

Three responses to trouble

by Rick Warren

It's a promise: into every life, a little rain is going to fall. Some of you are thinking, "I wouldn't mind a sprinkle now and then, but I'm always under a deluge!" It may seem that way. You may resent your problems, but problems have a purpose. God will use adverse circumstances to grow character in you.

“It's your choice to rejoice, and you can rejoice because God has a reason for the problem.”

Rick Warren

While you wait for that to happen, here are three responses you can have to the trouble in your life:

1. Rejoice

James 1 says, "Consider it pure joy when you face trials." Don't misunderstand this. This is not saying, "Fake it!" God never asks you to deny reality, and he doesn't expect you to smile and say, "Everything's wonderful!" when you're going bankrupt, or your spouse just left you, or your child is on drugs. Those aren't good things. The key is not to rejoice for those things, but in those things.

How can we be happy in the problem? Because we know God has a purpose. He's testing my faith, he's developing my endurance, and he's maturing my character.

If you are only happy when you don't have any problems, you will never be happy. You must learn how to be happy in the problems, because you'll always have problems. They are an inevitable part of life.

Notice it says, "Consider it pure joy. ..." *Consider* means to deliberately make up your mind. You can control how you respond to a problem. It's your choice to rejoice, and you can rejoice because God has a reason for the problem.

Problems in life are inevitable; misery is optional. You cannot stop problems from coming into your life, but you don't have to be miserable over them.

2. Request

The second thing to do is request that God help you in your problem. Pray and ask for help. Ask for wisdom. James 1:7 (Phillips translation) says, "If, in the process, any of you doesn't know how to meet any particular problem, you only have to ask God who gives generously to all men without making them feel guilty and you may be sure that the necessary wisdom will be given to you."

Ask God for wisdom so you can learn everything you need to learn through this problem. That way he won't have to bring it around again. Ask to be a quick learner.

3. Relax

Trust God to know what's best and don't doubt. Cooperate with him. Say, "God, I'm not going to doubt what you're doing here. I don't know why it's happening but I know you've allowed it and I don't want to short-circuit what you're doing."

Wallace Johnson was the founder of Holiday Inn, and a dynamic Christian. When he was 40 years old, his boss fired him from his saw mill job. It came as a devastating shock. This was during the Great Depression. He and his wife needed the income from his job, small though it was. Wallace felt that the world had caved in on him.

His wife worried. She asked him, "What are you going to do?" But Wallace had been thinking, and he answered by saying, "I'm going to mortgage our home and go into the building business.

His first venture was the construction of two small buildings. Within five years, Wallace Johnson was a multi-millionaire. In an interview, he said, "Today, if I could locate the man who fired me I would sincerely thank him for what he did. At the time it happened, I didn't understand why I was fired. Later I saw that it was God's unerring and wondrous plan to get me into the ways of his choosing."

The greatest thing that ever happened to him was to get fired.

Who knows what God might do through your problems and disappointments! If you've got problems, be happy. Don't think of your problems as intruders. Welcome them as friends. God's purpose is much bigger than those problems. Don't doubt.

James 1:8 says that when you ask for wisdom, "... you must ask in sincere faith, without secret doubts." Don't doubt that God is working in your life. Don't think he has abandoned you. He hasn't – and he never will. Your problems aren't a sign that God is mad at you – they're a sign that he's helping you to grow.

Since problems in life are inevitable, tackle them head on and use them to your advantage. Make it your goal to be in God's Hall of Faith. The people who make it into the Hall of Faith are those who endured incredible problems – pain, rejection, suffering – and maintained a Christ-like attitude despite it all. They are those who let the Lord work in their lives and grew as a result of it.

You're going to have problems. It's inevitable. There's no such thing as a problem-free life. But when a problem comes along you can be sure of two things:

- 1) The devil is trying to destroy you.
- 2) And God is trying to develop you.

Problems do not automatically make you a better person. Depending on your response, you can be better or bitter. You can rejoice, request, and relax or you can resent, rebel, and resist.

Which will you choose?

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rick".