

Living in Hope with the One Leader Study Series

Title: Transforming Troubling Times into Lasting Life

Instructions: This Bible study is provided for personal or group use. Please copy, print, or share with anyone.

When a crisis strikes, it demands our attention; it is inescapable. “We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

The question is, do we move through our problems and pain or become mired in them? What are the difficulties producing in us?

In troubling times, we tend to do one of two things:

1. Allow the pain or uncertainty of the trial to linger, bringing perpetual turmoil. We become stuck, distracted, emotionally down, and/or depressed. Circumstances begin to define us.
2. We accept the difficulties, deal with the consequences, learn from the pain, and move on, rising above the fray to help others and experience a better life.

Paul discussed facing challenges and how we respond to them in the following verses:

2 Corinthians 4:8-10, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

We can transform our challenges into good when we shift our attention from our temporal troubles to the eternal and its pursuit.

Here are three principles that will help us adjust our perspective:

1. People never fully live in the present without a clarity of purpose concerning their future.
2. Only with a Christ-centered plan of action for today can we bear much fruit tomorrow.
3. We must be connected to others in love now, so we can be fully alive going forward.

(continued)

People never fully live in the present without a clarity of purpose concerning their future.

When the present problems become our focus, we turn to meeting our own needs and are wrapped up in our situation. We become self-absorbed and end up being busy and not very productive. Problems can build us or break us. We must remember that “this too shall pass” and thus be reminded why we are here. What is our purpose? What does the Lord have for us in the future? Consider the following verses that direct us to clarify our future in order to see the present.

Jeremiah 29:11-13, “‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. 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 search for Me with all your heart.’”

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

2 Corinthians 4:10, “...Carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

In *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, a holocaust survivor, makes the following observations. “It is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future. And this is his salvation in the most difficult moments of his existence, although he sometimes has to force his mind to the task. The prisoner who had lost faith in the future—his future—was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay.”

Finding and Living God’s Purpose

The core of this process of finding and living God’s purpose for our life is found in receiving from the Lord His vision and purpose for our life and how it intersects with His greater plan. This purpose directs our steps in the present and gives us a hope for the future. A perspective of hope is what motivates us.

Life is not primarily a quest for pleasure, as Freud believed, or a quest for power, as Alfred Adler taught, but a quest for meaning and purpose. The greatest task for any person is to find purpose in his or her own life. If life in the present is to be fully realized, we must find meaning in the suffering that points us to the future and our true hope. When we can first answer the why of our life and future, we then can live in the tension of the “why” in our present problem.

Only with a Christ-centered plan of action for today can we bear much fruit tomorrow.

If we find ourselves stuck in the struggle of today and are unsure of the long-term picture, instead of languishing in the pit whining and moaning, we must take action. If our tomorrow is going to be fruitful, we need a Christ-centered plan of action. That engagement is not rushing here or there or running in circles of busyness. Practically this means doing the next, best, right thing. The “next” is the action, the “best and right” things are found in Christ. We find this truth reflected in the following verses.

Matthew 6:33-34, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Psalm 37:23-24 NLT, “The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.”

Daniel 11:32, “...The people who know their God will display strength and take action.”

As we act, the Lord meets us and empowers us along the way. It be only be enough strength for one step, yet that one step can be life changing. Action guides me to the “what” of my life and must be founded on faith, which is our response to God’s initiative. We live in today, yet we live for tomorrow. This sense of being fruitful helps transform us in the valley.

It is better to try something and fail than to try nothing and succeed. The result may be the same, but you won’t be. We always grow more through defeats than victories. **Soren Kierkegaard**

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards. **Soren Kierkegaard**

Don’t try to add more years to your life. Better add more life to your years. **Blaise Pascal**

We must be connected to others in love now so we can be fully alive going forward.

In the challenges of life, it is easy to isolate and become alone. This is never a good place as the enemy will have us in the palm of his hand. We will most likely end up in the ditch. In the crisis, reach out to others to connect with and relate to your situation. It never seems so bad when it trouble is pulled out of the darkness and put into the light. We are made for relationships, especially in troubling times, because the love of others makes us whole and fills up our life so that we can give love away. These verses help us look beyond ourselves to others.

John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:12-13, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

Proverbs 11:25, “He who waters will himself be watered.”

“Nothing is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope. In community we say: Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs—but we do not have to live it alone. We want to drink our cup together and thus celebrate the truth that the wounds of our individual lives, which seem intolerable when lived alone, become sources of healing when we live them as part of a fellowship of mutual care.” **Henri Nouwen**

In the difficulties, we are not only to be with others—we are to serve them and help them. Loving people as an ongoing way of life reinforces our purpose and will be the means to transform us. It helps us know “who” to focus on, which is not ourselves first.

Transform your troubling times into a life of lasting value by:

1. Focusing on a future **purpose** that brings hope and answers the “why” of life while giving meaning to the present suffering.

2. Engaging in a godly **plan** of action that moves us from being stuck today to walking by faith and allowing the Lord to guide us in our “*what*,” which will enable us to bear fruit tomorrow.
3. Caring for and serving **people**, our “*who*,” with the love of Christ, making us alive now and going forward.

“When we are no longer able to change a situation—we are challenged to change ourselves.” Viktor Frankl

[Click to Download](#) **the other studies in this series from our website.**