

When You're Walking Through Hard Times

God wants us to continually make good choices for our lives. So He's given us the Bible—His Word—as an instruction book to live by. The thing is, once we know what it says, we're responsible to do what it says. Because there's never a time when it's all right to do the wrong thing.

Wouldn't you love it if your children always did what you tell them to do just based on your word? I bet it would really make your day. But there are times when we need to tangibly touch their circumstances to help them get back on track.

And there are times when God has to do the same with us—not because He's mad at us, but because He loves us. We need to understand that if we follow His instructions, then we're going to have a life that's full of peace, joy, and emotional stability.

God cares about every area of our lives and He wants to be involved in everything we do. He wants to help us make good choices in how we dress, what we eat, who we hang out with, how we spend our money ... about everything in our life.

Even if you have a lot of areas where you need to change and grow, you don't have to feel discouraged. As you become more deeply rooted in God's love, it gets easier to do what He asks because you know He has your best interests at heart.

The question is: Do you value His opinion? Will you allow Him to continually work in your life?

When you really love Jesus, you're committed to righteousness. You want to do the right thing because it's right, not just to try and earn a reward from God.

This means we get beyond the mindset that if we do all the right things, then God owes us a reward. The Bible teaches that we're only doing what we should be doing when we do the right thing.

Luke 17:10 (NIV) says, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

The good news is we never have to worry about earning God's love. He'll always love us. And we don't have to wonder, *Am I doing enough?*

Here's the thing you need to understand: *You are not responsible for the results.* God is responsible for that. Your responsibility is to keep doing the right thing all the time, no matter what.

It isn't always easy, but it's always worth it. There are going to be times when we'd rather do the wrong thing. But we'll just regret it later. We need to decide that no matter what our circumstances look like or how hard doing the right thing might be, we're going to hold on to our joy because our joy is in Jesus.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (AMP) says, "Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, [though] the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. ..."

Let's make this more practical: Though I lose my job and the car breaks down and my child comes home with a bad report from school and I've gained five pounds and nothing seems to be working out in my life ... *even then, I will rejoice in the Lord. Even then, I will do what is right before the Lord.*

We don't have to settle for letting our circumstances determine the level of our joy and peace. We can decide today:

I'm going to continue doing right whether it's easy or not, and I'm going to trust God to give me the grace to do it.

When you're in the middle of hard times and you really don't like your circumstances, the first place to run is God's Word because it has the power to calm you down.

When you feel like giving up and doing wrong, find Scriptures about the strength we have in Christ, and then just rest in God's presence and receive His strength. Whatever you need, just go to God's Word.

I've seen God do amazing things in me and through me because I've let Him *continually* work in my life—and you can have that kind of relationship, too.

Philippians 1:6 (AMP) says, "He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return]."

I encourage you to pray like this: "God, today I'm giving You permission to keep working in my life until You are finished doing all that You need to do. So when I start begging You to back off, please don't. The truth is, I want to do whatever You are calling me to do."

Your relationship with God can be an amazing journey that brings you peace, joy and contentment in every area of life, if you will simply choose to follow Him.

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