

Navigating Life's Trials

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The one thing we know about life is that nobody is exempt from heartaches and trials. Each of us will see our fair share of troubles and upsets. We will endure things at times that we have no idea of how we will make it through. Our patience will be tested. Our endurance may struggle. We may feel hopeless and afraid. Unfortunately, this is a reality for us all. This is life. However, when tragedy strikes, we do not have to lose hope. We do not have to be afraid. We can fight through the darkness and reach the other side. But how do we do that?

As a Christian, there are 2 things we need to do in order to navigate life's trials. We must increase our faith and implement practical steps to get our minds in the right place.

Increase Your Faith

First and foremost, we must put our faith and trust in the one who gave his life for us and be confident that he is working on our behalf. This is an essential first step because if there is anyone that truly understands, it is Jesus Christ. We need to lean on him and believe with our whole heart that he can give us peace and endurance to make it through. Jesus can be your rock and your shelter right now if you will allow him to be.

But don't just take it from me. There are dozens of scriptures that can help you right now. Let's take a few minutes to read and listen to what the word of God says.

John 16:33 says, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Because Jesus overcame, we can too. Yes, his life was a life of victory. Yet he also showed us what it means to be human. In John 11:35, we see where Jesus had lost a friend, and he began to cry. We also see in Luke 5:16 that Jesus had to get away to pray and get his mind right. He overcame so many things, including having friends betray him. Praise God that he assures us that we can take heart and have peace because he overcame! In him, you can find the peace you so desperately need right now.

James 1:2-4 says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

I know it may not feel like it right now, but trust that God is working things out for your good. He wants you perfect, complete and lacking nothing. If you are struggling with understanding why you are going through this storm, just know that if you keep your faith, God will provide everything you need to get through this. If it is peace, he will give it to you. If it is love, his promises say he will provide that too. Whatever you need, he will provide it in Jesus' name.

Lastly, Isaiah 41:13 says, "For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I am the one who helps you.'"

Again, you don't have to be afraid. Trust in the creator and maker of it all. He will never leave you or forsake. He is holding your hand and helping you even now. The promises of God truly are yes and Amen.

Now, I know that all that may just seem like words right now. When we are going through our world being flipped upside down, things always seem easier said than done. So let me tell you the second thing we need to do, apart from increasing our faith, we must be willing to implement practical steps to maintain our sanity.

Practical Steps

First, we must realize that no two people are going to navigate things the same way. The thing about grief and loss is that there is no specific answer. There is no set time to grieve, and everyone grieves differently. When we realize this we release ourselves from the expectation of it going a certain way. We must give ourselves grace to know that what works for me may not work for my best friend. What helps others may not work for me. You will find a variety of opinions and advice on how to navigate grief and loss. Opinions truly are a dime a dozen. When we realize that we are all on a different journey and therefore, it will look different for each of us, then we can feel the freedom to grieve the way we see fit. So your first step is to release yourself from the expectation that it is supposed to happen a certain way.

Next, you need to identify your coping mechanisms. How did you get through the last thing that knocked the wind out of your sails? How did you survive the last loss you experienced? Whatever it may be...loss is loss. Whether it is losing a loved one, losing a job, or watching your parents get a divorce, grief is grief. Therefore, you must identify how you survived the last thing that you went through. Life has a way of teaching us lessons along the way. (It is important to be reminded here that I only recommend healthy coping mechanisms. Many times people will "self-medicate" to get the pain to go away, thinking they are going to get over their loss. This is destructive behavior. Therefore, if you have only ever practiced negative coping strategies, then it is important that you identify those and then substitute the negative one for a positive one. This could be anything from journaling, reading, writing, exercising, listening to music, going for a walk, etc.) So, today, stop and think for just a minute how you managed to survive the last trial you went through and come up with a game plan for how you will manage this current one.

After you figure out your coping mechanisms, you have to know what a trigger is. A trigger is something that will set off your emotions and take you back to the place of doubt and uncertainty. As much as we try to move past something, our mind and body rarely forget. So when the trigger reminds you of your loss, you need to implement the coping mechanism that you previously identified. So, in other words, as soon as you are reminded of your loss (triggered), do something (coping mechanism) to get your mind in a different place. Again,

remember that no two people respond and cope with loss the same way and that it is vital that you have established healthy coping mechanisms.

Finally, once you have identified your coping mechanisms and your triggers, it is now time to put them into action. Please keep in mind, the triggers will come. And more times than not, they will come when you least expect them. Again, giving yourself grace to grieve is an important step. It is ok to cry. It is ok to feel the emotions and the magnitude of your loss. We must face those feelings head-on and not be afraid of them.

Finally, let me end with this, whatever you may be going through today, know that there are people that love you and are praying for you. Please reach out for help if you need it. Do not struggle alone, and do not isolate yourself. There are people trained to help in times of need and stand ready and willing to help if you open yourself up to it.