

WfM Bible Study 2011-12

Adversity: Stepping Stone or Stumbling Block?

“Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds.....”James 1 v 2

In the dictionary adversity is defined as misfortune, trial or difficulty. Adversity is universal; no one is immune from it. Whether we are young or old, rich or poor, believer or unbeliever we all have to face difficulties at some point in our lives. They may be physical, emotional, financial, spiritual or any combination of these.

The source of our trials may be our own sinfulness (James 1 v14, 15) or a messenger of Satan (2 Corinthians 12 V 7) but, ultimately for the believer, God is working out His purpose (John 9 v 3). According to the Bible, Christ allows us to suffer adversity in order to develop our faith, and though we may not be able immediately to see His purpose, we can trust that He is “working all things together for our good...”

Adversity has the capacity to embitter us and cause us to question God. Our response to it will determine whether God is able to use it for our benefit. It can either be a stepping stone or stumbling block.

Read: 2 Corinthians 1 v 3-11, 2 Corinthians 4 v 16-18 and 2 Corinthians 12 v 7-10.

1. Throughout this letter Paul speaks of his sufferings. What three descriptions of God does he use to encourage him in v 3?
2. The word comfort is used 8 times between vs 3-7. What do you understand by the term comfort?
3. What is the purpose Paul sees in us receiving comfort from God?
4. How did Paul feel in the midst of his sufferings? vs 8 and 9
5. What was the purpose of Paul’s suffering? vs 9 and 10
6. How was Paul helped by the Corinthians? v 11

Think of someone you can pray for who is experiencing trouble or adversity today.

7. How does Paul describe his physical condition in 2 Cor 4 v 16? What is his attitude to this? Why?
8. How does Paul measure his troubles in vs 17 and 18?
9. What is Paul fixing his eyes on? See 2 Cor 5 v 1.
10. Why was Paul given a thorn in the flesh? 2 Cor 12 v 7.
11. What did he do? 2 Cor 12 v 8.
12. How did God respond in v 9?
13. Why did Paul delight in his troubles? vs 9 and 10

Think about and pray for Christians who are suffering persecution throughout the world today.

For further study:

Suffering to strengthen and purify faith: 1 Peter 1 vs 6-8

Suffering as an opportunity for witness: 1 Peter 3 vs 14-15

Suffering as part of sanctification: 1 Peter 4 vs 1-3.

Suffering as part of the body of Christ: 1 Cor 12 vs 12-26.

Suffering as an opportunity for others to help: Matt 25 vs 31-46.

Biblical case studies: Life of Joseph (Genesis 37-45)

Life of Job (Job 1-42)

