

APRIL 2010 Last Generation NEWSLETTER

If you are receiving this newsletter it is because you have contacted us or our ministry in some way, including ordering our books *God's Holidays* or *Armageddon and the International Sunday Law*. If you do not wish to be on our mailing list, just call us at 479-935-9444, leave a message to that effect, and we will remove you, or email us at rldrake78@gmail.com. We only wish for our newsletter to go to those who really want it.

It has been a number of months since we sent out a newsletter. We have been consumed with finishing the building of our health center, moving into the health center, and working full time to support ourselves and the health center. We also receive requests for health counseling which we do via the phone and internet as we have time around our full time work. In addition, these past several months we also wrote a book about how to recover from serious illnesses. To obtain an e-copy that you can download to your computer, go to www.lulu.com and type "Melody Drake" in the search box and you will find it. It is entitled *How Many People Have Prevented and Reversed Cancer, Heart Disease, Fibromyalgia, and Many Other Serious Diseases*. We are planning on printing hard copies of this book as soon as possible as well and will let you know as soon as we have this accomplished.

We thought we had found a director for our health center, but things did not work out, otherwise we would have been opening our doors about now. We are confident that if this health center is what God wants us to do that He will enable us to open our doors at the right time. Meanwhile we are helping others with their health as we can. We are waiting on God's timing. These past few months we have also had some personal health challenges which has taken a lot of effort to overcome. However, in the process we learned even more about how to reverse illness with natural remedies and so will be enabled to better help others.

In addition we were given the challenge to refute the lunar sabbath belief that seems to be spreading in some circles. Lunar sabbatarians get off on so many tangents that adequately refuting and exposing this belief took considerably more time than anticipated. Accomplishing all of the above has taken so much time that we haven't had the time and energy to get another newsletter out until now.

Pardon our formatting. We seem to be having more gremlins in the computer and we cannot get it to format properly in the program that we normally use. So here it is in its raw format. ☺

Lunar Sabbaths

The greatest of God's Holy Days is the Seventh-day Sabbath. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, Satan has invented a way to get God's people to no longer worship on the Seventh-day Sabbath by inventing lunar Sabbaths. We were hoping to not have to address this, but it has come to our attention that more and more Sabbath observers are falling for the error of observing lunar Sabbaths, including some of our dear friends. Also, some lunar sabbatarians are promoting our book *God's Holidays* and our website as a way of also promoting lunar sabbaths, making it appear that we agree with their agenda when we do not. For these reasons we felt compelled to address this issue in this newsletter. We have spent a massive amount of time researching their beliefs, reading their websites, and talking to several of their leaders via email. So we have a pretty good grip about what they believe and what Bible texts they use to try to support their belief. To fully cover the major arguments and texts that lunar sabbatarians use would make this newsletter too long. Therefore, we have put our complete report on lunar Sabbaths on our website at www.godsholidays.com under "Articles." If you are not on the internet and wish to read what we wrote about lunar Sabbaths, we suggest that you find a friend who is on the internet who can print it out for you. If you absolutely cannot do this, then send a donation to cover printing and mailing costs and we will print it out for you and mail it to you.

What Does The Future Hold?

We know that as you see the many troubling things going on out there in the world right now that you are wondering what is going to happen next. We believe that what we are seeing is simply that the world's problems are escalating and will soon culminate in the Great Tribulation. We really do believe that we are the last generation, as our ministry name declares. Right now there are two sets of financial experts out there declaring the future. The first set of financial experts did not accurately foretell the economic crash that began two years ago. The second set of financial experts did see this economic crash and they warned their followers. Interestingly, this

first set of financial experts are now saying that the economic downturn is going to be short lived and not to worry as things will get better in the next year or two. However, the second set of financial experts are following trend experts who have not been wrong in the past thirty years. What these financial experts are saying is that although the economy appears to be improving right now, watch out, because either at the end of this year or next year, things are going to get a lot worse financially and we are heading for a financial meltdown. Meanwhile, they say, get out of the stock market completely now, because the stock market is going to crash a lot lower. Also, sell any property that you are making payments on now, even if you have to take a loss, because property prices are going to fall drastically. They are saying that this economic crash is going to take a number of years to pull out of and that meanwhile, as the economic crash deepens, that a civil war could erupt in this nation.

Interestingly, the Bible tells us that world-wide economic collapse will happen just before the end of this world. Read James 5:1-8 and Revelation 18:11-24. Also, Ellen White says that we will have civil war at the end times, just like these financial experts are now predicting. "In India, China, Russia, and the cities of America, thousands of men and women are dying of starvation. The monied men, because they have the power, control the market. They purchase at low rates all they can obtain, and then sell at greatly increased prices. This means starvation to the poorer classes and will result in a civil war. There will be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Ms 114, 1899)

Both the Bible and Ellen White have very accurately predicted the future. However, if your life is right with God you have nothing to fear. Here are some comforting promises. "Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger, for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites. (Last Day Events p. 264) The following quotes are all from Last Day Events p. 265. "I saw that a time of trouble was before us, when stern necessity will compel the people of God to live on bread and water. . . . In the time of trouble none will labor with their hands. Their sufferings will be mental, and God will provide food for them. "The time of trouble is just before us, and then stern necessity will require the people of God to deny self and to eat merely enough to sustain life, but God will prepare us for that time. In that fearful hour our necessity will be God's opportunity to impart His strengthening power and to sustain His people." "Bread and water is all that is promised to the remnant in the time of trouble." "In the time of trouble, just before the coming of Christ, the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of heavenly angels."

Yes, we have nothing to fear if our lives are right with God. But, if we are not right with God, we have a lot to fear. Dear friends, getting right with God is only one prayer away. Won't you get down on your knees right now and pray that prayer?

Gardening Tips

We advise you to buy at least two years' worth of heirloom seeds, along with all the gardening supplies that you need, including supplies for starting your own seeds indoors. This year we decided to start our own tomato plants indoors. We bought a tray at Walmart that holds 72 tiny grow pellets that also has a clear plastic lid. In this tray we planted our heirloom tomato seeds which we obtained from Seeds of Change (888-762-7333 or www.seedsofchange.com), put the tray in a window, and our tomato plants are looking great! Two years ago in our garden we planted Mizuna simply because we had ordered seeds from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (417-924-8917 or www.rareseeds.com) and they sent us a packet of Mizuna for free. We didn't know what Mizuna was (we later found out it's a Japanese lettuce) but we planted it. Two short four foot rows of Mizuna in our grow bed provided the majority of our lettuce from spring to fall. The lettuce did not get bitter in the summer heat neither did it bolt. That fall we decided to not dig it up but just left it to overwinter. Early spring, the Mizuna started growing like a weed without needing to be replanted! Again, the Mizuna performed wonderfully. This second year it did go to seed, so we collected the seeds, but in spite of going to seed, again the lettuce tasted wonderful and lasted well until winter. And now, the Mizuna is taking off growing like a weed again. My kind of plant! Plant it once, and it comes back on its own year after year.

The current issue of Mother Earth News (April, 2010) contains a wonderful article on how to garden even if you don't have any space. They recommend getting bags of top soil, lay these bags flat out on your porch or balcony if

that's all you have, or on part of your lawn. Cut a window out of the plastic on the top side of the bag, leaving about 3 inches of plastic all the way around so as to hold the soil in, and plant your garden right in this bag. This article contains a planting guide of what to plant in these bags and when. An easy garden that is low work and in very little space! This article takes away all excuses. Grow a garden now! In the future, these gardens will provide us with quality food through difficult times.

How To Survive Difficult Times With Your Faith Intact

Times are getting more difficult all around us and so in this newsletter we decided to address how to keep one's emotional and spiritual health intact during difficult times. The following are excerpts from a letter written to a person struggling with difficulties and depression and we thought that what was written would be of help to many of you as well.

"I too, have struggled with depression. In the process I've done a lot of wrestling with God as to why He was allowing me to go through some of these things. Now that I am past some of these things, I can look back and see the wisdom of God in allowing me to go through some of what I did. Some things that I have gone through, I still haven't figured out the "why." Some people think that if you are depressed then you are not a good Christian. I disagree. Many people that God has used in a great way have struggled at some time in their life with depression. For instance, in the Bible Elijah had a "mountaintop" experience in which God used him in a mighty and miraculous way to defeat the enemies of God, and the very next day, when Elijah's life was threatened over it, Elijah got very depressed and upset with God, temporarily lost his faith, and ran—from God, life, and everything, and pleaded with God to die. Jonah also got very upset with God, and struggled with depression and anger against God. And yet, in spite of this, God used these men in a mighty way. Even Jesus, who is perfect, on the cross expressed despair when He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"

I think there comes a time in everyone's life when we get depressed or angry with God, and question God, and feel like tossing God out of our life. After many years of living, here are the lessons I have learned which enable me to cope with life when times get difficult.

First, I don't toss God out of my life. I realize that I have only two choices here, stay with God, or, if I don't, by default I am going to put myself under Satan, whom I believe is alive and well and out to destroy us. Which leader do you want over you? One who loves you and is working hard to save and help you, or one who hates you and is trying to destroy you? I realize that if I don't stay with God, that I step on the devil's ground and give the devil more access to my life and God less access to my life by my own choice, since God leaves us free to choose in life. I've learned that to step on Satan's ground is literally dangerous because I know that there is a war raging between God and Satan and yes, we are in the midst of that war. Many Christians have somehow gotten the false idea that when one becomes a Christian that life is automatically going to be all rosy. This is not true. Instead, we are in the midst of the greatest battle of the universe and God is calling upon His people to be good soldiers for Him in this battle. Ask anyone who has been in war. Is life easy? Is it a time to sit back and relax? Absolutely not. One has to be constantly on their toes lest the enemy overcome them. I know that ultimately God is going to win this war, and I want to stay on the winning team and not go to the losing team by default. By faith, I've learned, with God's help and strength, to "hang in there" when it gets tough, and stay on God's side. Yes, many times I fall and make mistakes, but I get up, ask God for forgiveness, believe that He has forgiven me, and then put it behind me and keep on. Yes, many times I've felt like giving up. But I've learned that if I ask, God will give me the strength to keep hanging in there on God's side. Yes, sometimes I've felt like it's taking every ounce of strength out of me to hang in there, and sometimes I've felt like it was going to literally put me in the grave, because the conflict got so severe and I could literally feel the battle between God and Satan over me. But I've learned that if, as did Peter in the Bible when he was sinking in the angry waves, I cry out, "Jesus save me" that He always will. Yes, it's not always instant. Many times God allows me to remain for a while in a tough situation before He pulls me out. Once it was so severe I didn't think I was going to make it, but with God's help, I did. Always, God pulled me out, many times in the nick of time, before I did sink and drown. Yes, this battle is very real. Yes, our life is going to be tough, but God is going to see us through.

The next lesson I've learned is that in the end, when the war is won, God is going to reward those who stayed faithful in a very, very big way. He is going to make it all up to us at that time. And those who share in the rewards of the victory of the war at that time are going to be so very, very thankful that they hung in there. Eternity is a long, long time, and I don't want to miss out. I'm taking what the Bible says about heaven, by faith, that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9) In other words, heaven is so absolutely wonderful that our greatest imagination about what it is like doesn't even begin to come close to what it is like. I don't want to miss out on something that wonderful. When times get tough, I remember this text and it gives me strength to hang in there and keep on fighting on God's side. Another quotation I remember is one which Ellen White wrote. She saw God's people, in vision, when they got to heaven. Here's a small quote from her description of heaven. "**We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that surrounded us that we could not speak them out,** and we all cried out, 'Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!'" (Early Writings, p. 17) Yes, when we get to heaven, our greatest trials on earth will seem like nothing, and our greatest suffering on earth will be seen as being worth it all in order to make it to heaven.

I'd like to give a little more proof that we as Christians are not called to a life of ease on this earth but rather to one of being a soldier fighting hard for God. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Timothy 4:7-8) Paul wrote these words near the end of his life, to Timothy, a young pastor, in his letter to Timothy to encourage him in the faith. Paul is passing on the torch to Timothy, and admonishing him to carry on and be a good soldier for God with the thought that in the end all good soldiers will receive an incredible reward that will make it all worthwhile.

Here's some more quotes along the same lines. "Now the church is militant. Now we are confronted with a world in darkness, almost wholly given over to idolatry. . . . But the day is coming when the battle will have been fought, the victory won. The will of God is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven. . . . All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving --the robe of Christ's righteousness. All nature, in its surpassing loveliness, will offer to God a tribute of praise and adoration. The world will be bathed in the light of heaven. The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold greater than it is now. The years will move on in gladness. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, 'There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.' These visions of future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, should be dear to His children. . . We need to keep ever before us this vision of things unseen. It is thus that we shall be able to set a right value on the things of eternity and the things of time. It is this that will give us power to influence others for the higher life. (Child Guidance, p. 568)

"Heaven will be cheap enough if we obtain it through suffering. . . . As I saw what we must be in order to inherit glory, and then saw how much Jesus had suffered to obtain for us so rich an inheritance, I prayed that we might be baptized into Christ's sufferings, that we might not shrink at trials, but bear them with patience and joy, knowing what Jesus had suffered that we through His poverty and sufferings might be made rich. (Child Guidance p. 567)

So, when I am suffering in despair, I like to imagine what heaven is like and then remember that my greatest imagination doesn't even come close to what heaven is really like, and that obtaining heaven is worth going through any trial, no matter how severe, in order to get there. Yes, it will be worth it all!!! These words cheer me on. I also like to read Ellen White's description of heaven in her book Early Writings to cheer me on as well.

The next lesson I've learned is that, in order to successfully survive this war that I need to give myself every edge possible. First, I need to spend time with God on a daily basis through Bible study and prayer. It is during this time that God gives us the strength and courage that we need to keep on, and also the wisdom that we need to fight this battle. Second, I need to spend time with other Christians who are good soldiers for God, especially more mature Christians from whom I can gain wisdom from. We also need human companionship in addition to companionship with God. I avoid spending time with those who are clearly not on God's side because I don't want to be negatively influenced by them. In other words, choose your friends very wisely, because we become like that which we associate with. I went once to a seminar where they were teaching how to be successful in life. Their

biggest theme was this. “To be successful in life, hang around those who are successful and learn from them. Don’t hang around with losers.” The same is true in our spiritual life. Spend your quality time with God and with those who are on God’s side. The only time I don’t is when I am trying to reach out to help others for God. However, if they don’t want help, I leave. And I’m not going to make these people my close friends that I spend a lot of time with unless they are willing to get on God’s side. Spending a lot of time with people who are on the losing side will significantly weaken you and actually increase your trials.

Next, I’ve learned that God allows us to go through tough trials in order to help us to become stronger spiritually and also to help us to grow and become better people and to give us wisdom. Which is the stronger tree? The one down in the valley, or the one on the top of the mountain getting buffeted by the storms? I can guarantee you that the tree on top of the mountain has its roots deeper and is stronger than the tree in the valley. I once went to hear an expert on death and dying speak at a seminar. He had one very interesting point he dwelt on that has really helped me. He said that those who lose a loved one to death go through a very, very tough time, but ultimately, months later, they emerge a much stronger person than before. And yes, it takes time to get there—it’s not overnight. Several years ago I went through the deepest “night” of my life. I was quite a number of months getting through it, but I did emerge on the other side a lot stronger person. Now it will take a much bigger storm to shake me than before, because I’m stronger. So now I’m very grateful for that experience, because I realize that in order to face the future, what is soon to come, that I need to be very strong. I really believe that we are about to enter the deepest night in earth’s history when the battle between God and Satan is going to significantly escalate up. This time is called the “time of Jacob’s trouble” in the Bible and happens just before the end. In order to have the strength to stand during that time and not fall, I need to be very strong. So I realize that God is allowing me to go through trials that are toughening me up, getting me ready for this time. And, although this time will be the most difficult in earth’s history, it will also be the most glorious. Those who live during this time are going to see the greatest manifestations of God’s power ever seen. It will be the most exciting time ever to live on this earth. But it is not for the faint hearted. So God, out of His great love and kindness for me, is getting me ready. Which brings me to my next point.

God is an incredible God of love. He loves us with all of His might and we can totally trust Him. He is fighting this war for us. He has literally given His life for us—that’s how much He loves us. We need to dwell a lot on this theme, because only a deep love of God will hang us through the tough times. What helps me to do this is to meditate on Jesus’ life and death for us by reading about His life in the Bible and also the book *Desire of Ages*. Actually, this is the MOST important point of this letter. We need to deeply experience God’s love in order to survive. But this experience is not based on feelings—but rather of faith. Those who depend on feelings will not survive this war. We need faith. Faith is believing even when you can’t see anything. There is a religious song I’ve listened to a lot lately which has one statement in it that says that in this war that we are in that “communication was destroyed.” How many times have you read about a battle where direct communication between the soldiers and their commander was destroyed by the enemy? That’s what this song is talking about. We are in a battle and direct face-to-face communication between us and God has been destroyed by the enemy (sin). However, God in His great love for us, still has a different kind of direct communication for us (prayer). But, since we can’t see God face to face because of sin, we have to have faith that our prayers do indeed reach God and that yes, even though we can’t hear Him back with our literal ears, yet we do hear Him with our spiritual ears. And, I can guarantee, that if you hang in there long enough, that you will eventually get confirmation that God is hearing and answering your prayers. My biggest confirmation always came during or after my biggest battles and toughest times, but yes, many times God never gave me any confirmation; rather, He expected me to get my confirmation by faith. However, I’ll share with you one experience in which I did get direct confirmation in such a dramatic way that it could have only come from God. I was driving my children to school, and as I was going into a blind corner I did a very dumb thing. I momentarily took my eyes off the road to turn down the heat at the request of my son in the back seat. In addition, that particular morning I was unusually tired and still groggy, which meant that my reaction time was slower. When I looked up, there was a car, halfway on my side of the road, coming around the corner too fast and only about 20 feet away. In the next split second, my car was in the ditch, stopped. I did nothing to get my car in the ditch. I also felt nothing. I didn’t feel the steering wheel turn, nothing. It just happened in a split second. I started shaking when I realized the close call and I just sat there, numb with shock and amazement. At that moment my 12-year-old son piped up from the back, “Fast reflexes Mom.” I replied, “I didn’t do anything. I didn’t put the car in the ditch. God did.” I calculated later that I was going about 30 mph around

that corner, and the oncoming car was going a lot faster and had to be doing at least 50 mph, which meant that had we hit it would have been with an impact of 80 mph—one which few survive and those who do usually have very serious injuries. A math expert put things into perspective for me when he heard this story. He said that at a speed of 80 mph to close a gap of 20 feet would have taken only 0.6 seconds. In other words, from the time that I saw that car until impact was only 0.6 seconds. Which means that I had less than 0.6 seconds to react and get that car in the ditch—something that is humanly impossible. Our reaction is not even that fast—let alone to also get the car in the ditch. So I have no doubt at all but that God performed a miracle to save our lives. However, how long in my life did I have to wait to get direct confirmation that God was helping me? That happened when I was about 40 years old. 40 years of living by faith before I got that confirmation. Yet, what happened was so incredible that it was worth 40 years of living by faith to get to experience. That experience strengthened my faith a lot and made me realize even more the depth of God’s love for me. He cared enough about me (a little speck in His universe) to take direct intervention to save my life. Wow! The Bible says that “God is no respecter of persons.” In other words, He loves you just as much as He loves me because He loves all of us the same. What He does for one, He will do for another. Maybe not the exact same experience, but the same principle. Which leads me to another principle.

God can do the most for those who are walking by faith in Him, spending time with Him and obeying His commandments. The Bible says that if we are living in known, deliberate sin, that God doesn’t hear our prayers. And yes, because we are human, we make mistakes all the time. But, if we ask for forgiveness, God instantly forgives us and treats us as though we had never made a mistake. So I’m not talking about mistakes that we make here, but about directly and willfully disobeying a command of God’s that we know about which then is living in open rebellion and open sin against Him. Those who are living in this kind of open rebellion will not have their prayers answered. But, we can instantly get out of open rebellion. It’s not a long process. All we have to do is to ask God for forgiveness and for strength to stop the disobedience—and then stop. (And yes, sometimes we will regress, but again, all we have to do is cry out to God for help and stop again. God always forgives. An example in the Bible is Mary Magdalene. Jesus forgave her seven times before she was finally able to stop her sexual sin for good.) A prayer like that is instantly heard by God. That lesson is taught to us by the prayer of the leper in the Bible. In the Bible, leprosy represents sin. When the leper came to Jesus asking for healing, Jesus didn’t respond like He usually did when someone asked for healing. Usually, Jesus let it be known that to be healed by Him, one had to have faith. However, when the leper came to Him and said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” Jesus instantly replied, “I will, be thou clean” and the leper was healed. Since leprosy represents sin in the Bible, what this means is that those who are suffering under sin, when they cry out to God for help to get out of that sin, that God hears and answers those prayers immediately with no waiting to test our faith like He does with other trials. The Bible says, “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” (Hebrews 7:25) This means that there is no sin so bad but that God can pull us out of it and save us. What wonderful love this is for us! To recap, God can do the most for those who are walking by faith in Him, obeying His commandments. This is a very powerful principle. Just read the stories in the Bible and over and over you will see that this is true. It goes like this. When a person is living a life of obedience to God (yes, they make mistakes but they ask for forgiveness and get up and keep on going), Satan always comes around and tries to steal that person away from God. God then says to Satan, “Bug off. That person is mine. As proof that he is mine, you can see how he is obeying My commandments.” Satan will reply, “Yes, but look at this time when they disobeyed your commandment, and this time and this time. So they are really mine. No, God, you bug off and let me have this person.” God replies, “Each time they failed, they asked for forgiveness. So they are Mine. Now, leave this person alone and get out of here!” Now contrast this with a person who is on Satan’s ground. God always comes around, trying to rescue that person off of Satan’s ground, but if that person doesn’t respond, Satan replies, “God, this person is mine. As proof, see how they don’t keep your commandments, even though they know about them. So bug off and let me have what is mine!” And God has to sadly reply, “Yes, they are on your ground. I concede, they are yours.” And God has to back off. However, those who are on God’s ground by living a life of faith and obedience to His commands, will receive God’s special protection and help and God can do the most for these people. (Psalms 27:5) In the near future, probably within the next couple of years, times are going to get very difficult. Those who survive these difficult times the most successfully are going to be those who are on God’s side, because they will receive special protection that the rest won’t have. I want that special protection, don’t you?

The following is one of the more difficult lessons that I've learned which is that sometimes God allows us to go through difficult times so that we can understand Him better. Recently, in the process of trying to do God's work, I had someone "betray" me. This someone was a person who was obviously pretending to be a Christian but who really wasn't, as I sadly learned when I got burned. Afterwards, I had a real, honest talk with God, because I was pretty upset and hurt. It went something like this. "God, I was trying to do your work and I was doing my best. And in the process of doing your work, this person, whom I thought was one of yours, hurt me pretty badly. I'm pretty upset. Why did you allow me to go through this?" After I prayed this prayer, I just sat there and listened, and I really believe that God spoke back to me through my mind because what popped into my mind was not my natural thoughts. Here's what was popped into my mind. "Yes, I allowed you to go through this so you would better understand Me and what I go through. Many times you have done to Me what this person did to you. Many times you have betrayed Me and hurt Me while claiming to be Mine. I know that you are sorry, and I have forgiven you, but I just wanted you to understand a little of the anguish that I go through over you when you hurt Me." What this experience did for me was to help me realize that every time I sin, I hurt God terribly. So it has really increased my motivation to not do anything which might hurt Him because I love Him and I know He loves me and wants to help me as much as possible. So sometimes God has to allow us to get hurt in order for us to realize how horrible sin is. Because the more we realize how horrible sin is, the less desire we have for it. So, think back to when someone hurt you very, very badly, and how you felt. This is how God feels when you go against Him. In the Bible we have a very dramatic story illustrating this. It's the story of Hosea, one of the Old Testament prophets. The story is all there in the book of Hosea. In this story, God tells Hosea to marry a harlot so Hosea does. Hosea is soon shortly burned very badly and hurt by this harlot when she has an affair while married to Hosea. God then tells Hosea that He allowed Hosea to go through this experience so that Israel would understand what they were doing to God. Israel was playing the part of the harlot and going after other lovers (false gods) when she was supposed to be the bride of God. By so doing, Israel was hurting God terribly. And God wanted Israel to know that. So God had Hosea live it out in his life by marrying this harlot. Pretty dramatic story and pretty awful for poor Hosea. Hosea didn't deserve that—but neither does God. So when we are hurt badly by other people, remember that probably you have hurt God just as badly. However, God is more concerned about us than about His own feelings. Yes, we have hurt Him badly, but we have hurt ourselves even more—and that is what concerns God the most. God doesn't want us to hurt ourselves because He loves us so very much. So God is doing everything He can to teach us how harmful sin is, how much it is hurting ourselves, and others, because only when we realize how terrible sin is, will we have the motivation to stop.

God also allows me to go through difficult times in order to be able to help others better. When we go through certain problems, we can then be of help to others who struggle with the same problem. For instance, I've struggled with depression. Now I'm better equipped to help others with depression because I understand better what they are going through. If I had never experienced depression I wouldn't have a clue to what to do or say to help. The Bible says that God is the "God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (Philippians 1:4) I was sexually abused as a child by two teenage boys outside my family on a regular basis for two years. Was this God's will for me to go through this? No. But now I know much better how to help others who have been sexually abused. Why do these things happen to us? Because we live in an evil world and we are in a very real battle. Since God gives free choice to everyone, He can't always control those who choose to do evil and who choose to hurt us. So as long as we are in a war, God can't stop all the evil that hits us. In any war there are innocent casualties. Which leads me to the next lesson I've learned.

The Bible says that "All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28) This promise is really true. Over and over God has turned bad things that have happened to me into good. Problems will never leave us the same. They will either break us or make us. If we allow God to help us through the problem, we will emerge a better person and God will turn it into good for us. Always. That's a promise we can count on—and one that has never failed me.

Another thing that gets me through tough times is to claim the promises in the Bible. These promises are extremely powerful and really do help. Here's a couple of my favorites. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." (Psalm 50:15) I have claimed this promise many times and it has never failed me yet. Yes, sometimes I've waited a while for the answer—but at the right time, God always came through and saved

me out of this trouble. Here's another favorite. "Delight thyself also in the LORD, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." (Psalm 37:4) Delighting ourselves in God means to spend time with Him, getting to know Him. When we do, our desires become His desires, and He then fulfills His desires for us because we are on His ground. (Remember, He can do the most for those who walk on His ground.) I've had this promise come true for me many times. So, what are the desires of your heart? If you are on God's side, these will be godly desires, and if they are godly desires, God will fulfill them for you. Yes, sometimes it takes time. God doesn't do all these things for us overnight for a number of reasons. 1) Many times God has to move on the hearts of other people in order to answer our prayers, and sometimes this takes time. 2) God sometimes makes us wait in order to test our faith and to get our faith to grow. 3) God knows the best timing and it's not always right away. 4) I'm sure there are many other reasons which we won't find out until heaven.

However, the Bible promise that has helped me the most is this one. "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13) When I was a young Christian it took me a very long time to truly find God and obtain peace in my heart. Quite a few years in fact. However, what hung me through this time was this Bible promise. I kept telling myself, "Hang in there, keep reading the Bible, keep on praying, keep on searching, because someday, this promise will come true and you will truly find God and find peace." I'm so glad I hung in there because eventually it came true. I look back now and wonder why it took me so long. Here's what I think. 1) I had some misunderstandings about what God was really like. So I had to spend a lot of time getting to really know God, in order to get my misunderstandings cleared up. And once I really knew Him, my trust (or faith) in Him increased incredibly. When we totally trust God, then we get peace. Living with peace in my heart is absolutely wonderful! I wouldn't trade it for anything, not even for a million dollars if someone offered it to me. 2) If we obtain something too easily, we don't value it. God knows this. That's why in this text He says we must search "with all our heart" because only if we have to search this hard will we truly value God when we do find Him. If you search for Him with all your heart, God will help you to find Him. And then you will live the greatest life of joy and peace. Inward joy and peace, that is. Outwardly, as long as we are in this evil world, we will have trouble. Jesus told us about this in John 14:27. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." So Jesus is saying that He gives us inner peace, but the world gives us trouble. Yes, we can have inner peace while having outward trouble when we totally trust God.

Another thing I do to help me through tough times is to study the life of successful Christians who have been through very difficult times. For instance, I just watched a DVD about the life of Martin Luther. Martin Luther was the man credited with starting the Protestant Reformation. He knew that if he stood up to the evil that was in the church of his day, that it would probably cost him his life. But truth was dearer to him than life. And, it nearly did cost him his life but God preserved him. In the process, however, he went through hell. So God used Martin Luther in a mighty way and in the process he liberated millions of people from a corrupt church system that was devastating them emotionally, financially, and spiritually. I also discovered some interesting things about Martin. He made some pretty bad mistakes in his life and he also suffered from depression and at times was unable to get out of bed because of it, but yet God still used him. I gained a lot of wisdom and courage by seeing how Luther navigated through tough problems and I gained hope by seeing that Luther made some pretty bad mistakes and yet God still used him. I also recently watched a DVD on the life of William Tyndale and shortly I plan to see the DVD on John Wycliffe, both of whom were great reformers who went through a lot of persecution but whom were used by God in a mighty way. I suggest that you watch these DVD's as well.

Another thing I do is to look at the big picture in life, instead of the daily trials that confront me. What is the big picture? The big picture is that in comparison to eternity, our life on this earth is but a moment. When we have been in heaven several thousand years, we will probably hardly even remember our life on earth and it will seem very insignificant to us. I had a step mom (who has since passed away from cancer) who had a favorite saying that was really true and that has helped me a lot. "This too shall pass." Every time she was going through a difficult time, she said this over and over. And, she was right. I remember the trials of ten years ago and now they have passed. So when I go through troubles now, I think, "In several years, this trial will have passed and I'll hardly think of it anymore. Just like God helped me through the troubles of ten years ago, so He will help me now. I just need to have faith." The big picture is also that we are in a real war, but at the right time God is going to rescue us out of it. Meanwhile, things can look grim, but it's not going to last.

In looking at the big picture, I also realize, as the Bible says, that “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9) The Bible here is expounding on an extremely important principle to grasp. Here’s an illustration to help understand what God is saying. Suppose your two year old child finds a sharp knife and grabs it. You immediately take it away and the child screams in anger. From the child’s perspective, you have just taken away a beautiful, bright, shiny, pretty toy and the child is angry with you for doing so. From your perspective, you have just taken away from the child an instrument that will seriously harm them and you are trying to save them from harm. However, can you make a two year old child understand your perspective? No. It’s impossible. But you realize that someday that child will understand and will be grateful that you took the action that you did. But right now, the child does not understand. We are like that child. God can see the big picture that we can’t see and are unable to see. So God is saying, “Just trust Me with all these problems you are facing, allow Me to help you through, and someday you will see that I am right and I did the best thing for you and you will be grateful.” An example of this from the Bible is the experience of the disciples when Jesus died. That weekend the disciples were in deep despair. Before Jesus died they believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but they did not realize that the Messiah had to die. So when Jesus died and was in the grave, they were in deep despair and depression because they felt that all their hopes had just been dashed to pieces. But after Jesus was resurrected, He corrected their incorrect belief and they then saw the big picture, that the Messiah had to die in their stead for their sins so that they could have eternal life. They were then amazed and sad that they had been so discouraged. They remembered other depressing times they had been through with Jesus, such as John the Baptist being beheaded. When that happened they really questioned God. If Jesus was the Messiah, why didn’t He save John the Baptist? That was a very dark night for them.

Another dark night for them was when the thousands who followed Jesus forsook Him when they saw that He refused to be the Messiah they wanted—which was to free them from Roman rule. Before that Jesus was very popular, and as Jesus’ close disciples, they figured that they were going to be very high up in the kingdom they thought Jesus was about to establish. But after Jesus was resurrected they saw the big picture that Jesus was trying to accomplish and they wondered how they could have been so full of discouragement and despair. It was a lesson they never forgot, and for the rest of their lives, no matter how discouraging life seemed to them at the moment, they saw the big picture and they didn’t let the everyday discouraging things get to them anymore. The book *Desire of Ages* tell us about this. When Jesus died, this is how they felt. “Never before had they been so utterly disheartened. Hopeless and faithless, they were walking in the shadow of the cross.” (Desire of Ages, p. 795) But, after Jesus’ resurrection He explained to them the prophecies in the Bible that foretold His death and they began for the first time to see the big picture. Here’s how they felt then. “The night is dark, but the Sun of Righteousness is shining upon them. Their hearts leap for joy. They seem to be in a new world.” (Desire of Ages, p. 801) What changed? Circumstances around them hadn’t changed, but their understanding had changed. So we also need to look at the big picture, which is that our lives here are temporary. All our suffering here will soon end. As Christians, it may seem like the entire world of six billion people is against us, but the majority in the universe, which is billions upon billions of beings, are on our side. So, in this world it looks to us like we are in the minority, but in actuality we are in the majority. And, if faithful, we are going to live forever and our lives on this earth in comparison will seem like but a moment.

Why does God allow us to go through difficult times? Because He is trying to knock the rough edges off of us and perfect us so that we are fit to enter heaven. Knocking our rough edges off is a painful process—but necessary. And when it is done, our happiness and joy will be incredible. The Bible tells us, “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised today.” (Hebrews 12:6-11) This is a very important principle God is trying to teach us. He is saying, “Just like you correct your children because you love them too much to grow up to be terrors to society and unhappy because they don’t know self discipline, so I am correcting you so as to perfect you and when I do, you will achieve true peace and happiness in your life and I’m doing this because I love you so very much. I want you to be happy. And yes, I know that this correction process

is very painful to you. But hang in there, because it will be worth it all when it is accomplished.” So, when I’m going through a very painful experience I think, “God must love me an awful lot!” I also think, “Try to quickly learn the lessons that God is trying to teach you through this experience so that you can get out of this painful process faster!”

Recently someone shared with me a series of talks on the internet done by a Christian psychologist about how to live the most successfully in this life, how to really experience the love of God like never before, how to navigate through life’s problems, how to experience better relationships with others, and how to heal from life’s hurts. It’s the best I’ve ever heard on the subject and the speaker is very interesting because they share many real life stories from their own life and from the lives of others to illustrate their points. I really believe what they say will help you a lot. To find this series, go to <http://gycweb.org/resources/audio.html>, scroll down until you find the series entitled “Overcoming Shame” by Alan and Nicole Parker. Listen to the entire series. It’s 5 parts and each part is one hour long.

When I was in the eighth grade my father shared the following quote with me. I have never forgotten this quote and it has had a lasting impact on my life. “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness--godlikeness--is the goal to be reached.” (Education, p. 18) Whenever I get into difficult situations, I think, “God’s ideal for me is much higher than my ideal for myself. I want God’s ideal for me—not my own ideal, because I realize that if I achieve God’s ideal for myself I will be much happier. I can’t see my way clearly right now through this trouble, but if I pray and ask God to work out His ideal and not my ideal, He will help me navigate through this situation the most successfully.” I also realize that in the process of God working out His ideal for me, that the situation can appear to be difficult trying, dark, and distressing. One example is the story of Joseph in the Bible. Joseph was thrown into prison in Egypt and left there for about two years. Joseph had already suffered through being sold into slavery by his brothers and having to be separated for years from his entire family. If I had been in Joseph’s place, about the time I was thrown into prison, I know Satan would have been tempting me to give in to deep despair and give up my faith. However, unbeknown to Joseph, God was using this prison experience to make him ruler over all of Egypt, to bring a knowledge of the true God to all of Egypt, to save his family back in Canaan from famine, and to reunite him with his family. So when I am in a “prison experience” I think the following. “Just like Joseph couldn’t see the future to see what glorious things God had in store for him, neither can I see the future to see what glorious things God has in store for me. But I will trust God, that He knows that He is doing, and by trusting in Him allow Him to work through this situation to bring me to His ideal for me instead of my ideal for myself, and in the process bring glory and honor to Him. So during my “prison experience” I run the above quote through my mind over and over and pray that God will work out His ideal for me. I challenge you to do the same. May God bless and guide you always is my prayer.

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