

What I Have Learned From Trial and Tribulation

My childhood was turbulent abusive and dysfunctional, and as I grew into an adult I developed a defensive resentful attitude that denied the existence of a loving God and festered with mistrust in my fellow man. My life was a roller coaster ride from one disaster to another and on two occasions I made serious attempts to suicide. I could see no hope for the future and felt too much pain to know how to bear it in the present. It was a miracle that I was found and that I survived my suicide attempts, but a loving Father God was close to me every step of the way, even though I had rejected Him and was not aware of His guiding compassionate protection as I struggled my way through a darkness I could not comprehend. When I was in my twenties, I was introduced to Jesus in a very real way – but that is another story all its own!

Full of the newborn fervor of a brand new forgiven Christian with a clean sheet to begin the rest of my life, I earnestly offered my life to Christ and asked him to do 'whatever it takes' but to never let me go. He has been faithful to this day to that prayer which was within the framework of His Perfect Will. And I know that He will be always, for He promised that he would never forsake nor leave us to the end of the world and God is not 'man' that he should lie.

I learned that when we pray for what we 'need' rather than what we 'want' we should be very sure that we are prepared for whatever comes! Within a short time of bathing in the fathomless billows of new Faith and Trust, I was a passenger in a car when it overturned going around a bend, and in the accident I broke my neck and lower back.

How could this be? As I lay in terrible pain in the hospital, I asked myself why would a loving God allow this to happen to me when I had just given him my life?

I had been the kind of person who was driven in everything I did, rushing here, hurrying there, cramming more into each day than was reasonable to expect from anyone, and even proud of it. What folly it all was. My self esteem was so low that I would go to extreme lengths to help others, even at great cost to myself. I was desperate to be loved. I buried my head in the sand and reasoned that wasn't this what Christ meant when He asked us to love our neighbour as ourself?

It was years before I managed to learn that to love others as oneself meant that we first need to love ourselves. I had no love for me, so I martyred myself and pulled the wool over my own eyes. Coupled with this was an unbending independent streak that prevented me from accepting help from others. I thought I had to give...give...give, with no thought to my own welfare, but how wrong I was.

In hindsight the months I spent lying in my bed, and wracked with pain was the most wonderful blessing that I could have ever imagined. I had given the Lord my 'permission' to do whatever it took, right? God is the ultimate Gentleman and never forces His will onto us, but I had given him permission! The car accident pulled me up dead in my tracks and gave me time to think, to be silent in my spirit and to soften the hard shell I had been hiding behind.

With nothing else to occupy my time, I began to read. I love reading, but my mad scrambling active life before the accident gave me no time for books. A friend came into the hospital one day and left a book with me that was to change my life forever. It was called "The Power of Postive Thinking" by Norman Vincent Peale and W.Clement Stone. I read the true life stories of men and women who had learned how to 'flip the coin' from the negative to the positive and turn tragic circumstances into

success and happiness in spite of great and adverse odds, and slowly I began to realize that I didn't need to be a victim of circumstances; that I had the power to be the kind of person I would like to be regardless of my past.

"For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten son that whoever believeth him Him should not perish but have everlasting life". I figured that if God loved me so much then I had to be worth something!

I learned to reprogram my subconscious mind using self talk and affirmations. I stuck little messages up all over the house and read them to myself aloud while looking into my own eyes in the mirror. I learned to appreciate ME. And as my own self appreciation grew, I discovered that I was also learning to genuinely love others, not in a desperate attempt to make them love me, but because it was becoming part of the person I had DECIDED I wanted to be.

Someone suggested that I cut out a magazine picture of some lady who had been persistent and faced many challenges while waiting for her dreams to come true, and had achieved her dreams and stick the picture on my refrigerator door to remind me that I too could do it. I chose Camilla Parker-Bowles. The picture was of her smiling the sweetest smile of triumph on her wedding day when she married Prince Charles. I don't know why I chose her, but the look on her face was an encouragement to me every time I went to the fridge!

The years have rolled by, ever faster and life has not been easy. I became too successful and in doing so, unwittingly made enemies who thought that I had what they would like to have and didn't.

As I approach seventy years of age, the past five years have brought deception and betrayal from some who were closest to me and whom I trusted. The emotional hurt has torn my heart into pieces and I learned that a heart can actually break from the intolerable pain of agonizing grief. I have been financially ruined from foolishly trusting, and my health has suffered from too much stress and sadness.

I have learned that being a Christian doesn't mean being a doormat for others to wipe their feet on, and that it is important to stand tall and resist injustice.

But I am smiling as I write this. Because through the greatest trials and misfortunes I could have ever imagined to come my way, if I could go back I would not miss out on one single second of it. Through it all, I have come ever nearer to Christ, His boundless mercy and love. And perhaps the greatest blessing of my life by the Grace of God, has been becoming able to truly love my enemies and all those who wish to harm me. My heart aches for those who persecute me as I "pray for those who spitefully use you". Forgiveness is the most precious gift we can give to mankind, because it lifts a huge burden from our own heart, sets us free and fills us with a deep inner peace even in the midst of turmoil, "The peace that passeth all understanding."

Glory to God forever.

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