

Coping With Adversity

Job 14:1 *Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble*

John 16:33 *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

Joseph was thrown in a pit, Moses had to flee for his life, the spies found the land full of strong armies. Is there anything we can do to prepare us for sudden shock?

One of the ways of coping with adversity is to accept that it is inevitable. Shock, tragedy, drudgery, trauma are part of life.

1 Pet 4:12 *Don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you.*

We typically start off in life with an optimistic bias - it will never happen to me. Nobody teaches you how to cope with adversity in school, we learn through the school of hard knocks.

Acacia trees grown in a windless environment fall over and snap their branches because wind is needed to strengthen the branches.

If God is refining, don't fight the crucible, its there for a purpose. Refining adversity is wholly positive.

On the other hand don't take a beating if you don't need to. Paul said '*is it right for you to flog a Roman citizen*'

If we had utopia - all our desires and needs met then we would suffer from boredom - utopia does not exist.

Prov 17:22 *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.*

We should pray for healing but if it does not happen how do you cope? With most illnesses we have the choice to be tragic heroes or to laugh it off / shrug it off / see the most positive side.

1. Illness is part of growing old - no point in complaining
2. You are in good company, many people are struggling
- you are not the only one
3. Many people are worse off than you
4. Greatfull not to have been ill earlier in life
5. Your illness could have been far worse
6. Everyone dies, illness is often part of the process

These kind of thoughts can help us avoid tragic mentality, avoid being trapped in a negative haze.

A man who lost both legs to disease said that if he had not been training in a gym to the point where the pain was as much as he could bare he would not have been able to cope with the pain of his illness. If we move out of our comfort zones it may prepare us for the future.

There are times when we need to cry out to the Lord - HELP!!

Sennacherib king of Assyria came to attack the land

2 Chron 32:20 *King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz prayed about this and cried out to heaven, and the LORD sent an angel who annihilated every brave warrior,*

People hug in the face of adversity. People need people to talk things through.

Remember the power of the Lord. The spies had seen all the incredible miracles like the parting of the red sea yet they still did not get it. Meditate on the power and awesome deeds of the Lord.

Ps 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.*

The Psalms are comforting and full of helpful insights.

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

1 Thes 5:18 *Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

When you look back over your life do you tend to think of the positive or the negative things that have happened?

Negatives can go round and round like a washing machine pause and then go round and round again? - trapped in persistent negative self talk. For milder trauma it is possible to 'snap out of it', but it takes self discipline - choose to '*cast your anxiety on him*', think of something positive. Try and be aware of any triggers that create negativity - people and situations.

Reflect on the good parts of the day at the end of each day. Maintain perspective. What are your really greatfull for?

If you believe that stress is bad, you are more likely to suffer health problems. If you believe that your stress reaction - increased heart rate etc - is just the way you are made to cope with difficult situations then you can experience quite a bit of stress with no impact on your health.

Positive things can come out of adversity - a wake up call, refocussing your life, galvanising a change in priorities, recognising what is truly important in life.

What can I learn from the adversity that I have been through?