

Your Spirit-Filled Key to Navigating Challenging Seasons With Grace

With so much discomfort and suffering it is very easy to question why God allows difficulty in the lives of those that love Him. This is an on-going question of theology. If God loves us and cares, why do bad things happen to God's people? The answer is a complex one, but I would like to attempt to answer it by considering God's love for all. God loves every person and His entire creation, but He also desires that we love Him and love each other with an authentic love. He wants us to learn to trust Him and to understand that life is full of adventure and includes in it both joy and sorrow (Eccl. 3:4).

It is difficult to understand that tears and laughter are both significant to our growth, and they develop within in us compassion, mercy, patience and a more perfect love for God, ourselves and others. Growing our love into God's stretches us to forgive those that trespass against us. Our most intense gratitude toward God comes because He forgave us. God's love is the power that transforms our hearts to embrace the power of forgiveness. Without this act of grace, our world would be even more evil. God's love within us balances the chaos of evil and causes grace to abound much more.

Without difficulty, we would not know the strength of God's love to overcome hard times. God loves us so much that He allows challenging seasons to cross our path that we may stretch and learn to forgive, to show mercy and to perceive a love so strong that it embraces the repenting soul that has done the unforgivable. Could you image your spouse or child doing a heinous act and not being able to be forgiven? God's love considers the whole life and not just an act or moment in

time. He looks beyond our faults and sees the repentant heart of His child, responding with forgiveness, love and grace. This love allows difficult things to happen to us while teaching the unconditional love of God.

In my lifetime, I have experienced much difficulty and trial and at varying seasons wondered why. After prayer, reading the Bible, contemplation and studying life, it became clear that it all works together for my learning and growth. Though we would rather not experience some things, the reality is we may not be able to control the actions of others, and sometimes, because of sin in the world, we are challenged by their behavior. The grace of it all is that God gives us the strength to forgive and overcome in every situation and if we seek it, we can see His mercy in all of it.

We have to be intentional to find intimacy with God to develop the mindset to work on our ability to love and challenge ourselves to grow when wronged and to seek God's love when life hurts. This is a choice and intention that must be practiced each day, while remembering how much we ourselves need God's grace. An intentional intimacy with Christ requires a hunger for God at all times and in all things. This is a discipline, a pursuit that is desperate for the mind and heart of God no matter the cost. This passion leads to spiritual integrity and insight that can see beyond the pain into the plan of God in the end. I believe God hurts with us, but He respects the boundary of human will and choice. However, He will intervene at His will as needed, and that may not always result in a time we would have preferred.

Accepting God's will and learning to embrace life in all of its seasons leads to maturity and emotional intelligence. When we consider Jesus had to die to redeem us and even said, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42a), we can see how difficult it was for Him to bear His cross and our sins. Yet He endured it, despising the shame, but for the glory set before Him, He did it anyway (see Heb.

12:2). We have some seasons like this and must learn to endure them and trust God to wrap them all up for our good.

Choosing spiritual maturity in difficult times and allowing God's will to have its course in our lives leads to peace. Not all things are revealed when they occur. Many times, we have to keep on living and wait for the revelation of its purpose. This is why learning to wait and trust God is necessary so we will not become bitter or angry at life or God. Deciding to live in faith that God will succor and empower our hearts and minds to make it through every trial is an individual decision for living in the joy of Jesus.

Living at the heart of God in an intimate relationship is what make it possible to survive life's difficulties and those who trespass against us. Intimacy with Him yields strength to overcome all obstacles. In the secret place of the highest is hope for living, joy for overcoming and peace for resting. However, only an intentional walk toward God will secure this place of shelter from the storms of life.

Listen to more of Dr. Mancha's teaching on intentional intimacy in this episode of *The Power of Intimacy With Christ*.
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