

Life Affirmations - Dealing With Problems

God is always with me. I need never face my problems alone. Together with God, any difficulty can be worked out and overcome.

Problems! Problems! Problems! Life seems full of them sometimes. One seems to pile up on top of another until we feel like it's all too much and we don't know what to do or where to turn. God is aware that we have circumstances in our life that produce fear and discouragement. With us and those problems clearly in His view, God tells us to not be afraid because He will be with us and He will take care of us. **"Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; He will never fail you nor forsake you"**(Deuteronomy. 31:8). God made the universe. God brings the sun up every morning and sets it down at night. God controls the power of the ocean and protects a little flower that grows up through a crack in the sidewalk. God is able to care for us as we confront our problems.

Certainly, every new situation, problem or difficulty presents a challenge. There are things we don't know and things we can't control. We're in need of learning new skills and finding dependable helpers to come alongside us. We may be facing huge consequences related to our past addictive behaviour. On our own it can seem frightening and overwhelming to figure out a plan and then to carry it out. If we didn't know God's heart for us, we would fall under the weight of our own fear. But God's word to us is: **For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.** (Jeremiah 29:11 NLT) With God, sorting out a problem or creating something new can be a great adventure. With His help, we can conquer whatever tests of faith we face along our path.

We often think challenges come from our relationships, our mistakes or circumstances around us. However, the true challenges are those of the heart. If we are able to bring our heart to an experience of God's truth, the fearful circumstances will fade into something quite small and manageable. Our **first challenge** is to remember that God is with us and not let the problem choke that truth out of our minds and hearts. **"Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go"** (Joshua 1:9).

When we face difficulties and problems we often ask ourselves some questions: Does God care? Does God care about me? Does God care about my situation today? It's very easy to get blinded by pressures and problems and to fail to see all the help and blessing that God is trying to give us. We often respond to problems by complaining and believing the lie that we have been rejected and abandoned

and now we have to "figure it out on our own." Things don't work the way we think they should and we blame God for not helping us out. God is very clear about His desire to help us and He's also very clear about what clears the path for that help to reach us.

Jesus says, ***So don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing...Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and He will give you all you need from day to day IF you live for Him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern.*** (Matthew 6:25-34).

God is not a magician who waves a magic wand into the wreckage of our decisions. God invites us to come and be with Him and to follow His teachings and commandments from day to day. Then, and only then, will we find our worries disappearing as we see God's help and blessing coming more and more frequently into our lives. The **second challenge** in dealing with problems is not to plead with God to "fix things for us" but rather to live according to God's principles and priorities. Jesus told us that IF we lived for God and made that the focus of our living that we'd have everything we needed from day to day. Am I living focused on my need or on God's kingdom?

God empowers us to live in a changed way and gives us wisdom and solutions to apply to real problems. The **third challenge** for us in dealing with fear and discouragement is to remember that we are the ones who must do the work to face the problem and work with others to find solutions. God will be right there with us, but it is our hands and feet that will put new things into practice. We are responsible, with God's help, to faithfully work on problems until we see that the job is done. Some problems will be resolved fairly quickly and others will take some consistent work over time. God will keep on giving us strength to do what we need to do today. God will keep on giving us answers and direction for the next step we are to take. Our challenge is to trust and to obey. ***So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time ... For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.*** (Galatians 6:9, Philippians 4:13, NLT)

God wants to help us. He wants to restore us. He wants to give us abundant life, filled with love and joy and peace and hope. It's available to us today.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What causes me fear or discouragement?
2. How do I handle my difficult situations?
3. To whom do I turn when I have difficulties or problems?
4. In what areas of my life am I reluctant to trust to God?
5. What does it mean to "live for God and make His kingdom my primary concern?"