

Study Notes: Session 2

“Life is Difficult; Life is a Series of Problems”

Key Concepts

- Problems
- Suffering
- Discipline
- Compassion/comfort/mercy
- Courage
- Grace

Your Scriptures to Read

- ⇒ Affliction: Psalm 34:19; Matthew 13:21; 2 Corinthians 1:4,6; 1 Thessalonians 3:4-5
- ⇒ Trial/test: James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12-16
- ⇒ Tribulation: John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 5:3; 12:12
- ⇒ Suffering: Romans 8:18; Philippians 2:27; 4:12; 1 Peter 2:19; 5:10; James 5:10,13
- ⇒ Paul’s sufferings: 2 Corinthians 11:23-28; 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; 9:1-22
- ⇒ Jesus’ sufferings: John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3-12
- ⇒ Jesus sympathizes with us: Hebrews 4:14-25; Hebrews 5:3,8
- ⇒ Discipline: Job 36:10; Hebrews 12:7-11
- ⇒ Self-control: Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 9:25; Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-8
- ⇒ Courage: Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:9; Psalm 27:14; Acts 28:15; Philippians 1:14
- ⇒ Compassion/Comfort/Mercy: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; James 5:11
- ⇒ Grace: John 1:14-17; Romans 5:2,17; Hebrews 4:16; 13:9; 2 Peter 3:18

Other Suggested Reading

- ⇒ *M. Scott Peck, MD, The Road Less Traveled, Section 1 Discipline, p 1-44.*

⇒ <https://judithdoctor.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Rebellion-vs-Acceptance.pdf>

Quotations

- ◆ *Life is difficult.* – Dr. M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*.
- ◆ *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulations, but take courage, I have overcome the world.* – Jesus Christ
- ◆ *We never learn anything new about God except through adversity.* – Watchman Nee.
- ◆ *Most people are suffering far more than others realize.* – Morton Kelsey.
- ◆ *Suffering is not only the last thing to be considered useful, but something to be avoided, evaded, and shunned at all cost.* – Paul Billheimer.¹
- ◆ *Humans have a freedom to transcend suffering and find meaning to their lives regardless of their circumstances. We can survive anything if we can find meaning and purpose in our experiences.* – Dr. Victor Frankel.
- ◆ *Courage is the attitude or response of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult, or painful, instead of withdrawing from it; the making of action in spite of pain.* – Unknown.
- ◆ *Courage is not the absence of despair or fear, but the capacity to move ahead in spite of fear and despair and not withdraw.* – Dr. Rollo May.
- ◆ *Courage is not a virtue or value like love, honesty, etc. It is the foundation that underlies and gives reality to all other virtues and personal values.* – Dr. M. Scott Peck
- ◆ *Without courage we have conformity, dependency, and cowardice.* – Dr. Bruce Morgan.
- ◆ *All growth comes by “seeing” truth, not by trying to change, conform, or reform: see who you already are in God and who He is in us.* – Dr. Bruce Morgan.
- ◆ *The Lord is good; His mercy endures to all generations.* – Psalm 102:5.

Reflection Points

Reflect on Psalm 102, a Prayer of the Afflicted

Read it aloud to the Lord as a prayer for yourself.

Meditate on the hymn “Amazing Grace”

This hymn was written by John Newton (1725-1807), a former captain of a slave ship, after he survived a violent storm where he feared his ship would sink, and he cried out

¹ Paul E. Billheimer (1897-1984) began a tent ministry in Anderson, Indiana, in 1936 that grew to include a Bible institute, a Christian high school, a Christian day school, and in 1957, a Christian television station. Authored compelling books like *Destined for the Throne*, *Destined to Overcome*, *Destined for the Cross*, *Spiritual Warfare*, and *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*.

to God, “Lord, have mercy on us.” As he reflected later on this experience, he believed God had touched him with grace.

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.
Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we've first begun.*

Reflect on grace

- Why do you think people love to sing this hymn, “Amazing Grace?”
- What does grace mean to you?
- What does it mean to grow in grace?
- Reflect on how you have enjoyed moments of grace in your life.
- Consider ways that you might be resisting grace.
- In a difficult situation this week, go to the throne of God and ask for His grace.
- Be aware of moments when you received grace this week.
- Why do you think God wants to give you mercy and grace?
- Identify healing moments that point to a miraculous force of grace your life. What incidences of health dangers have you successfully survived?
- Can you say to God, “I need Your grace; I choose to welcome Your Grace?”

Your Responses

1. What is it about life that makes it difficult?
2. How do you show that life is difficult?
3. What are some problems you have experienced in life?
4. What has been the most difficult problem to solve in your life?
5. What are some problems you avoid facing?
6. What is the most painful problem in your life at the moment?
7. How do you respond to painful situations or problems?
8. Do you suffer from a neurosis?
9. Who makes you feel guilty?
10. From what vantage point do you look at life: the guilty one, sinner, or forgiven one?

11. To what degree are you manipulated or motivated by guilt?
12. Who do you try to manipulate via guilt?
13. How have you experienced comfort and compassion in your life?
14. Why is courage important?
15. Can you identify people who are courageous?
16. Think back over your life and recall some of your most courageous moments.
17. In what area of your life do you feel the need for more courage right now?
18. Pray for courage to become a doer of the Word of God, not a hearer only.

Suggested Creative Exercises

Drawing Activity

- Draw a symbolic picture of a current problem in your life. Pray about this problem, asking God for Divine wisdom in how to solve it. Can you draw a solution to this problem?
- Draw a picture to illustrate the meaning of grace to you.
- Draw a picture of a recent dream. What grace does your dream offer you?

Journal Writing

- Journal for 10 minutes on a recent situation in which you encountered a difficulty. Did you face it? If so, how, and what did you learn from it. If not, what opportunity for learning might you have missed? What might you still do about it?
- Journal for 10 minutes on how, where, and when you experience moments of grace in your life.

Writing Letters

- Write a letter, poem, prayer, or psalm to the Giver of grace.
- Write a letter to a friend describing your experiences with grace.
- Write a letter to God telling him about the major problems you have experienced in life and how they have affected your life. Then listen for His response to you and write it down.
- Write a letter to God about a problem you are avoiding, explaining to Him why you are avoiding it.

Imaginative Meditation: “Welcoming Grace”

Sit comfortably with both feet on the ground and nothing in your lap. Shut your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply a few times. Now for a few minutes give yourself the opportunity to image yourself fully open to Grace, reminding yourself that God is love.

Image a large white screen in front of you

Let go, relax, and be receptive. Let pictures or images flow on to the screen as if you were in the presence of total love and acceptance of who you are and what you are becoming.

Take time, pausing sufficiently to allow the images to appear.

Draw pictures of the symbols or images you imagined or envisioned

When sufficient time has elapsed, open your eyes and use colored markers or crayons to draw symbols or images of what you saw. What did you experience in this meditation?