

When a Time of Trial Discourages You, Cling to These Truths

(Editor's Note: This is part 1 of a two-part series. Watch for part 2, coming soon!)

Some of the most impactful spiritual lessons I have ever learned when I've faced challenging and difficult times is when I have continually and consistently applied the five simple truths listed here. I have found that these truth lessons about who Jesus is really do win the argument in the negative situations I may be facing. I have also found that most, if not all, challenges I face have an underlying goal—to skew my perception of God's righteousness, faithfulness and love. But when I practice what I have learned, I find strength and renewed hope. And I believe it is this power that will carry me to the end.

We all have been told that reading the Scriptures and applying due diligence to the study and application of God's Word in our everyday lives will move us into joy and fulfillment. I bet if I asked you if you could be like the apostle Paul as he described himself in his letter to Timothy, you would agree that yes, that would be amazing. We all would. What did he write? Glad you asked. He wrote:

I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For these things I suffer, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that Day (2 Tim. 1:11-12).

When we love and serve God, it is natural to desire to be anointed and appointed to herald His message—the message of a

God who causes us to triumph over all. But then, at the first sign of trouble, for most of us, our faith often trembles, our focus gets diverted and the issues we face start to overtake us. We try but typically fail at heralding triumph. I confess that I have been quick to forget who I am in Christ, what He says about Himself, His faithfulness and His power to rescue me. Yes, failed, and miserably at that. But as I grow in my spiritual walk, I find a go-to remedy—a balm of truths to remember when I face trials and difficulty. And it has made all the difference.

These five simple truth-filled lessons have changed my perspective of the problems I may be facing, aided me in how to pray when my faith is challenged, shaped my faith, and solidified my walk during hard and difficult seasons. I have come to know in whom I have believed in a new and powerful way. And yes, I am learning to say as Paul said, convincingly, that God “is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”

Before you glance down and assume you have read all this before, before you tap the delete button or, as in some social media cases, swipe left to remove this blog from your screen, I urge you take a moment to read and ponder. Allow the Holy Spirit to breathe life upon what you might otherwise consider just another blog full of insipid platitudes. I promise this is in no way a trite A-B-C or 1-2-3 method or solution. I realize that some of you who are reading this may be struggling with extremely difficult or painful situations. And this is in no way intending to minimize sorrow or pain. These suggestions or lessons listed here may not solve your problems or make them disappear; they will, if allowed, anchor you to the God of hope. And hope does not disappoint (Rom. 5:5, NKJV).

Lesson 1: You Are Never Alone

Have you ever wondered why the Lord says, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb. 13:5) but does also say, “You will

seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13)? I have.

If He will never leave me, why must I seek Him—especially in a difficult and trying time when I need Him most? Scriptures say He is a very present help in time of trouble (Ps. 46:1). I have asked, "What does 'present help' look like?" Here is what I have learned and applied in my prayer life and has made the difference: He promises to be near to the brokenhearted and the one crushed in spirit. God completely understands our prayers of desperation, our cries for relief. He hears, and He feels compassion toward us—"for we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15).

However, I'd like to suggest that in our trials and difficult seasons, perhaps there is an opportunity for us to seek Him and ask: "Lord, how are You revealing Yourself to me in this situation I'm facing? How are You being glorified in this trial?" I'd like to also suggest considering Jeremiah 29:13 in context, with the before and after scriptures. Verse 11 says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." He has thoughts about each and every one of us, our situations and our future. And they are good, full of peace and intended to give us hope. When we cannot see during our difficult challenges is when we most need God to share His purposes with us. Verses 12-14 continue, "Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, says the Lord." We have this promise of "finding Him" right in those moments when we can't see how He could possibly be glorified in what we are facing.

Many would say, "But I am seeking Him; I am praying for a miracle, for deliverance, for provision, for healing and so on." I say to continue to do so, but in addition, to try these aforementioned questions. You will find Him in a way that will

encourage, strengthen and empower you to move forward.

Lesson 2: Remember What You Know

Psalm 77 portrays precisely the conflict of the psalmist's heart as he faced trial and tribulation. When his circumstances threaten to convince him that God has forgotten him, the psalmist articulates exactly what each one of us does in our propensity to forget God's goodness and miracles. It's as though the psalm conveys that the real battle is to obliterate God's righteous goodness from our memory forever.

But wait! There's more. The Psalmist makes a choice in verse 11 (NIV): "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago." And by the time he finishes writing, not only has he encouraged himself through remembrance of the Lord's great goodness, but he is now exalting the magnificent power of our God!

Another example of this is found in the book of Exodus, chapters 14-16. In just a few chapters, we see the Israelites delivered from slavery, brought through the Red Sea and before you know it, they are grumbling about not having food to eat! The Israelites used to build altars of memorial. We wrote it down. Yes, the best way of remembering God's faithfulness is to record it, write it down, refer to it and share it with others.

Let us not forget. May we be people who fight against every difficulty with the God-given gift of remembering.

My friend, we have to figuratively park in the camp of past memorials where the goodness of God was manifested on our behalf—how He healed, provided for, kept and sustained us. In trying and testing times, it can be easy for our attention and focus to be taken off God and unto the problem we face. The distractions of the issues can overcome us. I'll admit I am likely first in line when it comes to not being completely centered on Jesus in challenging times. However, I hold on to

this truth. I force myself, strain if need be, to see that my mind and heart remember Him. And it works! {eo}

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