

How Can You Cope When Trials Overwhelm You?

Have you ever reached a point where life was too hard? Have you ever prayed, “Lord, I want to be more like You,” and then all hell broke loose? I have a friend in another state who is feeling overwhelmed like this right now. Life is just too difficult for him.

First there was a wave of family drama, complete with accusations, betrayal and hurt feelings. Then there was an accusation at work that triggered doubts about his job. On top of that, one of his children was rushed to the hospital because of a viral infection. And right after that, his youngest child fell against a glass table—and the bloody cut sent her to the emergency room.

My friend sent up a flare. When he called me for prayer, he said, “I just don’t know if I can take any more trials.” When we are in the flames, our first reaction is to panic. Yet the Bible gives us much better options. If you feel like the trials are piling on and you are on the verge of collapse, let God’s Word give you strength as you remind yourself of these truths:

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– **Life is never free of challenges.** The apostle Peter, who died a martyr’s death, wrote: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you” (1 Pet. 4:12, NASB 1995). Why are we shocked when bad things happen to us? If Peter and the earliest Christians suffered trials, why should we be immune to hardship? There will be no

tears in heaven, but on this side of eternity there will be plenty of them.

– The fire is purifying you. The beautiful thing about fire is that it refines. Proverbs 17:3 reminds us: “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests hearts.” That testing is uncomfortable, but the result is priceless. Instead of focusing on the pain, expect the gain. Don’t complain when hard times create pressure; the coal in your soul is becoming a diamond. God uses our afflictions to transform us.

Charles Spurgeon said, “None of us can come to the highest maturity without enduring the summer heat of trials. As the sycamore fig never ripens if it be not bruised, as the corn does not leave the husk without threshing, and as wheat makes no fine flour until it be ground, so are we of little use until we are afflicted. Why should we be so eager to escape such benefits?”

– Trials are not a sign that God is mad at you. Too many of us whine like babies when our comfortable existence is disturbed; then we moan, asking, “Why is God doing this to me?” Don’t be so fragile. God’s love for you is not in question. He bought you with a price because you are precious to Him. Now He is on a mission to make you more like Jesus. Hebrews 12:6 says, “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.” The trial you are experiencing is actually proof that He loves you!

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– There is always a song in the wilderness. We have options when we face trials. We can drag our feet and grumble about the discomfort, or we can praise God and thank Him no matter how we feel. When we praise, we are not removed from the trial; we are lifted above it. Satan hates joy because it is a secret weapon that overrides depression and anxiety. When you

feel darkness has overwhelmed you, sing—and your mourning will be turned into dancing.

– Your struggle will end with a testimony. How can we know God provides if we haven't experienced lack? How can we know He heals if we have never known sickness? I always remind people that if bad things never happened to us, we would never see God's loving intervention. You may feel pain when you go through trials, but in the end you will have a long list of answered prayers to share with others. Instead of loathing a trial when it comes, you can say, "Oh good! This is just a set-up for another miracle!"

– The strength you gain from your trial will help others. Joseph would never have been fit to rule Egypt if he hadn't spent time in the pit. David would never have become a king if Saul hadn't chased him in the wilderness. Trials aren't fun—but they expose our fears, burn up our selfishness, crush our pride and give us compassion for people.

Embrace your hardships. Praise your way through the hard times. Welcome your trials, knowing that in the end you will have more peace, love, joy, strength, courage and faith because you put your trust in God—who promises to be with you in the fire. {eoa}

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