotional heart connection. I have had some of the dumbest responses given to me in the most vulnerable moments. All in the name of "giving help." This is why people often isolate themselves during trials—the community doesn't know how to be helpful and redemptive.

3. Quick advice – Job's friends did this. They responded to his excruciating trial by breaking down the whole situation and giving him advice—most of which God flushed down the toilet. You may have some great advice or insight to offer,

but the wrong timing can nullify the power of that word.

4. More pasta dishes – Thank God this did not happen to me, but friends I know got inundated with pasta dishes during intense seasons of hardship. The last thing families need in a rough time is dump truck of carbohydrates to add weight and bloat to their already challenging emotional time. Give a grocery card or find out their favorite dish instead.

Friday, I'll share six things you do need when going through a tough season. {eoa}

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