

Dealing With Our Circumstances

Circumstance: "A condition, fact or event accompanying, conditioning, or determining another." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

True or False? (discuss the accompanying references):

- "If God is all powerful and all loving, He would not allow any pain or suffering."
 - Romans 5:3-5
 - Romans 8:18-27
 - 2 Corinthians 1:2-5,9
 - John 16:33
 - Ephesians 6:12
 - 1 Peter 4:12-16
 - Philippians 3:10
 - James 1:2-4
 - 2 Timothy 3:12
 - Hebrews 12:10-11
- "If my circumstances were different, then everything would be better."
 - Philippians 4:11-13
 - 1 Timothy 6:6-10
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - James 1:9,12
- "My circumstances are not good, and I don't think they can ever change."
 - Jeremiah 29:11-13
 - Proverbs 3:5-6
 - Roman 8:28
 - 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - Philippians 4:6-7
 - Ephesians 3:20
- "I may get to where I can't take it anymore, and there's nothing I can do."
 - Matthew 11:28-30
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
 - John 14:27
 - Ephesians 3:20-21
- "It's really about me, and my happiness needs to come first."
 - Ephesians 2:10
 - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
 - Philippians 2:13-14

Some follow-up thoughts to consider. Do you agree?:

- Happiness (pleasure): Depends on our circumstances.
- Joy: "The quiet, confident assurance of God's love and working in our life, regardless of the circumstances."
- We can and should master the circumstances that we can control, for the good of others and for God's glory.
- There are circumstances that we can't control, and should not try to control. What are some?
- What we really believe effects our joy, and also our response to our circumstances. Explain.
- Are we victims of our circumstances or victors over our circumstances? What does that mean to you?
- Some tell God how great our problems are; others tell the problems how great our God is! Which one are you?
- Our circumstances don't make us what we are; they reveal what we are.

Some final questions to ponder:

- 1) What sinful habit or practice have you been excusing because of your circumstances? How can and should they change?
- 2) Give an example of a circumstance in your life that revealed something about your heart that needed to be changed.
- 3) How did Paul emerge as a victor and not a victim in 2 Corinthians 4:8-11,16-18?
- 4) Very prayerfully, list difficult circumstances in your life you are facing right now, how you are responding to them, and any changes that may be needed in your attitude or response to them.
- 5) Why does God allow any suffering and pain in our lives?

The Serenity Prayer: "God, grant me the courage to change the things I can, the serenity to accept the things I can't, and the wisdom to know the difference."