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How Do You Stand When Life Gets Too Heavy?

James 1:12: (NASB) *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.*



Life can get heavy sometimes. It can happen for all kinds of reasons - our own poor judgment or mistakes, circumstances beyond our control, accidents or a tragedy. Whatever the reason, the fact is sometimes life just becomes a heavy burden. When life does get heavy we begin to doubt and fear, which opens the door to begin down that ever-consuming road of discouragement and even depression. How do we fight this? How do we find a formula that will help us to stand up and walk under the weight, to fight through the fear and to persevere through the pain? How can we transform the heaviest experiences of our lives into the best growing experiences of our lives?

We choose to plant thoughts in our subconscious mind - good or bad. We plant what can bring us to greatness or pull us down to misery, using repetition and emotion. These are the two keys to getting a thought to take root in your head: Repetition and emotion.

In order to accomplish the major task of understanding the weight of the burdens of our lives differently, we will adopt guidelines from Stephen Covey's bestselling book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People."

James 1:2 teaches the first two habits:

Habit #1: Be Proactive - most of us live reactively and we slog along. Growth only happens through a proactive approach.

James 1:2: (NASB) *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials...*

The word *trials* here means "proof" or "adversity." Encountering things that are difficult for you will "prove" you.

To *consider* here is not merely to lean one way or another; it means to lead or accept. Ideally we want to proactively fix it in our mind as truth!

(See the Bonus Material for more details and other definitions.)

Examples of consider: Acts 7:10: (KJV) *And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him **governor** <2233> over Egypt and all his house.*

How can the same Greek word for *consider* be translated the same as *governor*? A governor gives guidance and direction. Fixing something in your mind as truth means you are guiding those thoughts - governing your mind. We see the word is more powerful than just thinking about it one way or another.

Philippians 2:3: (NASB) *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **regard** <2233> one another as more important than yourselves...*

Fix in your mind as truth that others are more important than yourself.

James 1:2: (NASB) *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials...*

In other words, fix it firmly in your mind as truth that it is all joy when you go through various trials. This is what we need to reinforce in our minds over and over. This is a scriptural formula for bearing the heaviest of our burdens. Lead yourself based on what you have learned of Christ to not live reactively.

Habit #2: Begin with the End in Mind. Know where you must go right from the start!

Plant the thought. Once again: James 1:2: (NASB) *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials...*

Let's paraphrase that: "Consider (fix in your mind as truth) that it is a cause for all joy (cheerfulness or calm delight) when you encounter (are surrounded with) various trials (various ways of being proven)."

This is difficult, but is one of the secrets to bearing up under hard burdens.



Philippians 3:7-8: Because Paul knew where he was going, walking away became far more valuable than staying put! There was something more important and bigger to walk towards. That is how he governed his life. This is why we can be joyful during trials - it is bringing us towards a bigger, better and stronger result.

Having foresight is great, but what do I do?

For us to be able to change the way we think about the process of an experience - the hardships of our lives - we need to know where that experience is to lead us. Following Jesus promises us a NEW DESTINATION and therefore a NEW PATH and that means a NEW WAY TO THINK.

2 Corinthians 5:16-19: (NASB) ¹⁶Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him in this way no longer. ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (NEW WAY TO THINK) ¹⁸Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (NEW DESTINATION) ¹⁹namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (NEW PATH)

The *ministry of reconciliation* sets our end goal to help with restoring mankind back to perfection - what was lost in the Garden of Eden. For now, we are to live the life Christ showed us to live - one of selflessness, contribution and integrity.

But what happens when life gets too heavy? Dealing with burdens is tough! Beginning with the end in mind means that even the heaviest of our burdens can be put in the context of a higher purpose. If we do that, our burdens now have a "why" attached to them. While this step does not lighten the load, it does open our eyes to hope. Our experiences are given to us for a reason and are not just arbitrary.

Now that our eyes are open to hope and we know where we are supposed to go, what is next?

Sometimes people around us plant seeds in our heads that are not real, appropriate or healthy. They may be saying these things due to their own damaged lives.

Even Jesus was put down constantly, but he knew his life was about a higher purpose. Same with the Apostle Paul...

Habit #3: Put First Things First

James 1:3-4: (NASB) ³knowing that the testing (proving) of your faith produces (accomplishes) **endurance <5281>**. ⁴And let **endurance <5281>** have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Endurance: Strongs #5281 hupomone (hoop-om-on-ay');
cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy

How does the proving of our faith, essentially the hard experiences of our life, accomplish a cheerful constancy in our life? This proving process gives us a tangible result to look for - endurance. James is telling us that one of the very first things we must focus on when dealing with heavy burdens is learning to apply cheerful constancy to our coping mechanisms.

The Lord will not give us more than we can handle, and if we believe our trials help us to become more Christ-like, we can get through them.

1 Peter 4:12-16: Rejoicing is not necessarily being happy; rather, in this case it equates to trusting the value of trials and burdens before we can see the fruit of the trials and burdens. Exultation comes later. How are we here applying putting first things first? Ask these questions: What is the most important thing? (Christ in you!) Is my burden helping me crystallize that with cheerful constancy?

Habit #4: Think Win-Win

James 1:5: (NASB) *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach (without chiding or defaming), and it will be given to him.*



Why is *wisdom* the thing to be asked for? Because wisdom is the embodiment of the first three habits - we cannot progress in the footsteps of Christ, we cannot stand up under our burdens without the wisdom to be proactive and not reactive, without the wisdom to find our "why" - to begin with the end in mind and without the wisdom to spiritually prioritize our experiences and put first things first! We may not know what good will come out of the experience while it is happening but it may become understandable later. Wisdom will help us put our heavy burdens in a clearer and manageable perspective.

James 1:6: Here we go back to lessons of unflinching trust. (Please see our program, "How Do You Truly Trust?" from June 12, 2016) Our faith must provide the strength of foundation to live in trust that God WILL provide whatever we might *need*, not want. But, we are not like Solomon in that we can just ask for wisdom and have it come to us.

Our asking for wisdom is living in faith and studying the Scriptures. 2 Timothy 2:14-15: Here is where we find the win-win in our asking for wisdom, for we in our asking are seeking for it with diligence. Thus, we grow as we seek for wisdom, and once we have more wisdom we not only grow more, we help others to do the same!

Sometimes our burdens are so heavy as to skew our perspective and we look at life with hopelessness and a lack of energy and ability. We are resigned to the heaviness. These scriptural principles say we need God's wisdom to refocus and think differently.

James 1:7-8: Not seeking with unflinching trust will only bring us instability. Ask in faith, stand and seek in faith and receive the wisdom to transform burdens to blessings. Sometimes it takes years to find the blessing in our experiences.

Wisdom helps us to see our burdens for what they are - an opportunity to flourish in the faithfulness of God: 1 Corinthians 10:12-15: *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man* - there is no experience of tragedy that happens to you that does not happen to others. Take heart in the fact that God is always watching out for you if you are seeking Him.

How does win-win fit into bearing the weight of our burdens? Once we have put first things first and prioritized that *seeking first the kingdom* is our primary objective, we can then be on the same page as our Master and begin to really grasp that our burdens are tools of faith! Where there is a burden, there is a potential win because where there is a burden, there is the potential to activate and apply our faith to learn to trust and then take the steps to overcome.

Habit #5: Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood Some people seek to plant poison in our lives. We might get defensive when they accuse us of things. They might manipulate the truth. Why would we want to understand somebody like that? Because human nature plants poison when human nature is hurting. We all have different weaknesses and personality types and have to deal with individual differences. We might begin to understand their flaws.

James 1:9-11: The weight of our burdens must be seen for what it is. There are times when the weight is as a result of persecution or circumstances, or even the reaction of others to spiritual righteousness (the humble brother James describes). There are times when the weight is directly related to our own doing, thinking and desires like the rich man. First, understand the source of the burden and then act on that clarity.

Trying to understand someone who is hurting us can sometimes help us to cope with the darkness and evil they are sending our way. We cannot necessarily cure them, but if we understand there is hurt behind it, it helps us to be able to listen to the right voices in our heads. Sometimes we can best bear the weight of our own burdens by bearing the weight of others because there is strength in numbers. The early Church had issues of disagreement, which needed to be faced. The scriptural way to face them was NOT to browbeat those who were wrong; rather, it was to accept and support them in their conscience.

Romans 15:5-13: Being of the same mind did not necessarily mean agreeing. In this case, it meant acceptance, cooperating and co-laboring in the face of disagreement. The burden of Jewish heritage was so heavy that no one was asked to discard it. Instead, they were all asked to understand each other first and then seek to be understood so they could walk together in cooperation for a collectively higher cause.



Seek first to understand, then be understood has two applications in bearing the weight of our burdens. First, we need to seek internal understanding of why we are carrying specific burdens. Second, we must reach out in understanding of our brother's burdens before we can expect our brother to understand our burdens.

Habit #6: Synergize James 1:9-11: (NASB) *Blessed is a man who **perseveres <5278>** 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.*

Now we finally get to the core of the matter. "Perseverance" under trial is THE KEY to attaining spiritual life with Christ!

Persevere: Strong's #5278 hupomeno (hoop-om-en'-o); to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; figuratively, to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere

Greek/English Lexicon: 1) to remain 2) to tarry behind 3) to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee 4) to preserve: under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one's faith in Christ
5) to endure, bear bravely and calmly: ill treatments

To stay under (behind), i.e. remain - the weight is on you. Do not run away from it but stay and stand up under that weight. Most of the time we cannot do this with just our own strength. This is the key and it is the same key for each and every called-out one. To stand under the pressure, to push through the pain and to fight the fear are all common denominators for those who are Christ's. It is a battle to be won or lost inside your own mind.

Synergize with others: Philippians 2:3-9

Synergize through the promises: 2 Peter 1:2-4

Synergize with Jesus: Hebrews 12:1-3

The difficulty of your experiences is there for the purpose of your growth and development. It is a purpose much bigger and stronger than your imagination can grasp! Allow yourself to go through those things, bearing the weight by relying on the Scriptures, on Jesus and on those who can help bear you up.

Bearing the heavy weight of the burdens of our lives can be so much more easily accomplished when we make use of the energy, when we synergize with what we have available through Jesus himself, the Word of God and each other. This synergy will change our weariness to strength, our discouragement to courage and our lack of direction to clear focus. The human form is built to respond to the encouragement and positivity of others. We can alternatively respond to the negative - choose your synergy carefully.

Habit #7: Sharpen the Saw This final habit revolves around the idea of always honing your skills, always revisiting your lessons learned, always refining your approach. In dealing with our heavy burdens, the "sharpen the saw" habit is the implementation of the other six habits that have helped us envision what we must stand up under in a new way.

The first key point in revisiting this whole thing: James 1:13-18: God allows our temptations, but He does not create them. He overrules our trials and engineers our testing experiences but He does not tempt us. Here we find the inspiration to go and sharpen the saw again and again: God only brings us ultimate good and ultimate blessing and will not change! We go to a reliable source, and no source is more reliable than God.

Sharpen the saw! Practice, drill and rehearse. Absorb Scripture, thrive on fellowship and be instant in prayer!

The burdens of our lives are temporary and our struggles have a purpose. According to James 1, we can take them and find wisdom from above. That wisdom can help us find the strength to stand up under the weight, bear the pain and move forward because the glory of God is on the other end. We may not see resolution to our problems in this life, but God has resolution to them in eternity and that is what counts the most.

*So, how do you stand when life gets too heavy?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*