

Coping Strategies that Work

Heb. 10:32-39

Introduction:

1. Do you ever see people that just have more than their share of difficulty? They learn that they have cancer. Their child is killed in an automobile accident and then their house burns. Maybe you feel you are experiencing more than your share right now. Maybe your burden is so great you just don't know what to do.
2. And then people add to your calamity by saying trite things like these.
 - a. "It always comes in threes."
 - b. "Who sinned, this man or his parents that such calamities fell on him?"
 - c. "All things work together for good."
 - d. "It could be worse. Just look at the man with no legs."
 - e. "Time heals all wounds."
 - f. "You'll get over it."
 - g. "There are many lessons that you can learn from this."
3. Did you ever want to just punch somebody in the nose? When I am suffering, I find little comfort in the fact that someone else is in a worse circumstance than I am.
4. Some people seem to "suffer well." By that I mean that they never give up. They do not become overly distraught. They are certainly not oblivious to their circumstances. They grieve. They cry. But they never give up. They never lose hope. They may not know what to do, but they cope.
5. Others are more like a BB in a shoe box that is vigorously shaken. They are all over the place. Their emotions swing between all kinds of extremes. They cannot be comforted. They are distressed and they are not coping well.
6. I have decided that some people just do not have the coping strategies that others do.
7. Needless to say, I don't have all the answers, but I do see some principles in Scripture that have proven helpful to me and I would like to share them with you. Suffering is never easy and as the intensity and the period of the suffering lengthens it becomes even more difficult, that's I would talk with you about, coping. The passages that we are going to consider this evening focus on suffering for the cause of Christ. But the coping mechanisms in this suffering apply to other circumstances as well.
8. Reading of Heb. 10:32-39.

Discussion:

- I. Willing endure difficult circumstances in order to achieve a greater good (32-35).
 - A. These people had willingly accepted suffering recognizing that there was a great reward (v. 35). They gave up their property recognizing that they had a better possession.
 1. Sometimes in our suffering we allow it to overwhelm us to the point that we can see nothing else. Sometimes just a glimpse of the bigger picture helps us cope.

2. Perhaps these people were being tempted in this way. The writer is encouraging them to remember how they had endured suffering before and to not give up. This is testimony that the length of suffering adds to the traumatic effect.
- B. A greater good may be recognized in the greatness of a reward achieved later or it may be a good for some other.
 1. The people of Heb. 11 suffered and did not receive what was promised, apart from us (v. 39-40).
 2. Christ suffered for a greater good (Heb. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 3:17-18; 2:24).
 3. Paul suffered for the progress of the gospel (Phil. 1:12-18).
- C. Your suffering may not be the same as these Christians. You may be a student suffering through an education or a parent suffering through training your children, but clear values can help us cope.

II. Recognize the temporary nature of difficulties (37-38). “This too will pass.”

- A. Recognizing that the suffering will end helps to cope. When we see no end suffering can be overwhelming.
- B. We see a combination of these strategies in Moses (11:25-26).
 1. He gave up the enjoyment of the passing pleasures of sin.
 2. He endured that sacrifice in light of greater riches and greater reward. The suffering seemed light by reason of the weight of the reward.
- C. No matter how bad things get there is relief for the people of God (37). The Lord will come and he will relieve us of our afflictions (2 Thess. 1:5-7).
- D. Paul looked at his afflictions as momentary and light when compared to the glory to come (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

III. Tap into your support system (v. 34) not just as a receiver, but as a contributor.

- A. This is so very important. God has never expected his people to go it alone.
- B. But some people never develop a support system choosing to avoid investing in others.
 1. Instead they seem always to be withdrawing rather than investing.
 2. When you are a withdrawer only don't expect to have support when you need it.
 - a. Some seem to think they can contribute little or nothing and have support when they need it.
 - b. God has designed that we should consider how to stimulate one another (Heb. 10:24-25).
 3. These people had been sharers, showing sympathy to prisoners.
- C. We need to take an active role in strengthening others (Heb. 12:12).
 1. Somehow this helps us cope when we are suffering. I am not sure how it works. Just that it does.
 2. One way that it works is that when I help others they tend to help me.
- D. “You can get by with a little help from your friends.”
 1. Not your enemies and not those you have ignored.
 2. So invest in people.

IV. Trust in God's faithfulness (36).

- A. God promises and fulfills his promises.
- B. He is for us (Rom. 8:31-39).
- C. Entrust your soul to Him who is faithful in doing right (1 Pet. 4:12-19).
- D. Jesus entrusted himself to Him (1 Pet. 2:23).

Conclusion:

1. I know it is difficult to apply these strategies.
2. Sometimes we are overwhelmed.
3. But these strategies work.