

Endorsements

Judy Gerry is a wise, compassionate woman of God. This study will lead you to a deeper understanding of God's perspective on pain and His loving purposes in adversity. It will enable you to go beyond coping with trials, to rejoicing in them and allowing them to produce rich results in your life.

--Nancy Leigh DeMoss, Author, Revive Our Hearts radio host

"Can there be anything good about bad times? In her excellent study, 'Facing Adversity,' Judy Gerry takes her readers on a scriptural pilgrimage in search of an answer to this often-raised question. Benefited by the author's refreshing clarity, solid faith and spiritual insight, the reader will discover that the answer is a resounding 'Yes!' Adversity, in fact, is portrayed as an essential element on every Christians path toward spiritual maturity. Judy Gerry shows the pilgrim how to embrace hard times with the grace of God."

**--Tom Elliff, Senior Pastor, Missionary, Author
Past President, Southern Baptist Convention**

Adversity is a normal part of life. It tests the metal from which we are made. Yet, God often gives great grace and wisdom through our trials if we see them through the lenses of His eyes. God has a way of making adversity our best friend.

...Judy Gerry leads us to the Scriptures to discover victory in the midst of adversity. She teaches us to see trials, problems and sorrows from a Biblical perspective. She leads us to waters that turn bitter circumstances into bountiful blessings and difficult days into Divine deliverance. She brings us to the Word of God and encourages us to look at adversity through His eyes.

You will be blessed by Judy's insights. I highly encourage you to read, study, and pray through the message encapsulated in this book. When the storms of life come, you will find yourself standing in a place of safety and victory as you understand and apply these great truths to your life.

--Sammy Tippit, Sammy Tippit Ministries

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WEEK 1



The Problem With Pain

DAY 1: DEALING WITH THE INITIAL SHOCK



Life is a gift from God intended to be savored and enjoyed. It is easy to be thankful and joyful when life is a series of pleasant “Kodak moments.” No one on earth, however, is exempt from the reality of pain. Life’s first introduction to the world is itself accomplished through the painful process of childbirth.

While most adversity is temporary, there are turbulent times of hardship which challenge our understanding of life. There are seasons when the darkening clouds of trouble seem to gather all around us. While desperately hoping that problems will dissipate in the breeze, they gain intensity. The winds begin to howl, the thunder threatens and the whirlwind rages on. We wonder what on earth is happening.

During these storms of adversity, we cry out for God to deliver us. Everything in us longs to escape:

“My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me; and horror has overwhelmed me. And I said, ‘Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten to my place of refuge from the stormy wind and tempest.’”
(Psalm 55:4-8)

Facing Adversity

Adversity is by definition painful. It is “a condition of suffering, destitution, or affliction; a calamitous or disastrous experience.” (Webster)

Synonyms for adversity include: *hard times, rainy day, gathering clouds, ill-wind, affliction, trouble, hardship, curse, blight, load, pressure, mishap, disaster, calamity, trial, sorrow, setback, chastening, anguish, opposition, testing, and tribulation.*

Would you say that you ever experienced adversity? Describe the situation:

What was your initial reaction to the situation? What thoughts went through your mind? How did you feel?

The initial shock that we feel when we encounter trials usually results in several reactions. We often think that the situation is unbelievable, unbearable, totally out-of-the-ordinary, or unfair. The Lord speaks to each of these reactions in His Word. Look up the following verses and record your insights. Note any reaction that you have experienced.



“This is unbelievable! Things like this aren’t supposed to happen.”

1. Job 5:7

2. John 16:33

3. I Thessalonians 3:3, 4

Week 1: The Problem with Pain

4. Job 2:10



“I can’t bear this! It is too much for me to handle.”

5. Hebrews 4:15, 16

6. Philippians 4:13



“Why me? Other people don’t experience things like this!”

7. I Peter 4:12

8. I Corinthians 10:13



“This is not fair! There is no justice in life!”

9. Luke 18:1-8

10. II Corinthians 5:10

11. Revelation 20:11-13

12. I Peter 2:19-21

Facing Adversity

“Lord, this situation that I’m facing is painful; I’m confused right now. I need You to help me to understand what is going on, and how I should respond to what is happening. You’ve promised that You will always be with me and that You will strengthen me. So I cry out to You today, asking You help me. I can’t see what is going on around me, but I trust You, Father. Amen.”

The Problem With Pain

DAY 2: WHAT’S GOING ON?

There is a lot of erroneous teaching regarding suffering today, even in the church. We need to evaluate what we believe in the light of God’s Word. Note any theory below that you have heard, then look up the Scripture references for insight to determine what is true.



Adversity only happens to bad people. Spiritual people don’t have trouble.

1. II Timothy 3:12
2. Job 1:1
3. John 19:6
4. Psalm 34:19

Week 1: The Problem with Pain



We're never to ask for adversity to be removed.

5. Luke 22:42

6. Job 13:15, 16



God does not want us to know why painful things happen.

7. II Corinthians 12:7



Suffering is an illusion; pain is not real.

8. John 20:27

**THE TRUTH IS THAT ADVERSITY IS REAL.
IT IS PAINFUL. AND IT HAPPENS TO EVERYONE.**

“Father, I don’t like being in pain. I would rather not have to go through this difficult time. But, like Jesus, the thing that I want the most is to experience Your will for my life. Lord, please help me to control my thoughts and emotions so that I can see what is really true. Thank You for understanding how I feel, and for encouraging me with Your presence. I trust You, Lord. Amen.”

Facing Adversity

"THE WEAVER"

*My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me,
I cannot choose the colors He worketh steadily.
Oftimes He weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper, and I, the underside.*

*Not 'til the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful in the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.
(author unknown)*

"Father, it boggles my mind to see how You can use even the worst of circumstances to bring great good into our lives. You are an amazing God! You love me just like You loved Joseph, and I want to follow You every step of the way as You unfold the beautiful plan that You have for my life. Thank You, Jesus. Amen."

Putting Adversity into Perspective

DAY 3: WHY DOESN'T GOD FIX THIS?

Yesterday we saw how God used one man's lifetime of trials to ultimately accomplish something wonderful for many people. The *big picture* of Joseph's life revealed a beautiful plan of God's love and provision.

Today we will look at another biblical account in which several individuals experienced a time of great personal pain.

1. John 11:1-45.
 - a. What was Jesus' relationship to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus?

Week 2: Putting Adversity into Perspective

- b. Describe the problem/trouble.
- c. Why do you think that Jesus delayed responding to the call for help?
- d. How do you think that the disciples felt when Jesus said that His dear friend was dead and that He was glad that He wasn't there in time to save him?
- e. Why did Jesus weep? (Also see Hebrews 4:15)
- f. Which characters in this story were undergoing adversity?
- g. Was there a purpose to this adversity? If so, what was that purpose?
- h. Do we have any evidence that the purpose for this adversity was accomplished or fulfilled?

God's purpose was not to cause pain for Joseph, Mary, or Martha. His purpose was not to cause death for Lazarus. God hurts when we hurt, but some things are so important to Him that He will interrupt our comfort in order to accomplish them.

Joseph patiently endured his trials and had God's perspective on his pain. Mary and Martha were unable to see the *big picture* until Jesus revealed it to them. Being able to see beyond our immediate pain is a key to persevering with victory.

Facing Adversity

“Wisdom” has been defined as “the ability to see life from God’s point of view.” During times of duress, we need to ask the Lord to reveal to us, through the Holy Spirit, God’s perspective on what is happening.

Have you ever felt that God was *silent* or *slow to answer* when you cried to Him for help? How did you respond?

How do you think that you should respond when there are periods of silence, or when it appears that God has forgotten you?

Consider a trial or difficulty that you are currently facing. Can you discern what God’s perspective might be on this situation? How might the Lord use this “negative” experience to accomplish His “positive” purposes?

“Oh Father, Your plans are so intricately glorious! Thank You for having such a perfect design for my life. You are my Good Shepherd and You have led me to the place where I am today. Even though I can’t see everything that You’re doing right now, I believe that You’re doing something wonderful through this trial that I’m facing. Be glorified in my life, Lord. I love You! Amen.”

Putting Adversity into Perspective

DAY 4: GETTING OUR ATTENTION

The Lord longs to have an intimate relationship with us. He “opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing” and our Lord is “kind in all His deeds” (Psalm 145:16, 17). His desire is always for our good; yet, often we do not cooperate with Him.

God may allow adversity to enter into our lives in order to get our attention. We tend to more readily call upon Him and listen for His voice when we are in need. The Lord will

Week 2: Putting Adversity into Perspective

turn the heat up in our lives in order to cause us to focus on Him. Because He loves us, God will custom-design our adversity to be as intense as necessary.

1. Acts 9:1-8.
 - a. How did God get Saul's (Paul's) attention?
 - b. Would you consider this as being an extreme step to take to get his attention?
 - c. Why do you think that God took such a dramatic steps with Saul?
(Also read Acts 9:15, 16)
 - d. How did Saul respond to this adversity?
 - e. When Saul listened, what did he hear?

Remember, our personal trials are uniquely designed by God to communicate individually with us. Even though Saul's encounter was witnessed by others on the Damascus Road, only Saul understood Jesus' voice speaking (Acts 22:9). Likewise, there may be times when we experience painful circumstances, while those around us do not fully appreciate the depth or gravity of what the Lord is doing in our lives.

- f. Did Saul act upon what he heard?

The Lord will allow our trials to be as intense as necessary in order to get our attention. He will also allow those trials be painful enough to shift our focus onto God Himself. Adversity hurts.

Facing Adversity

2. Job 3:11, 12, 20, 23

Describe the feelings that Job had during his painful hours.

3. Job 6:8, 9

Have you ever experienced the type of response that Job had in these verses?

When the pain that we experience is beyond our ability to control, we are prompted to cry out to the Lord in the right ways. David cried out to God “all day long” (Psalm 86:3.) During the throes of pain we cry out to the Lord with our voice (Psalm 3:4), and He hears us if we cry with a pure heart (Psalm 66:18).

Much as the intensity of the cry of a child will determine how quickly the parent will respond, our Lord hears us and “He does not forget the cry of the afflicted” (Psalm 9:12).

During the turbulent storms of life we are tempted to think that God does not hear us. Yet, it is very possible that during our times of thunder (described in Psalm 81:7) that God is most easily found (Psalm 81:7). We cry out to Him, though He is not clearly visible. He is there waiting for us. He is trying to get our attention. He is listening for us to call His name.

Saul (Paul) was an unbeliever who met God through adversity. Job was a righteous man who grew closer to God through adversity. Tomorrow we will meet others who were impacted by the trials that God allowed into their lives.

*“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience
but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse
a deaf world.” (C.S. Lewis)*

Week 2: Putting Adversity into Perspective

Lord, You alone are the Almighty God. I'm so privileged to be Your child! Father, the deep desire of my heart is to have a consistent and close relationship with You. But, I have to confess that I am prone to wander away from Your side. I'm so easily distracted by the cares and demands of my daily life. Forgive me, Lord. Thank You for never giving up on me, and for using this adversity that I'm facing to get my attention. Amen."

Putting Adversity into Perspective

DAY 5: REFOCUSING

Yesterday we saw how God uses adversity to get the attention of people from diverse spiritual backgrounds. He used adversity to get Paul's attention even though he was a violent persecutor of God's people, and He used affliction to get Job's attention even though he was a righteous and godly man. The Lord drew each of these men closer to Himself through their unique trials.

The presence, or absence, of adversity in a person's life does not indicate the condition of one's spiritual health. However, today we will see how the speed with which we respond to the Lord by giving Him our complete attention does indicate our spiritual health.

We have seen that adversity stops us and causes us to refocus our attention. The question is; on what do we refocus? Do we scurry about looking for our own solutions to ease our pain, or do we run to the Lord and look into His face?

Jonah was a man who was running away from God. The Lord instructed him to "go to Ninevah" and tell the inhabitants of God's impending judgment (Jonah 1:2). Jonah's immediate response was to set his eyes toward Tarshish, the opposite direction (1:3).

1. Jonah 2:1-9
 - a. To where did Jonah refocus his attention during his pain?