

## Equipped to keep going when your world falls apart (part 1)

Have you ever had it with life? Ever wanted to run away and hide from difficult and painful circumstances that just seem to go on and on with no end in sight? What do you do at times like this? Well, like most things in life, we have choices. We can't always choose our circumstances, but we can choose how we respond to them.

Our friend, Sally, recently went through a very difficult time. She experienced the death of a close family member following a prolonged illness through which she had nursed him tirelessly. Towards the end of his illness, Sally received news of serious problems in her daughter's marriage. On top of this, she contracted an infection which laid her low for a few weeks. "Where is God in all of this?" Sally asked. The answer? The same place as He always is - in complete control. Sally had to learn, and is still learning, that when bad things happen to her, she can choose her response.

One way we can respond to horrible happenings in our lives is by **choosing to believe the character of God**. At one level, it's very comforting to know that God is all-powerful and in control of our lives but, at another level, this knowledge can leave us perplexed when things aren't going well. If He has all power and authority, we reason, then why does He not do something to stop our pain? Could it mean He doesn't care about us? In order to know the character of God, we need to go to the word of God. It tells us clearly that God cares for us<sup>1</sup> and loves us with an everlasting love. The bottom line is that our all-powerful God is in charge of our world and He also cares deeply for us. If we allow this knowledge to sink into our hearts and minds, it can help us to keep going when our world falls apart.

We can also **choose to respond to God in praise**. This is probably the last thing we want to do when things are going badly for us! But, we need to hold on to the truth that, despite our changing circumstances, He never changes.<sup>2</sup> This means we can always praise Him for His constant faithfulness, goodness, mercy, compassion, sovereignty, holiness, and much more besides. Giving thanks to God is another aspect of praise.<sup>3</sup> Even in bad times, there is much to be thankful for. If you're not in the habit of regularly thanking Him, why not begin to do this now?

Another response we can choose to make in difficult circumstances is to **wait for the Lord to act**.<sup>4</sup> I *hate* waiting and I guess you probably do too! I'd much rather take action! But waiting is not necessarily something passive. Think of a sheepdog waiting for the shepherd's command to round up the sheep. The dog has his attention closely focused on the shepherd, ready to spring into action as soon as the command is given. The animal doesn't tell the shepherd how or when to respond, but he waits with an attitude of expectation that there *will* be a response of some kind, at some time. God doesn't always act in the way we would like Him to, and rarely does He act according to our timetable. So we have to wait. But how can we make good use of this waiting time? Here are some suggestions:

- Take time out each day to focus on God rather than on your problems.
- Be teachable and ask God what you need to learn at this point in your life.
- Keep handing over your problems to God and trust Him for the outcome.
- Determine that, whatever happens, you will continue to praise and serve God wholeheartedly.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 5:7

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 13:8

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:18

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 8:17