

What Can I Do With Trouble?

No one likes trouble. We'd all like to make trouble go away as quickly as possible. Many times people wonder why they have trouble if they follow God. They assume that God will not allow any suffering and trouble to touch their lives. In fact, God knows our human circumstances. God knows there will be troubles and problems that we will all face.

All evil begins with the devil. Often we, or other humans, co-operate with the thoughts and suggestions of the devil and strike out in hurtful ways with words or actions. We live in a world that is broken down because of sinful choices down through the ages. We will experience some of the effects of that brokenness. God wants us to know that we can expect to have suffering and trouble visit our lives. He also promises to be with us so the trouble doesn't overwhelm us and he promises to use every difficulty for our good if we will give ourselves and our troubles to the Lord.

In the Bible, we read these comforting words: *God said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, to those who have been called according to his purpose.* (2 Corinthians 12 and Romans 8)

The story is told of a shipwreck survivor who washed up on a small island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect himself from the elements, and to store his few

possessions. But then one day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst had happened --- everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me?" he cried. Early the next day, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going badly. But we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Too often we respond to trouble with anger, despair, complaints, or panic solutions. God wants us to respond first towards Him with faith and trust in His good care for us. He invites us to make healthy and steady choices to build solutions, under the watchful care of responsible people who can guide us. He has given us many clear directions for dealing with trouble in the Bible. It's helpful to read the Bible on a regular basis so we have a "tool box" full of helpful guidelines to apply when trouble comes. It is even more helpful to apply the good advice we get from both the Bible and responsible teachers in our lives. It's good to remember that trouble is often a "smoke signal" that summons the grace and help of God.

Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. (Proverbs 16)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What effect does trouble and suffering have on me? (i.e. weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions)
2. How do I usually respond to these kinds of troubles?
3. What examples do I have of God showing up in the middle of a struggle when I felt powerless? (either from my own life or stories of my friends)