



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

BIBLE STUDY: CHARACTER IN ACTION

A Christian is not immune to the experience of suffering. Sickness, sorrow, death, disappointment, and pain are experienced by all men. But for a Christian, suffering carries with it the promise of God's sovereign purpose in shaping the inner qualities of life.

VERSES Pg. 734

God's Ultimate Control

1. What do the following verses teach about God's perspective and purpose?

Isaiah 45:5-7 _____

Isaiah 46:9,10 _____

2. What did Joseph say about the difficult circumstances and troublesome people he faced?

Genesis 50:20 _____

3. Read Romans 8:28.

a. What was Paul's conclusion? _____

b. To whom was this promise made? _____

4. Can you describe an experience in your life which at the time did not seem to be producing anything good, yet later proved to be beneficial?

The Purpose of Suffering

5. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12, which describes the Messiah as God's suffering servant.

a. In what ways did Christ suffer unjustly? Isaiah 53:3-5 _____

b. How did He respond to this suffering? Verse 7 _____

c. For whose sake did He endure this suffering? Verses 8, 10-12 _____

d. How does Christ's suffering relate to you? 1 Peter 2:21 _____

6. What are some of the reasons God tested the children of Israel?

Deuteronomy 8:2 _____

Deuteronomy 8:3 _____

Deuteronomy 8:16 _____

7. What are some further purposes of suffering?

John 15:2 _____

Hebrews 12:6,7 _____

1 Peter 1:6,7 _____

8. Why should we not be surprised to suffer for Christ? I Peter 4:12,13 _____

9. Reflect on Jesus' words in John 15:18-21.

a. What does this reveal about the world's attitude toward God? _____

b. Why can we expect this response? _____

Your Response to Suffering

10. Read Luke 6:22-23

a. What type of suffering can we expect? _____

b. How should we respond? _____

11. Examine James 1:2-4.

a. What should be our attitude as we experience various trials? _____

b. Why can we have this attitude? _____

12. Read Ephesians 5:20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

- a. How does God want us to respond to every situation? _____
- b. Why is this response important? _____

13. Is there any circumstance in your life for which you have not been able to thank God from the heart? Check one answer below:

- Yes No

- b. What is it? _____
- c. What keeps you from thanking God for it? _____
- d. What action could you take to resolve this conflict? _____

14. Read Philippians 1:12-21.

- a. How did Paul suffer? _____
- b. What was his attitude? _____
- c. What were the results of his suffering? _____

15. What attitudes toward suffering were shown by the following men?

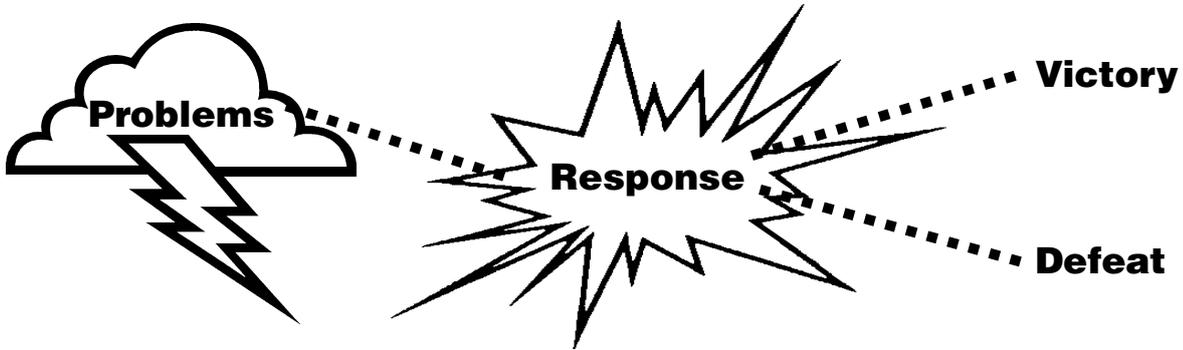
Job—Job 1:20-22 _____

The Apostles—Acts 5:40,41 _____

Stephen—Acts 7:59,60 _____

Paul—Romans 8:18 _____

A man's response to problems determines his maturity level. Each crisis is an opportunity for victory or defeat.



16. What wrong responses could be demonstrated in the midst of suffering? Why are they wrong?

Psalm 106:13-15 _____

Romans 12:17-19 _____

Hebrews 12:15 _____

The Results of Suffering

17. Read Romans 5:3-5. What are some possible results of suffering? _____

18. What can God's loving discipline produce in you? Hebrews 12:10,11 _____

19. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3,4.

a. What does this passage tell you about the benefits of suffering? _____

b. Name a person you know who is presently going through a difficult time. _____

c. What can you do to encourage this person? _____

20. Read Psalm 119:67,71.

a. What can afflictions produce in you? _____

b. How do you think this happens? _____

21. Psalm 78 recounts God's dealings with the nation of Israel. Often God did things for the benefit of His people which they failed to see from His perspective. Rather, they saw them from their own short-range point of view. From verses 11-18, list several ways God acted for the good of His children.

When God wants to drill a man
And thrill a man
And skill a man;
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed—
Watch His methods, watch His ways!
How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands,
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!
How He bends but never breaks
When His good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses
And with every purpose fuses him,
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out—
God knows what He's about!

—J. Oswald Sanders
(From *Spiritual Leadership*, page 141)

Remember These Points

Add a sentence or two to the following statements to summarize the most important points you learned from each section in this chapter.

God's Ultimate Control

God is in control of the circumstances surrounding us. _____

The Purpose of Suffering

We should expect to suffer, and should learn something from trials. _____

Your Response to Suffering

God wants us to display joy and thanksgiving in all situations. _____

The Results of Suffering

Suffering produces good qualities in our lives. _____
