

Clear Thinking About Problems

By Santiago Lange

Life is often a series of mountains and valleys, ups and downs, highs and lows, good times and bad times, obstacles and opportunities. Sometimes the good and the bad experiences even come at the same time! In the years ahead, we can be sure that we will face difficulties and hard challenges. Sometimes, it's easy to ask, „Why bother“? „Why me“?



What do we do on those days? How do we get through the tough times? Let's briefly examine a few bytes of truth that can help us to keep going when we face serious situations.

We should understand, for example, that one of the secrets of endurance is the **FOCUS OF OUR MIND!** As James writes....

“Consider it pure joy, my brethren, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” James 1:2-6 (NIV)

Our attitude is determined by our understanding. Rejoicing is not just “positive thinking” but it should be based firmly on certain facts of life and spiritual realities, facts we need to know. One reality is that...

Problems are inevitable.

“...whenever you face trials...”

The point is that problems are not an elective in the school of life – they are a required course. Life IS difficult.

Problems are unpredictable.

“...whenever you face problems...”

The Greek word “peripipto” that has been translated in the NIV with the word “face” – means to fall into unexpectedly or to be surrounded with.

Problems come in many shapes and types.

James reminds us that there are *“... trials of many kinds ...”*

Problems come in many shades and varieties. They can vary in intensity, variety, and duration.

Problems are purposeful.

“Realize that they (trials) come ... to produce in you ...” (Phillips)

Our problems are “productive”. What can our problems produce or help accomplish? In verses three and four in James chapter one we can find some answers.

For example, we are taught that

Problems test our faith.

“You know, James says, that the testing of your faith...”

Job said: “He (referring to God) has tested me through the refining fire and I have come out as pure gold.”

Problems also help purify our patience.

“...the testing of your faith develops perseverance...”

The Greek word used for perseverance or patience is “hupomone” – the term means, in context, to have steadfastness and constancy as we grow in our trust towards God.

Problems also sanctify our character.

“So that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

God’s goal for us is to grow up and be mature. God is more interested in building our character and a strong relationship with Him than in simply making us “comfortable”.

What should be our attitude?

“Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials ...” (v.1)

Not that the trials themselves are joyful but our focus must be deeper and more forward looking. God is willing to give us the needed help as He works in us towards His purposes and glory.

“If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him.” (v. 5)

Wisdom can be understood as “seeing life from God’s point of view.” This necessitates a greater understanding of WHO God is.

We need to be praying for...

Wisdom to understand our trials.

And for... **Faith** to endure our trials.

God says that “the Adversary” wants to use problems to defeat us. God, on the other hand, wants to use problems to develop us.

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial. When he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1: 12)

When our life seems DEPRESSING...let’s think about God’s **PROVISION**. Depression can result from an ALL OR NOTHING philosophy. One of the healthiest emotion known to man is GRATITUDE! God can use the DISAPPOINTMENTS in our life if we’ll focus on His **PROVISION!**

When Life Seems DEFEATING let’s think about God’s **POWER**. FAILURE is a part of life and a stepping stone to greater and better things.

What then should we do when we fail ?

We need to be seeking help BEYOND OUR OWN RESOURCES!

In Psalms 147:5 we read... "*Great is our Lord and mighty in power. . .*"

When life seems DARK, let's focus on God's **PRESENCE**. God will TAKE CARE OF YOU!

As the Psalmist writes...

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." - Psalms 34:18

Points to ponder:

- 1. Evaluate what recent events have discouraged you.**
- 2. Admit where you have failed God and others.**
- 3. Agree to focus on God's work in your life. □**