

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! Sometimes life seems full of them. 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 of circumstances in our life that produce fear and discouragement. With full knowledge of all that is going on in our lives, He tells us 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. His word tells us to **"Cast all our anxiety on Him because He cares for us.** (1 Peter 5:7)

Every unknown situation, problem or difficulty presents a challenge and there will be things we don't know and things we can't control. We're in need of new skills to handle the consequences of our past choices and to move forward into the life God is offering us. Our old ways have not worked and need changing. On our own it can seem frightening and overwhelming to figure out a plan and then to carry it out. When we don't know God's heart for us, we fall under the weight of our own fear. But God's word to us is: **For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."** (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV) Sorting out a problem or creating something new can be a great adventure when we look to God for His input.

Sometimes we 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).

We often ask ourselves some questions: when we face difficulties and problems; Does God care? Does God care about me? Does God care about my situation today? It's very easy to get blinded by the pressure of problems and to fail to see the help and blessing that God is offering to give us. Sometimes we respond by complaining and believing the lie that we have been rejected and abandoned by God and others and now we have to "figure it out on our own." Things don't

work the way we think they should have and we blame God and others for not helping us out even though we have not sought the help we need. 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. His word says **"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him."** (2 Chronicles 16:9) God may also put dependable helpers alongside us to assist us in troublesome times, but, we may choose instead to isolate because we are too proud to admit that we need help.

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 each day. Then, and only then, will we find our worries disappear 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 **"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). IF we live for God and make His way the focus of our living then we will have everything we need today and every day. Am I living focused on my need or on God's kingdom?

The **third challenge** for us in dealing with fear and discouragement is to remember that we are the ones who must do the work in facing problems and, work together with others, to find solutions. God will be right there with us, but it is our will that will put new things into practice. We are responsible, with God's help, to faithfully work on problems until we see that the solution is found. 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 an abundant life, filled with love, joy, peace and hope. It's available to us today, will I grasp it?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what areas of my life am I reluctant to trust in God?
2. What does it mean to "live for God and make His kingdom my primary concern?"