

## Lesson 6 – “Things That Adversity Reveals to Us”

Sunday, February 21, 2010

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 103:13-14; Mark 4:19; Judges 6:12-16; Mark 11:25-26; Romans 12:3

Today's lesson objectives are to discover if “I am supposed to learn something about myself from this adversity?” and “How can I gain by suffering through it?” In a previous lesson we learned that we should self-examine ourselves when adversity comes our way to determine if there is sin in our life that needs to be confessed to God. But we should not limit our examination to sinfulness or pride as there may be strength areas that need attention as well. In today's lesson we will review five strength areas that we should examine. The first area is...

**“Our View of God”** – What is the first thing you think about God when adversity hits? Is He a cruel taskmaster judging you unmercifully or requiring unreasonable behavior? Or do you regard Him as a benevolent Father who is correcting you in a loving manner that will help you to grow? Psalm 103:13-14 tells us *“As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For he knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”* The first response that many people feel is that God is dealing with them too harshly. If this is the way you feel, do not deny it. Instead, explore that feeling as you may discover that somewhere along the way you have been taught incorrectly about God. People who have a negative view of God usually have been taught this by their parents or gained it from an impression of their father they received while growing up. If you do have this feeling, then please review the following descriptions and Scripture passages to help you develop a better understanding of God. He is: Loving (John 3:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:8); Intimate (John 15:15); Patient, Gentle, and Gracious (Psalm 103:8); Generous (Luke 6:38); Faithful and Steadfast (Lamentations 3:23). By studying the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you will be able to see what Jesus said about Himself and the Father. Remember, Jesus said in John 14:9 *“He who has seen me has seen the Father”*. This will help you to begin the healing process for this area in your life.

At the other end of this area, are those folks that believe God will overlook their sins. We only need to look to Galatians 6:7 to see where Paul says *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”* God does not play around with sin. Our heavenly Father is just, righteous, and absolute. He is also loving, generous, and available. He desires to have a warm and intimate fellowship with us; but we must live according to His commandments. Please read Psalm 37:28-29 to answer the questions below.

What does it mean to be preserved forever? How does this concept tie in with adversity and chastisement?
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The second area is...

**“Material Possessions and Their Place”** – When adversity strikes, one of the first things we look at is our material possessions or loss thereof. When you hear of people that have lost all of their material possessions due to a hurricane or tornado, many will state that even though they have lost a lot, they are still thankful that they have their life. Do you use people and value things or do you use things and value people? Many people are preoccupied with acquiring material possessions rather than looking at what is really important. The intangibles of love, hope, friendship, family togetherness and health are far more valuable than anything we can buy. Mark 4:19 reminds us that *“...the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”* Using the above passage, please answer the following questions.

How do the "cares of this world" interfere in your relationship with God?  
In what ways are riches deceitful?

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The third area is...

**"Strengths and Weaknesses"** - Adversity shows us what we are really made of. In Judges 6:12-16, Gideon was told by the Angel of the Lord that he was a *"mighty man of valor"* and that God was with him. Questioning where God was because they were delivered into the hands of the Midianites, Gideon felt that his clan was the weakest in Manasseh and that he was the least in his father's house. Gideon needed to learn that when the Lord said he was strong, that he should not declare himself as weak. What this passage is telling us is that we should not dwell on the past, but look forward to the future. If God has forgiven us of our sins, then we should not be remembering them over and over. If God has forgiven and forgotten our sins, then we should too! Now we should bear in mind that we must not go off the deep end by thinking that we can do anything because God has already forgiven us! We should never try to cope with an adversity on our own. We need God's help every hour of the day and every day in the week if we are to be successful. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:25 says *"The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."* God is our ever-present help in our time of need. There is no comparison to God when it comes to strength and wisdom. If we rely on God, we have access to His unlimited power and wisdom. When we rely on ourselves, we will fail miserably and may even bring on more adversity in our life.

Whose wisdom and strength are you relying on, God's or yours? If yours, what do you need to do?

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The fourth area is...

**"Unwillingness to Forgive"** - The Lord will have no part in sin; however, at the same time He can not ignore its presence. He is continually moving against sin. Those who believe in Jesus Christ and receive God's forgiveness are spared the wrath of God. This will not remove the natural consequences of their sin because of God's chastisement and discipline. If we are forgiven by God, we are expected to forgive others the same as we were. Mark 11:25-26 instructs us that *"...whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."* Adversity may reveal to us that we have not forgiven others. God may be calling us to willingly forgive others so that we may be able to receive forgiveness from Him. Failure to forgive others will result in bitterness and adverse relationships with others. This may also lead to a desire for vengeance. We are reminded in Romans 12:19 *"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay", says the Lord.* When you experience adversity, ask the Lord to reveal to you whether or not you are in a state of unforgiveness to anyone. If you are, forgive that person, seek to make restitution, and ask the Lord to forgive you and free you from any consequences of your unforgiveness.

Read Luke 6:37 for a promise regarding not judging others, condemnation, and forgiveness.

Why does Jesus say that our sins will not be forgiven if we fail to forgive others?  
How does unforgiveness affect your relationship with God?

The last area is...

**"Our Faith in God"** - When adversity comes along we need to stop and analyze the state of our current faith in God. Romans 12:3 tells us that God has given each one of us a "...measure of faith". Why did He give us this "measure of faith"? He gave it to us to help us overcome fear. Fear is always a negative component of adversity. We generally fear a catastrophic loss of some sort such as a loss of life, limb, or sanity. We also fear more subtle things such as a loss of reputation, status, opportunity, or a valued relationship. Fear causes us to foresee the very worst that can happen. Faith on the other hand tells us that God is in control. Romans 8:28 states "...all things work together for good to those who love God". Faith will help us to recover from anything that we have experienced thus far. While adversity may call your faith into question, it is really calling it into action. If your faith is weak it needs to grow. Adversity will show you the areas in which you need to develop a stronger faith. Please read James 1:5-8 and answer the following questions.

In what ways is a person who lacks faith similar to a wave of the sea?  
How does faith bring stability and calmness to one's life?

In wrapping up today's lesson we have reviewed our view of God, attitudes towards material possessions, strengths and weaknesses, unwillingness to forgive others, and a closer look at our faith. Only as we examine ourselves more closely and reevaluate our view of God will we be able to improve the following areas:

- Grow in our understanding of God's vast love and righteousness and grasp the relationship that God desires to have with us.
- Confront our materialism and shift our priorities to things that are eternal.
- Study our strengths and weaknesses to see more clearly who the Lord created us to be in Him.
- Understand with greater depth how the Lord desires to work through us.
- Face our unwillingness to forgive others and free ourselves from the consequences of our state of unforgiveness.
- Come face to face with the true nature of our faith level and begin to conquer our fears and develop our faith.

Dr. Charles Stanley in his book gives us some thoughts and encouragements for today and tomorrow in each lesson. Below are the ones for us to consider with today's lesson.

Today and Tomorrow	
<b>Today:</b>	God uses adversity to teach me important lessons and to make me stronger in Him.
<b>Tomorrow:</b>	I will ask the Lord to help me make good use of adversity, rather than wasting it.