

For Those Who Are Struggling

by L. A. Stauffer

In nearly 50 years of preaching I've never seen a time when brethren were not struggling with life and their relationship to God. Life is like that; it constantly throws challenges our way and demands responses. The more serious of these two is not the "challenges" but the "responses."

The challenges, regardless of their character, are common to all. Like temptation, every man faces them. We all can say -- "been there, done that." Preachers and elders may look calm and may appear to escape these problems, but they've been there and have struggled too.

Some Of You Are Struggling With Your Children

The children are going through difficult times and aren't handling it well. You're sure they're not going to make it; that the world is going to swallow them up; that they're going to make costly mistakes. You may be right. Again -- most of us have been there, faced that, and it's not pleasant. In fact, it breaks your heart.

Others Are Struggling With Problems At Work

We know because some of you have told us. You have conflicts with principles and with people. You've tried to work these out. You've made your conviction known, talked with troublemakers, and have seen no changes. It's not all roses in the business world, and many of you are facing tough decisions.

Many, Of Course, Are Struggling With Marriage

I say, "of course" because all of us have been there. It isn't easy raising kids and handling the differences in a woman and man's approach to training and discipline. And understanding what a woman really needs often takes years of maturing. Dealing with these problems in love and patience and acceptable compromise isn't always the method young wives and husbands choose.

And finally, Some Are Struggling With Health Problems

This is difficult for those who are not there yet to relate. Yet profound and debilitating diseases abound and create ongoing frustration and discouragement for many brethren and their families. Some are plagued by these illnesses 24 hours a day and find little relief from their struggles.

Most, if not all, of these problems are not going to be eliminated, but there are ways to handle them spiritually by those who trust in the Lord.

1. Prayer The obvious solution to these struggles is to ask for God's help. Seek answers from the One who is infinite in wisdom, love, and power. He assures us of grace and mercy to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14-16). He promises that if we ask for wisdom in faith that He will supply it (Jas. 1: 5-8). But, as Paul, we may need both wisdom and strength (2 Cor. 12:7-10). We would all like for God to remove our problems, but that is not always wise and profitable. When that is the case, we need "courage" and the "will" to do what's right regardless. In prayer we must not, by demanding our own way, preempt God from helping us in His way.

2. Meditate Meditation on God's Word is also helpful in times of struggles (Ps. 1:1-2). Read the Psalms. Hear the cries of David or other psalmists who petition God when facing enemies, when battling consciences, when seeking guidance, when combating temptation and sin. Read Job. Fill your heart with his will to do what is right regardless of what life has dealt. Get angry as he did, challenge God as he did, debate your cause with friends -- whatever; but don't deny or forsake God; amidst it all inculcate Job's resolve. Read Proverbs. Search there for those gems of wisdom that help men cope.

3. Assemble And, of all things, brethren, don't forsake assembling with the church (Heb. 10:24-25). We know your excuses: why assemble when my heart is not right; why assemble when I have problems that I have not straightened out; why assemble when my mind is not on what's going on, etc. Assemble because it is there -- not at home, on a golf course, at a fishing lake but in God's presence, among His people, and in His service -- that you will find help. There you can make friends of God's children; there you can offer praise to God; there you can receive admonitions, warning, and words of encouragement; there you can find wisdom, strength, and resolve.

4. Work A good dose of "thinking of others" can work wonders in our lives. Visit someone at the hospital with a bouquet of flowers. Jot down a brief note and send a card to a shut-in or a sick one. Call a brother or sister whom you missed and let them know you care. Offer to baby sit a young mother's child while she shops. Offer to mow the lawn for an elderly person. You get the idea. It's amazing how thinking of others lifts our spirits and lightens our own burdens.

Many of you don't know how "gut wrenching" your problems are for those of us who watch you struggle. We want so badly to say some magic words that take away your hurt. Though we can't do that, we will listen to you, empathize with you, and seek to encourage you to take charge of your life, face up to your problems, and faithfully serve God while you struggle in search for answers.

-- via *Biblical Insights*, Vol. 6, No. 6, June 2006