

# Marriage and Parenting

## Topic 13 – Parenting – Honoring God Together in Difficult Times

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### Introduction

When individuals experience life difficulties, they do not go through it alone. Their families go through the difficulties as well. Each of us knows of someone who is in the middle of some personal difficulty: perhaps a financial crisis, unemployment, personal serious illness or death or that of a family member, chronic pain or illness or handicap, grief, heartache, seeing a loved one make unwise or sinful choices, etc. Difficulty in life should not be surprising since the Scriptures tell us that all people will experience trouble in their lives.

<sup>7</sup>For **man is born for trouble**, As sparks fly upward. Job 5:7

<sup>1</sup>Man, who is born of woman, **Is short-lived and full of turmoil**. Job 14:1

We also see that among God's people there are those that experience particular hardship. Charles Spurgeon noted that God calls some Christians to shoulder extraordinary hardships in this life.

"Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided, and not desired; and yet, surprising as it may seem to be, it is a fact that some of the best of God's people frequently walk in darkness; ay, some of them are wrapt in a sevenfold gloom at times, and to them neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear. As the pastor of a large church, I have to observe a great variety of experiences, and I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgment among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to Heaven by night." Sermon on Isaiah 50:10 delivered on Sept 25, 1887

Parenting or bring Biblical care to other families going through trials or suffering can be very difficult. It is entirely possible that we ourselves or dear brothers or sisters who are suffering may never experience relief from that suffering this side of heaven. However, they have an incredible opportunity to present the truth of the Gospel to the world (to prove their faith) by how they respond to the trial or suffering.

Before we look specifically at how to glorify God in suffering, we need to lay a foundation of God's faithfulness and sovereignty which gives us hope in trials and suffering.

- ❖ **What is the most difficult life situation you have gone through individually or as a family? How did you view God's work in and through that situation?**

### Faithfulness

God's faithfulness can be explained as: God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised. He is steadfast, unchanging, perfectly reliable, utterly dependable, and completely trustworthy. He is 100% reliable, 100% of the time.

Far above all finite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement of covenant or threatening He will make good, ... A. W. Pink in "The Attributes of God"

Because God is faithful, He can be completely trusted. Because He is faithful we can fully submit ourselves to His sovereignty.

Let's examine what the Scriptures declare about God's faithfulness.

1. Faithfulness is part of God's character

<sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, **the faithful God**, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; Deut 7:9

<sup>4</sup>“The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; **A God of faithfulness** and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He. Deut 32:4

<sup>4</sup>For the word of the LORD is upright, And **all His work is done in faithfulness**. Psa 33:4

<sup>13</sup>If we are faithless, **He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself**. 2 Tim 2:13

2. The Scriptures declare that God's faithfulness is:

- Great (abundant in quantity, size, age, number, rank, quality)

<sup>22</sup>The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

<sup>23</sup>They are new every morning; **Great is Your faithfulness**. Lam 3:22-23

- Incomparable

<sup>8</sup>O LORD God of hosts, **who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You**. Psa 89:8

- Infinite

<sup>5</sup>Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, **Your faithfulness reaches to the skies**. Psa 36:5

- Unwavering

<sup>33</sup>“**But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness**.” Psa 89:33

- Established

<sup>2</sup>For I have said, “Lovingkindness will be built up **forever**; In the heavens **You will establish Your faithfulness**.” Psa 89:2

- Everlasting

<sup>89</sup>Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven. <sup>90</sup>**Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations**; You established the earth, and it stands. Psa 119:89-90

<sup>6</sup>Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; **Who keeps faith forever**; Psa 146:6

3. God's faithfulness is displayed in:

- Forgiving sin

<sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

- The permanence of our salvation

<sup>8</sup>who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>**God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord**. 1 Cor 1:7-9

<sup>24</sup>**Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass**. 1 Thess 5:24

<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for He who promised is faithful**; Heb 10:23

- Bringing trials and discipline into our lives
  - <sup>75</sup>I know, O LORD, **that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.** Psa 119:75
- Provision in times of trial, temptation, and suffering
  - <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; **and God is faithful,** who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Cor 10:13
  - <sup>19</sup>Therefore, **those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** in doing what is right. 1 Pet 4:19
- His providence
  - <sup>1</sup>O LORD, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name; **For You have worked wonders, Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.** Isa 25:1
- Fulfilling His promises
  - (to Jacob) <sup>15</sup>Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for **I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.** Gen 28:15
  - <sup>11</sup>The LORD has sworn to David **A truth from which He will not turn back:** “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. Psa 132:11
  - (concerning Abraham) <sup>19</sup>Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; <sup>20</sup>yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup>and **being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.** Rom 4:19-21
  - <sup>9</sup>Know therefore that the LORD your God, **He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;** Deut 7:9
  - <sup>7</sup>The works of His hands are truth and justice; All His precepts are sure. <sup>8</sup>They are upheld forever and ever; They are performed in truth and uprightness. Psa 111:7-8
- Executing His judgments
  - <sup>20</sup>“The anger of the LORD will not turn back **Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart;** In the last days you will clearly understand it. Jer 23:20
  - <sup>29</sup>So the land quakes and writhes, **For the purposes of the LORD against Babylon stand,** To make the land of Babylon A desolation without inhabitants. Jer 51:29
- Answering prayer
  - <sup>1</sup>Hear my prayer, O LORD, Give ear to my supplications! **Answer me in Your faithfulness,** in Your righteousness! Psa 143:1
- Creation
  - <sup>5</sup>The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. <sup>8</sup>O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. Psalm 89:5, 8
  - <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. Rom 1:20

4. God's children are commanded to depend on His faithfulness in difficult times

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall **entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** in doing what is right. 1 Pet 4:19

5. God's faithfulness should be proclaimed

<sup>10</sup>I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; **I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation**; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation. Psa 40:10

<sup>1</sup>I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever; **To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.** Psa 89:1

<sup>1</sup>It is good to give thanks to the LORD And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; <sup>2</sup>**To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning And Your faithfulness by night,** Psa 92:1-2

A. W. Pink in "the Attributes of God" describes three results of understanding at the heart level God's faithfulness:

The apprehension of this blessed truth **will preserve us from worry.** To be full of care, to view our situation with dark forebodings, to anticipate the morrow with sad anxiety—is to reflect poorly upon the faithfulness of God.

The apprehension of this blessed truth **will check our murmurings.** The Lord knows what is best for each one of us, and one effect of resting on this truth will be the silencing of our petulant complainings. God is greatly honored when, under trial and chastening, we have good thoughts of Him, vindicate His wisdom and justice, and recognize His love in His very rebukes.

The apprehension of this blessed truth **will beget increasing confidence in God.** ... When we trustfully resign ourselves, and all our affairs into God's hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner shall we be satisfied with His providences ...

#### ❖ **How does (or should) heart-level understanding of God's faithfulness impact you?**

Three different groups of people should respond differently to God's faithfulness:

1. To His children, called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28), that are walking with Him on a consistent basis by presenting their bodies a living and holy sacrifice (Rom 12:1); God's faithfulness should be a comfort at all times because He will execute His Word perfectly. He provides all we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3) in the easy and hard times.
2. To His children, who walk in willful, unrepentant sin; there is the fearful expectation of discipline (Heb 12:4-13). God will not allow His true children to continue in rebellion; discipline is imminent.
3. To those that reject Jesus; there is the expectation of impending judgment (Psa 96:11-13; Rev 19:11).

### Sovereignty

The God of the Bible is the only true God (Isa 45:5, 21-22; 46:9; Joel 2:27; John 17:3). His ways are beyond our ways and His thoughts are beyond our thoughts (Isa 55:8-9).

<sup>8</sup>"For **My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,**" declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.** Isa 55:8-9

God's sovereignty is a doctrine that eludes full comprehension. It is beyond our natural experience since we desire to be in control of our lives and from our perspective we observe that we are in control of our lives.

No doctrine is more despised by the natural mind than the truth that God is absolutely sovereign. Human pride loathes the suggestion that God orders everything, controls everything, rules over everything. The carnal mind, burning with enmity against God, abhors the biblical teaching that nothing comes to pass except according to His eternal decrees. John MacArthur at <http://www.sfpulpit.com/2007/09/28/gods-absolute-sovereignty/>

The Scriptures declare that God is sovereign:

<sup>25</sup>Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; **From ancient times I planned it Now I have brought it to pass**, ... 2 Kings 19:25

<sup>2</sup>"I know that You can do all things, And that **no purpose of Yours can be thwarted**. Job 42:2

<sup>21</sup>Many plans are in a man's heart, But **the counsel of the LORD will stand**. Prov 19:21

<sup>24</sup>The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, **just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand**, Isa 14:24

<sup>9</sup>"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup>**Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'**; <sup>11</sup>Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it**. Isa 46:9-11

<sup>11</sup>also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will**, Eph 1:11

The Westminster Shorter Confession states: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." (Isa 25:1; 46:11; Eph 1:11) The decree of God refers to His sovereign purpose – His comprehensive, eternal plan that where He determined to bring about everything that happens.

We will collectively view God's unconditional, eternal plan and His providential work in time and space to accomplish His plan as His sovereignty.

God's sovereignty is his exercise of rule (as "sovereign" or "king") over his creation. Wayne Grudem

It is not merely that God has the power and right to govern all things but that He does so always and without exception. John Piper

The doctrine of sovereignty is... "similar to the doctrine of providence, but here we are thinking about God's decisions *before the world was created* rather than his providential actions in time. His providential actions are the outworking of the eternal decrees that he made long ago." Wayne Grudem

"God sustains, nourishes, and cares for everything that He has made." John Calvin

"God's providence is His constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people." Jerry Bridges in "Trusting God: Even when Life Hurts"

"... the conviction that God, in His goodness and power, preserves, accompanies, and directs the entire universe. The Bible speaks of God as one who creates, preserves, upholds, wills, acts, governs, foreordains, elects, calls, predestines, judges, redeems, forgives, reconciles, provides, heals, and loves. That God is directly in command of His universe – past, present, and future, is not merely a supposition of Biblical faith, it is a central motif of the Bible." Benjamin Farley in "The Providence of God"

God is the supreme ruler – in control of all events. All things are under His rule and control, and nothing happens without His direction or permission (Job 1-2). He works all things (not just some things) after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11). God's purpose is all inclusive and is never thwarted (Isa 46:11). **Nothing takes Him by surprise!**

The Father sovereignly plans and brings about all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psa 145:8-9; 1 Cor 8:6). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Eph 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chron 29:11). In His sovereignty, He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Hab 1:13; John 8:38-47). His sovereignty does not absolve people of their responsibility; people are still accountable (1 Pet 1:17).

1. God's plan encompasses all things; He is sovereign over all things.
2. God's plan was formed in eternity past (Eph 1:4, 2 Tim 1:9, 1 Pet 1:20).
3. God's plan is wise, perfect, and beyond our full comprehension (Rom 11:33-36, Psa 104:24).
4. God's plan is according to His will (Dan 4:35, Eph 1:11).
5. God's plan encompasses His directive will (Isa 45:18, Dan 4:35, Dan 2:21, Eph 1:4) and His permissive will through which He brings things about through secondary means (such as the free will sinful acts of men).
6. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11).
7. God's plan encompasses all things, yet man is responsible for his sin (Rom 3:23).
8. God also uses man to carry out His plan (e.g. election and evangelism) (Acts 10:1-5).

God's decree includes the means to accomplish that decree. He is sovereign in all things, yet uses various means to bring about that sovereign purpose. God has elected certain individuals for salvation, yet He uses the preaching of the gospel to bring them to Himself (Acts 10). Similarly, God has ordained all things that will come to pass and yet He uses prayer to accomplish them.

God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass, but He has also decreed that these events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment. God has elected certain ones to be saved, but He has also decreed that these ones shall be saved through the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel, then, is one of the appointed means for the working out of the eternal counsel of the Lord; and prayer is another. God has decreed the means as well as the end, and among the means is prayer. *The Sovereignty of God* by A. W. Pink

God's plan is so comprehensive that it not only includes the final destinies of things but also includes the secondary, creaturely processes that work together to accomplish these ends. *Pray With Your Eyes Open* by Richard Pratt

### The Sphere of God's Sovereignty

Over all things

<sup>19</sup>The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty **rules over all**. Psa 103:19

<sup>28</sup>And we know that **God causes all things to work together** for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. Rom 8:28

<sup>11</sup>also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will**, Eph 1:11

Over all of nature

<sup>6</sup>Whatever the LORD pleases, **He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.**

<sup>7</sup>**He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.** Psa 135:6-7

<sup>4</sup>The **LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm** on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Jonah 1:4

<sup>45</sup>so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He **causes His sun to rise** on *the* evil and *the* good, and **sends rain** on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. Matt 5:45

<sup>26</sup>He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then **He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.** <sup>27</sup>The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that **even the winds and the sea obey Him?**” Matt 8:26-27

<sup>7</sup>“Furthermore, **I withheld the rain from you** While *there were* still three months until harvest. Then **I would send rain on one city** And **on another city I would not send rain**; One part would be rained on, While the part not rained on would dry up. <sup>8</sup>So two or three cities would stagger to another city to drink water, But would not be satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>**I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees;** Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the LORD. Amos 4:7-9

#### Over physical laws

<sup>5</sup>But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Alas, my master! For it was borrowed.” <sup>6</sup>Then the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw *it* in there, and **made the iron float.** 2 Kings 6:5-6

<sup>12</sup>Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “O sun, stand still at Gibeon, And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.” <sup>13</sup>So **the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,** Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. <sup>14</sup>There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel. Josh 10:12-14

<sup>7</sup>“This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: <sup>8</sup>Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps.” So **the sun’s shadow went back ten steps on the stairway** on which it had gone down. Isa 38:7-8

#### Over angels, Satan, and demons

<sup>20</sup>Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, **Obeying the voice of His word!** <sup>21</sup>Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, **doing His will.** Psa 103:20-21

<sup>15</sup>And **God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it;** but as he was about to destroy *it*, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, “It is enough; now relax your hand.” 1 Chron 21:15

<sup>12</sup>Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD. Job 1:12

<sup>14</sup>Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and **an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.** 1Sam 16:14

<sup>6</sup>And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, Jude 6

## Over nations

<sup>10</sup>The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. <sup>11</sup>The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. Psa 33:10-11

<sup>7</sup>For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. <sup>8</sup>**God reigns over the nations**, God sits on His holy throne. <sup>9</sup>The princes of the people have assembled themselves *as* the people of the God of Abraham, For **the shields of the earth belong to God**; He is highly exalted. Psa 47:7-9

<sup>20</sup>Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. <sup>21</sup>It is He who changes the times and the epochs; **He removes kings and establishes kings**; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. Dan 2:20-21

## Over human beings

<sup>1</sup>The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; **He turns it wherever He wishes**. Prov 21:1

<sup>6</sup>The **LORD kills and makes alive**; He brings down to Sheol and raises up. <sup>7</sup>The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. 1 Sam 2:6-7

<sup>15</sup>But when God, who had **set me apart even from my mother's womb** and called me through His grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, Gal 1:15-16

## Over animals

<sup>4</sup>It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and **I have commanded the ravens** to provide for you there." <sup>5</sup>So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup>The **ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening**, and he would drink from the brook. 1 Kings 17:4-6

<sup>17</sup>And **the LORD appointed a great fish** to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. Jonah 1:17

<sup>27</sup>However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me." Matt 17:17

## Over "accidents"

<sup>33</sup>The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD. Prov 16:33

<sup>7</sup>Each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck* us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Jonah 1:7

<sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And *yet* not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. Matt 10:29

## Over free acts of men

<sup>21</sup>I will grant this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed. ... <sup>35</sup>Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; <sup>36</sup>and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. Ex 3:21; 12:35-36

<sup>9</sup>The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps. Prov 16:9

<sup>18</sup>So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. Rom 9:18

## Over sinful acts of men and Satan

<sup>1</sup>Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, “Go, number Israel and Judah.” 2 Sam 24:1

<sup>1</sup>Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. 1 Chron 21:1

<sup>5</sup>Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. Gen 45:5

<sup>20</sup>As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. Gen 50:20

<sup>22</sup>“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—<sup>23</sup>this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. Acts 2:22-23

<sup>27</sup>For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup>to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. Acts 4:27-28

## Results of Understanding God’s Sovereignty

A heart-level understanding and acceptance of God’s sovereignty will 1) deepen our reverence for God’s character; 2) put God in His rightful place and puts us in ours; 3) magnify God’s grace; 4) be profoundly humbling; 5) give us a sense of complete security; and 6) provide comfort in sorrow.

❖ **How does (or should) heart-level understanding of God’s sovereignty impact you?**

## Difficult/Hard Times (Trials and Suffering)

Suffering entered the world at the Fall (Gen 3). Generally, suffering can be a byproduct of a fallen world, the result of the sin of others, or the result of our own sin. Even so, God is sovereign over all suffering and in His sovereignty, He works ALL things for His glory and our sanctifying good (Rom 8:28-29). This includes our own sin and the sin of others.

## General Suffering

General suffering is difficulty or hardship that comes on a person through no fault of their own (i.e. not because of personal sin) or persecution because for their faith as believers (2 Tim 3:12; 1 Pet 4:12-19). As we will see later, God calls believers who are experiencing this type of suffering to rejoice (James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-8) and persevere (Rom 5:3-4).

## Suffering due to Personal Sin

There is also suffering due to the consequences of personal sin: either the natural consequences of personal sin or God’s discipline for sin. For example: revoked driving privileges because you broke the speed limit (by a lot or many times); marriage difficulty because you have chosen to sin; being fired from job or demoted because you chose to sin, being church disciplined because of sin, God’s conviction of sin, or health issues because of sin.

<sup>12</sup>Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup>but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. <sup>14</sup>If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup>**Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;** <sup>16</sup>**but if anyone suffers as a Christian,** he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. 1 Pet 4:12-16

<sup>7</sup>It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>**But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** <sup>9</sup>Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? <sup>10</sup>For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. <sup>11</sup>All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Heb 12:7-11

In some places in Scripture, sickness and even death are described as God's judgment of sin.

<sup>29</sup>For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. <sup>30</sup>**For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.**

<sup>31</sup>But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 1 Cor 11:29-31

In other places in Scripture, sickness is not related to personal sin, but to God's glory.

<sup>1</sup>As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "*It was* neither *that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him. John 9:1-3

We cannot know if sickness is God's discipline. However, we can know if we are sinning or not. Look at what David says of how his body felt because of ignoring the conviction of sin.

<sup>1</sup>How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! <sup>2</sup>How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! <sup>3</sup>**When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.** <sup>4</sup>**For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.** Selah. <sup>5</sup>I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Psa 32:1-5

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, And chasten me not in Your burning anger. <sup>2</sup>**For Your arrows have sunk deep into me, And Your hand has pressed down on me.** <sup>3</sup>**There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation; There is no health in my bones because of my sin.** <sup>4</sup>**For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.** <sup>5</sup>**My wounds grow foul and fester Because of my folly.** ... <sup>18</sup>For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin. Psa 38:1-5, 18

Sin requires repentance! True repentance will be demonstrated by an earnestness, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, avenging of wrong, and doing everything we can to heal relationships and live at peace with all people.

<sup>9</sup>I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. <sup>10</sup>For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

<sup>11</sup>For behold **what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong!** In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. 2 Cor 7:9-11

<sup>23</sup>Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your offering there before the altar and go; **first be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and present your offering. Matt 5:23-24

<sup>18</sup>**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.** Rom 12:18

<sup>14</sup>**Pursue peace with all men,** and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.  
Heb 12:14

❖ **Are you quick to repent of sin?**

Once repentance is present, the believer is to understand that the continued experience of the natural consequences of sin are what God has ordained at this time and they are for His glory and their sanctifying good (Rom 8:28-29). In these situations, God calls the believer again to rejoice (James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-8) and persevere (Rom 5:3-4).

A believer who is suffering may never experience relief from that suffering this side of heaven. However, they have an incredible opportunity to present the truth of the Gospel to the world (to prove their faith): Jesus Christ has done a supernatural work in their heart. That is the issue – the heart motives and resulting actions through the trial and suffering.

❖ **Are you committed to glorifying God in repenting of all known sin?**

What about equitability?

One may ask, “Why is it that some believers seem to have more difficulty (or difficulty to a more intense degree) in life than others?” Experience shows us that some Christians seem to sail through life while others have a hard time, moving from one crisis to another. The answer to this question is probably unsatisfying from a human perspective. To our human mind, it may seem unfair.

“The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation. Its distribution and degree appear to be entirely random and therefore unfair.” John Stott – Anglican Theologian/Pastor

The bottom line is... God is God and will do as He wills in allowing or causing His children to experience difficulty. The truth of Scripture is that difficult times are for His glory and our sanctifying good!

<sup>5</sup>“I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; <sup>6</sup>That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, <sup>7</sup>The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.** ...

<sup>9</sup>“**Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’** Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands’? Isa 45:5-7, 9 (see also Rom 9:19-24)

❖ **Do you find fault with God?**

Some Key Passages

Romans 8:28

<sup>28</sup>And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; Rom 8:28-29

– “Good” means beneficial, profitable or useful (from God’s perspective).

We saw when looking at God’s sovereignty, that the purpose of God’s plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11). In addition, we see that in working all things for His own glory, God causes all things to work together for the sanctifying good of His children.

What an incredible promise! In the midst of the most wonderful or most dark circumstances, we can know that God is working this for His glory and my sanctifying good.

❖ **Is this a promise that is constantly on your mind?**

## James 1:2-4

<sup>2</sup>Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

- “Consider” is a command calling for action. It denotes deliberate and careful judgment stemming from external proof, not subjective judgment based on feelings.
- “Joy” is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who knows all is well between himself and the Lord. It is not an experience that comes from favorable circumstances, but even occurs when those circumstances are the most painful.
- “When” carries the idea not just of possibility, but inevitability.
- “Encounter” means falling into, usually unexpectedly.
- “Various” means various kinds. It stresses the diversity not the quantity of trials.
- “Trials” means trial, try, tempt, and prove in either a good or a bad sense. Depending on the context, it may either mean enticing to sin or difficult times.
- “Testing” describes both the process of determining the genuineness of one’s faith or specifically the genuineness of one’s faith as the result of testing.
- “Endurance” means steadfastly and unflinchingly bearing up under a heavy load and describes character which does not allow one to surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial. The picture is that of steadfastness, constancy, and endurance.
- “Let ... have” is a command, putting the readers on guard against allowing the chain of results to be interrupted.
- “Perfect” means mature, fully developed, full grown, complete soundness.
- “Complete” means having the entire allotment, complete in all its parts, and in no part unsound.
- “Lacking in nothing” means literally "in nothing being left behind"; not falling short, not being destitute or in need.

There are inevitable varieties of hardships that will fall upon each of us unexpectedly (from our viewpoint). When this occurs, we must make a deliberate decision of the will to evaluate the truths from God’s Word concerning trials and joyfully accept hardship. We know that God has a perfect plan to use the hardship to display the genuineness of our faith and mature us in our relationship with Christ.

### ❖ **Do you view hardship as a blessing or curse?**

## 1 Peter 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup>so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>8</sup>and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 1 Pet 1:6-8

- “Greatly rejoice” is an intense, expressive term that means to be supremely and abundantly joyful. It is not based on circumstances or superficial feelings. It always refers to spiritual rather than temporal joy and usually has reference to a relationship with God.
- “Necessary” is a matter of perspective, in the case of trials the necessity is God’s.
- “Distressed” refers not only to physical pain, but also to mental anguish, including sadness, sorrow, disappointment, and anxiety.
- “Various trials” has the same word meanings as James 1:2

Trials are a necessity from God's perspective. We are to greatly rejoice knowing that trials are for a short time (in relation to eternity). For the believer who desires to glorify God in the trial it results in the proof of their faith and glory to God.

❖ **Do you view hardship as God's means of maturing you and proving your faith?**

Romans 5:3-4

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; <sup>4</sup>and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; Rom 5:3-4

- “Exult” combines the ideas of jubilation and confidence into one word to describe "joyful confidence"; which believers are to be continually (present tense) practicing.  
Believers are to first “exult” in the hope of the glory of God (v2) – in the certainty of our salvation. Then we are to “exult” in tribulation (v3). Then we are to “exult” in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (v11).
- "Tribulations" originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a person. It is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships.  
... has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice...In Scripture the word thlipsis is perhaps most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress. MacArthur NT Commentary: Romans 1-8.
- “Perseverance” is translated “endurance” in James 1:3-4
- “Proven character” is similar to “testing” used in James 1:3 having the idea of being shown proven, authentic or genuine.
- Hope is confident expectancy.

Believers with a God centered perspective exult in their tribulations. The result of tribulation is perseverance, proven character, and hope; a demonstration that we are a true child of God.

❖ **Do you exult in tribulation?**

God's Purposes for Difficult Times:

1. To test the strength of our faith.

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, **that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction.** Ex 16:4

<sup>6</sup>In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup>so that **the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;** <sup>8</sup>and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 1 Pet 1:6-8

... even the world can often notice the marked differences between genuine Christians and those who merely profess faith in Christ. As with jewels, there is a noticeable difference in radiance, especially when people are undergoing difficult times. Many people have great confidence in their faith until it is severely tested by hardships and disappointments. How a person handles trouble will reveal whether his faith is living or dead, genuine or imitation, saving or non-saving. MacArthur Study Guide on Trials

❖ **Do you purpose to pass the test of genuineness when undergoing hardship?**

2. To humble us

<sup>7</sup>Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, **to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! 2 Cor 12:7

❖ **Are you proud?**

3. To teach us to trust God and not in ourselves

<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; <sup>9</sup>indeed, **we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;** 2 Cor 1:8-9

❖ **When you go through a hardship, in whom do you trust: yourself or God?**

4. To remind us of our future glory

<sup>18</sup>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.** Rom 8:18

❖ **Do you focus on the end in the midst of hardship or on the present circumstances?**

5. To develop godly character and strength

<sup>3</sup>And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that **tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;** <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:3-5

<sup>2</sup>Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that **the testing of your faith produces endurance.** <sup>4</sup>And let **endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.** James 1:2-4

<sup>10</sup>Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; **for when I am weak, then I am strong.** 2 Cor 12:10

The road to maturity, to being complete in Christ during our alien pilgrimage here, is filled with the bumps of difficult circumstances. The life of ease is not the way God has typically chosen as the forum for growth. This perspective shows us a purpose in hard days. We have the great opportunity to both please and honor our God by our faith and to simultaneously grow in the likeness of Christ. Wayne Johnston in the VBC Counseling Center Semester 1 class notes

❖ **When in the midst of hardship, do you focus on glorifying God and growth?**

6. To enable us to better help others in their trials

<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>**who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.** 2 Cor 1:3-4

❖ **Are you self-focused?**

7. To allow us to receive help in time of need

<sup>16</sup>Therefore **let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** Heb 4:16

❖ **Do you draw near to God in hardship?**

8. To cause us to learn more of God's Word

<sup>71</sup>**It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.** Psa 119:71

❖ **Do you saturate yourself with God's Word when in hardship?**

9. To give us opportunities for service.

<sup>12</sup>Now I want you to know, brethren, that **my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel**, <sup>13</sup>so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, <sup>14</sup>and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Phil 1:12-19

❖ **Do you use hardship as an opportunity to minister to others?**

God's Hope in Difficult Times

1. The trial may never end this side of heaven, but glory awaits the true believer.

<sup>18</sup>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.** Rom 8:18

2. The hope of glory is an anchor for our soul.

<sup>17</sup>In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, <sup>18</sup>so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup>**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, Heb 6:17-19

❖ **What is your hope in hardship?**

3. God is sovereign and is working all things for His glory and my sanctifying benefit.

<sup>28</sup>And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; Rom 8:28-29

❖ **Do you rest in this promise?**

4. God has given us everything we need to glorify Him through the trial.

<sup>2</sup>Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; <sup>3</sup>seeing that **His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup>For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Pet 1:2-4

5. God will not allow more trials (temptations) in our life than we can bear through His strength.

<sup>13</sup>No **temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man**; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Cor 10:13

6. The Word can equip us to glorify God in the trial.

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>**so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** 2 Tim 3:16-17

7. Saturation with the Word provides peace.

<sup>165</sup>Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble. Psa 119:165

❖ **Are you consistently in God's Word to prepare you to glorify Him in hardship?**

8. Prayer brings peace.

<sup>6</sup>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And **the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** Phil 4:6-7

❖ **Do you have great peace in hardship?**

9. Cast the burden on God and He will care for you.

<sup>22</sup>**Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you;** He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. Psa 55:22

<sup>6</sup>Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>**casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.** 1 Pet 5:6-7

❖ **Where do you cast your burdens?**

10. Perseverance results in blessing, maturity and eventually the crown of life (more glory for God).

<sup>12</sup>Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. James 1:12

### **Families Honoring God in Hard Times**

1. As a family (with parents as the example) commit to strive to honor and glorify God.

To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can see God's character in us (Ex 33:17-23); when we display the life of Christ living through us (Gal 2:20).

<sup>31</sup>Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever **you do, do all to the glory of God.** 1 Cor 10:31

<sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

For the believer, our desire to glorify God must be our greatest desire, our highest purpose, more important than anything.

❖ **What is your most important and over-riding purpose?**

2. Understand that you must walk in the Spirit. You must bow only to the Lord as master and not to the despair of a hard time.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** ... <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:16, 22-23

❖ **Are you consistently walking in the Spirit?**

3. As a family, strive to cultivate a deep understanding of God and His character through a study of His word.

When we understand God for who He has revealed Himself to be in His Word, all other affections fall away and we are driven to our knees in worship. Having a proper God-consciousness is critical to living a life pleasing to God. The more our thoughts are set on the things above, the more it will cultivate a heart motive to obey, please, honor, and glorify Him.

<sup>1</sup>Praise the Lord! **How blessed is the man who fears the Lord, Who greatly delights in His commandments.** Psa 112:1

<sup>11</sup>**Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.** Psa 86:11

❖ **From where do you get your view of God?**

4. As a family, strive to maintain an active involvement in a local body.

Believers are united in Christ and connected to one another. God has designed the church in such a way so that care can be brought to believers. The church is the major way that God brings love, edification, encouragement, admonition, comfort, etc. to believers.

<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; <sup>24</sup>and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Heb 10:23-25

In the midst of difficult life issues, believers should continue to use their gifts to serve others in the body (1 Pet 4:10). This takes the focus off their difficulty and onto others, seeing others as more important than themselves (Phil 2:3-4).

<sup>10</sup>As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Pet 4:10

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; <sup>4</sup>do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil 2:3-4

❖ **Are you actively involved in your local body?**

5. Review God's purposes for difficult times in this study. Acknowledge that this time is for His glory and your sanctifying good, even though you may not understand how.
6. Focus on God's goodness and care for you.

<sup>7</sup>I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, Psa 31:7 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>**You are good and do good;** Teach me Your statutes. Psa 119:68

Do not start your thoughts with your difficulty and then think of the goodness of God. Start with the goodness of God and then think about your difficulty. Understand your difficulty in the context of God's unwavering goodness.

7. Parents, focus on your marriage. Marriages can unravel during family difficulty (for example: statistics indicate that ~16% of marriages end in divorce after the death of a child). Pray, meditate on God's Word, talk, fulfill your marriage roles, and seek the fellowship of mature brothers and sisters.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

Everything we experience is for God's glory and our good – so that God's purpose of sanctification will be accomplished in us. We will all experience trouble in life – this side of glory. In all the troubles of life, the believer's purpose is to glorify God as they are filled with the Spirit and exhibiting the life of Christ flowing through them. In the midst of life's difficulties, God is sovereign, faithful, loving, and gracious and equips His children to honor Him.

## **Real Life Scenarios**

*Yourself #1:* As a couple you have always tried to live within your means, being wise with the resources God has given you. But have not had extra to accumulate a sizable emergency fund. You were just given a layoff notice and are unsure what the future holds financially for your family. What thoughts and heart attitudes would most honor God at this time.

*Yourself #2:* You just found out your husband/wife has a serious medical condition? You went to the doctor together to receive the diagnosis and are coming home to your teenage children. What thoughts and heart attitudes would most honor God at this time? What do you tell your children and how do you approach the illness with them?

*Someone Else:* A coworker seems distant and [his/her] performance is slowly degrading. After a meeting where [he] has an angry outburst, you ask [him] out to lunch and question [him] about what is going on. [He] is reluctant to share, but finally tells you about [his] spouse's declining health and also the family's financial instability due to medical bills. You know [he] attends a church in town. What is the most important thing for you to know about your coworker at this time? After that, where would you begin as you seek to bring Biblical care to this coworker? What other care might you offer?

**Marriage and Parenting – Additional Study**  
**Topic 13 – Parenting – Honoring God Together in Difficult Times**

Re-read the verses on hard times in this study.

List out the things that are true about God:

List out the things that are true about you:

What blessings come from hard times?

Do you find your mind set on the truths of the Word during hard times or do you find yourself becoming bitter? Which honors God? What should you do with bitterness?

Read Psalm 20:6-8

<sup>6</sup>Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. <sup>7</sup>Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. <sup>8</sup>They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. Psa 20:6-8 (ESV)

Make a list of things that believers may be tempted to trust in when going through hard times:

What do you trust in during hard times?