



Faith & Life Discovery Journal

When the Going Gets Tough...

monday

01/19

There is an old saying that goes like this, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" The idea is this: when the circumstances of life get challenging one's real strength comes out. I think this is true to a point. Adversity seems to motivate some to tremendous acts of courage and human strength. Tough times will either make you or break you. But there are times that no matter what you do things don't seem to get better. And at times like that people of faith have a stronghold, a place of refuge when the worries and troubles of life seem to be caving in around them. Sure, situations still break people of faith and when times are hard they are no less challenging for Christians than they are for anyone else. It is just that as Christians we have a source of strength and hope beyond ourselves to turn to.

Read Psalm 46

Where do you turn when life gets tough? To yourself, to others, or to God? Think of a time when you found God faithful through adversity. What did that experience teach you?

Where does the world turn when life gets tough? Do people of faith journey through adversity more easily or just differently? Explain.

What can you do to encourage someone you know is hurting and facing great difficulty at this time?

Ask God to be your strength and shield both in good times and bad.



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Blip on the Radar

tuesday

01/20

You just went to the doctor and found out what's been making you sick might be cancer. Your daughter just told you she's quitting school and getting married to a guy you barely know. Your spouse of 35 years says they just aren't "in it" anymore and asks for a divorce. Your 401K looks more like a 201K and you're wondering if retirement will be a possibility or if you'll have to work the rest of your life. These are the kinds of things that happen to people everyday all-over the world. These are painful discoveries and no-doubt life-altering. These are more than just blips on the radar screen of our lives. These are enormous obstacles that can threaten to undo us depending on our response. When confronted with these kinds of opposing realities (in the sense that these are not the kinds of things anyone expects to happen in life) we can either slide into "woe is me" kind of thinking or we can, with the Holy Spirit's loving help, tender mercy, and unending compassion, learn to accept these realities knowing that we will not have to face them alone. The Holy Spirit of God shines brightest when the people of God are faced with challenging circumstances.

Read Isaiah 57:14-21

What does God's comfort look like in the face of life's greatest obstacles?

What are some of the obstacles you are currently facing? How can God assist you in overcoming them? Have you received his peace and comfort in those situations?

In this passage, God promises to revive the heart of the lowly. What does that mean? Do you know anyone in need of that? What about yourself? What does God need to revive in you?

Ask God to remove the obstacles in your way and give you the strength to endure until he does!



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When You Don't Know What Else to do...

wednesday

01/21

Prayer has been the famous last resort of many people, whether people of faith or not. It seems many people begin believing in the power of prayer when faced with life-altering adversity. This is a good thing because regardless of what got them there, if their prayers move from selfish to sincere, God will hear their heart and respond. The prayed for result may not always be what happens, but God WILL unleash his peace and presence through the ministry of the Holy Spirit into that person's life. God will invade the hurting heart with his peace and love if they will be open to receiving it. For the Christian, prayer should increasingly become a daily source of hope and strength for the journey, rather than a last-ditch effort to avoid trouble or pain. God's hope is that those who love him will communicate with him continually (cf: 2 Thessalonians 5:17, "pray continually"). As we grow in the grace of God, prayer becomes something we learn we cannot live without, rather than something we think of when we find ourselves in a pinch.

Read James 5:13-20

James lists several circumstances that should lead one to pray: trouble, happiness, and sickness. In other words, wherever you are in life is the right time to pray. Think about your prayer life. What typically motivates you to get serious about prayer?

How do you view prayer? Is it a life-giving, spiritual source of strength and hope or a painful, dry discipline that you find little satisfaction in? Depending on your response, reflect on why you feel that way.

If prayer is simply conversation with God, then why do so many people find it hard to make time to pray? If the only right way to pray is to share your true heart with God, then when and where can you pray? Are you too busy to pray?

Ask God to renew your prayer life and help you find great satisfaction in your communication with him!



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Don't Give Up!

thursday

01/22

Perseverance is the act of persevering. What does it mean to persevere? It means to stay at it regardless of the temptation to give up. It means refuse to quit. It means refuse to throw in the towel. Perseverance, if it is a solely human act, will fall short because it has limits. But Spirit-motivated perseverance has no limits. Spirit-motivated perseverance becomes Spirit-empowered perseverance and the Holy Spirit of God will see us through any adversity for as long as needed until God breaks through and brings us victory. There are so many biblical examples of this kind of perseverance (cf: The woman with the bleeding disorder in Mark 5:21-43; the friends who dug off a roof to get their disabled friend to Jesus in Mark 2:1-12; Moses and the Israelites' journey out of slavery in Egypt in the book of Exodus). The bottom-line is this: perseverance is more than pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. It is hard and demanding spiritual work that will fail if it is not motivated and empowered by God's Spirit working in and through us.

Read James 1:2-18; James 5:10-11

What does perseverance mean to you?

What is so hard about perseverance?

How does perseverance move from a humanly motivated act to a spiritually empowered act of trusting in and depending on God?

Ask God to help you persevere through whatever you're facing today!



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Be Prepared!

friday

01/23

The Boy Scouts' long standing motto is: "Be prepared." Pretty good motto for life. Truth is we can't be prepared for everything but there are a lot of things that we can be prepared for if we're willing to do the hard work beforehand. Most people prepare for their future by investing money they make now for the retirement they plan to have later in life. Many people prepare to assist their children in paying for college. Every homeowner is required to carry insurance on their home as long as they have a mortgage they are paying off. Insurance is a way of being prepared for unlikely, but potential, disasters that can cause damage: fires, floods, theft, etc. Spiritual preparation is important for our life of faith. Everything we do now is preparation for our future with God in eternity, but it is also preparation for times when life and faith are challenging because of the circumstances we're facing. Staying rooted in God's Word is our essential preparation for our life in faith.

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

What does it mean to be spiritually prepared? Is there a difference between preparation and training? Why do we need spiritual training?

How does living a spiritually prepared life offer assurance that God's Word & promises are true?

What do you do to prepare yourself spiritually for everyday life and for life with God in eternity?

Pray that God will keep you focused on staying spiritually prepared so you'll be ready to face what life brings your way (both the challenges and opportunities)!