

Last month, at our monthly pastors meeting at Epic life church, we had a very honest and lengthy discussion about how we, as pastors, are handling adversity.

We concluded that Pastors don't handle adversity very well  
So many burn out because they feel that have to hide it inside and pretend that all is well.

There are a ridiculous number of verses in the Bible about adversity. I call them the "Not so precious Promises

The children of Israel were a classic example of  
How Not to Handle Adversity

Every time they came to a hard place  
They complained (Murmured)  
You talk about cry babies....  
Bad food, Bad circumstances, bad leadership  
They refused to trust God  
They accused Moses  
And they even accused God of trying to kill them

How we handle adversity is a critical issue  
All of us...All of us have faced and will face Adversity  
If someone told you that you could escape Adversity  
By becoming a Christian, They either lied or were ignorant

But I will say this: Mature Christians follow in the footsteps of Jesus in this way: They handle Adversity real will

Those of us who live in affluent society are not well taught on the subject of adversity, or trials, or discipline or God's refining process

A new word has been invented to describe this generation  
SNOWFLAKES: When the heat is on: "We melt"

## WHAT IS ADVERSITY?

Adversity comes in many forms and it comes for us all.  
And adversity is no respecter of persons

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation (this word: trial, hardship, test) ,  
has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful, He will not allow to be tempted (tried or tested) beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so you can endure it. (Don't you wish this said, so you can avoid it)

- Sometimes adversity comes from our own actions in the form of consequences for our sin or our naivety.

We can choose to sin if we want to, but there are unavoidable consequences to our actions. Not because God hates us, but because he loves us.

- Sometimes adversity comes for the purpose of developing and refining our character
- Sometimes adversity comes from the world as a consequence of Serving God.... **2 Timothy 3:12 “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...”**

This may not sound like good news

But God has a plan to refine us. To transform us into His image. To shape us!  
God accepts us where we are, but He has no intention of leaving us that way

Malachi 3:2-3

- 2 For He will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.  
3 He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify them and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

And if we are wise we will not only welcome the refining when it comes But pray for it to come:

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart O God And renew a right Spirit within me

One of the great misconceptions about the Christian faith is that if you call Jesus your Lord, hardship and adversity will be removed from your life. This is far from the truth.

Let’s cast our eyes on some of the least favorite verses in the bible and embrace them as truth...

Hebrews 12

- 5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you,  
6 because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”

**Put that on your refrigerator door!**

*THANK YOU LORD FOR YOUR DISCIPLINE*

- 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?  
8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.  
9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!  
10 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness.  
11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.  
12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

13 “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Don't be a wimp about it.

And don't take it as a sign that God doesn't like you, Quite the contrary, it is a sign that He is “perfecting you”

(The author and perfecter of our faith)

A companion to this passage is in 1 Peter 5

It shows us The proper response should be to hardship and God's discipline

1 Peter 5:

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Anxiety for most of us comes along with Adversity And we tend to forget that He cares and lapse into anxiety

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Everything in us wants God to spare us before we suffer a little while

Adversity is one of God's tools to bring people to Him and to bring people back who have wandered away from Him

Psalms 119:67

Before I was Afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word.

Learning what not to do is just as important as learning what do.....

Our perspective on the matter of hardship and discipline  
Is absolutely critical to our development

Those who have a twisted perspective of Adversity will never grow up. They will never mature

Look at these lovely words from James 1

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

These words seem almost absurd or masochistic

Count it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds????

Yeah sure! That's how we role, isn't it? I don't know about you but I always say "This is good for me, when something bad happens" (OK that's a joke)

The subject of adversity in the life of a Christian is not an obscure subject in the bible

As a matter of fact we are promised a good share of adversity  
And it's something we not only need to expect  
It is something we need to understand and embrace

1 Peter 1:

- 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,
- 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.
- 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,
- 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

There are two seemingly contrary things going on here at the same time:

We are filled with praise and hope and love  
Yet we are going through all kinds of trials

We are praising God  
For His great mercy  
For His new birth  
For His living hope  
For our inheritance  
For shielding us by God's power  
For the refining process

We are filled with love for Him And we are filled with inexpressible joy

AND YET we are experiencing trials and hardships ..... this is good  
Because your faith is being refined.  
Your character is being shaped

You are like a man who says, I have to have surgery And you say, "That's bad"  
But your friend says, No! that's good! Because without it you'll get worse and die

You are learning obedience through the things you are suffering

Character is something that is formed in the life of a person, not only in their childhood, but through all the days of their lives

Many of us can look back on how your faith was formed and your character developed in the fires of a desperate trial....

So many of us got here because we were desperate

AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF SCRIPTURE IS DEVOTED TO THE TOPIC OF UNDERSTANDING THE WINDS OF ADVERSITY.

ALL KINDS OF ADVERSITY?

- Temptation to sin
- Physical affliction
- Emotional Stress
- Persecution - Rejection
- Hardship in life
- Personal weakness or limitation
- Personal failure
- Spiritual harassment

God never promised us that we would not experience these and other kinds of adversities  
But He did promise us that we would never have to go through them alone.

Romans 8:35-39

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?  
36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."  
37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,  
39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's promise is that He will walk with us and He will hold onto us through it all

Isaiah 43:1-3

1 But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.  
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.  
3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

THE WORDS: "I will never leave you or forsake you". Found in 4 different places in the bible

God has promised to be with us through it all

But serving Jesus Christ has never been for the faint of Heart. Many have faced tremendous adversity despite their obedience and faithfulness and even because of their faith

The apostle Peter wrote:

1 Peter 4:12-14

- 12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.
- 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
- 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Let me close this morning by sharing something the Apostle Paul wrote about himself and the other Apostles, which really reflects his attitude toward Adversity

TAKE THESE WORDS TO HEART AND ENVISION THEM BEING WRITEN ABOUT YOU

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

- 3 We try to live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.
- 4 In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind.
- 5 We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food.
- 6 We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love.
- 7 We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense.
- 8 We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors.
- 9 We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed.
- 10 Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

Create in me a clean heart O God...