

## Frustration: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

Frustration is a feeling of being hindered in achieving or accomplishing your goals or desires. We experience frustration in many circumstances and relationships. People disappoint us. Financial aid workers don't seem to understand our needs. We blow a month's worth of money in 24 hours and realize that we'll have to scrounge for yet another month. We try to clean up our act and work things out and it seems like obstacles appear out of nowhere to keep us from getting ahead. Any number of circumstances leave us with a feeling of anger and defeat and helplessness. What are we to make of it? Where is God in the middle of it?

Much of our frustration comes from trying to work our way through problems with only our own thinking and plans. We see certain solutions for certain problems and work towards them. When those particular plans don't work out our way, we get frustrated. Life is more complex than the little glimpses of it that we get each day. When we don't consult God and obey His direction, we end up doing things that harm or frustrate, rather than help. We get hurt or disappointed and then run to escapes and addictions to cover our pain. God, who knows everything, knows how to arrange things so all of the pieces work together in the right way and the right time. How do we know this? Here are God's promises: ***And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 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. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*** (Romans 8 & Jeremiah 29) We need to turn control of our will and our lives over to God who knows the past, present, and future, and learn from God what will work for us and for our circumstances.

God has a good path for us to follow that will give us satisfaction and strength. It's not always a path that gives us everything we feel we need at any one point. However, God shows us in the Bible how to

walk the path and face all kinds of circumstances. We are told, ***"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength."*** (Phil. 4)

We are not always in control but God always is. As we turn again and again to God, in the middle of our plans and programs, God will show us how to act and react. God will give us strength to face what needs to be faced, and will show us new ways to deal with problems. When necessary, God will even remove obstacles from our path. However, only God knows what we actually need in order to build character and to walk safely. We have to be willing to trust God's wisdom, learn God's way and follow it. God invites us: ***Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*** (Matthew 11) We can face whatever God leaves in our path to face. It's for God to decide if the right thing to do is to strengthen us or remove the obstacle.

Sometimes we experience restlessness and frustration because it's time to do something we haven't done before or time to face and resolve something that we've been sitting with for awhile. It's time to grow. ***Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.*** (Isaiah 43) God wants to do new and wonderful things in our lives but we have to leave some old ways behind to make room for the new. Dissatisfaction with "things as they are" is often a signal to ask God what He's bringing our way and how we should take new steps of faith and growth. God wants us to experience His love, His peace, and the security of His good plans for us no matter what circumstances we face today. Have we learned the secret of being content in all things? Will we choose to trust God to give us exactly what we need to face anything and everything with Christ who strengthens us, or will we continue to run after our own feeble plans and flawed solutions?

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