

The Search for Answers

One of the *downsides* of the “information age” is that we’ve become somewhat accustomed to and conditioned into thinking that there is an answer to every question, problem, circumstance, or predicament readily available. There isn’t, at least not the kind of answer that we mistakenly assume and desire. You see, we want an *instant-fix* prescription, pill, procedure, or even just a diagnosis that explains “my problem” or “problems.” We want answers... and with them of course, solutions.

Perhaps we all get “there” sometimes; we may even feel like “that’s where I live”! Paul got there. This warrior of the Word not only wanted a *solution* to his “*thorn in the flesh*,” he earnestly prayed for it three times, 2Corinthians 12:7-8. We know “the answer” he wanted- “*that it might depart from me.*” Who wouldn’t feel and desire the same? But instead of getting “the answer” he *wanted*, note what he received:

- **Information** regarding the **purpose of his affliction**, “*to keep me from exalting myself,*” v.7; and, “*power is perfected in weakness,*” v.9b;
- **Assurance** that **he, with reliance on God, could handle it**; “*My grace is sufficient,*” v.9a; and of course,
- **Support** from “*the power of Christ,*” v.9d.

All of which, though not “the answer” he sought and for which he asked, enabled him to not only to **understand** and **cope**, but also to **rejoice in**, his tribulation (since it wasn’t going to be removed by God), v.9c and v.10. Was his situation, and “the answer” given, really any different from **yours**... or **mine**, cf. James 1:2-12?

I get it. Sometimes we’re like the infant that hurts: we may not know exactly what the problem is, let alone the solution to it, but a parent holding, comforting, and encouraging us helps tremendously. God is that parent, and its not only OK to “*cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’*” (Romans 8:15), since it is entirely the right thing to do! But, we must understand that when we do, we might not get “the answer” we want. We might be told, as was Paul: **this is good for you** in the long run (especially *spiritually*); **with My help, you can handle it**; and that, not only should you **learn to live with it**, but you should **be happy doing so**.

Admittedly, there are some situations, circumstances, and experiences of our earthly sojourn for which there are just no satisfactory answers. Our particular “Why?” question may **not**:

- A. **Have an answer we could understand even if it was provided.** “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,*’ declares the Lord. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts,*” Isaiah 55:8-9; or,
- B. **Be a question we even have a right to ask.** “*On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?*” Romans 9:20-21.

However, when we find ourselves looking for “answers,” please understand three absolutely true and essential principles:

1. More often than not, **we need God more than we need answers**. In truth, the *lack of God* in our lives is usually the reason we’re wanting and needing answers!

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you,” Matthew 6:33. And,

2. Regardless of the situation, circumstance, or predicament for which we desire answers, **the solution is always going to be: Simply, do the *right thing(s)*.** What **others** *have done* or are *doing to you*, or even what **you’ve done** or are *doing to yourself*, start doing what God’s Word says, and do it now! *“Becoming sober-minded and stop sinning,” 1Corinthians 15:34; “Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin,” James 4:17.*
3. When you really commit to **learning** (Eph.5:10) and **doing the right thing(s)** (Jas.4:17), you **may not get** the “answer” (the thing you initially wanted) you desire, but you **will get God**, and that is infinitely better than whatever other “answer” you desired.

Finally, remember the admonition of 1Corinthians 10:13, *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.”* You don’t have to have all “the answers” to be able to navigate through life’s maze of questions, but Jesus does. Get close to and stick close to Him, and He’ll guide you home! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)