



## Lesson 4: Leadership Lessons from the Word

### A PATHWAY TO COPING WITH CRISIS

#### *The Big Idea:*

**“Coping With Difficulties is Difficult But, Quitting is NOT an Option”**

*2 Corinthians 4:8-9 & Philippians 4:6-7*

*“Don’t worry about somethings; pray about all things.”*

*Dr. T. Lynn Smith*

I recently had a refocusing experience while at work. On the day the world celebrates Halloween one of the employees (Delissa Hightower) was carrying a large orange bowl. I assumed she had candy in the bowl. So, as I approached her I said, “Wow more candy?” but she replied, “no, I am passing out lemons for Life.” I was shocked and at the same time pleased. Shocked because she did not have trick or treat candy in the large orange bowl, and pleased that she was passing out lemons for Life.

We face numerous stresses in life that remind us of lemons. When we encounter the lemons life divvies out we have choices of how we will react. Generally, the metaphor for lemons is something sour, but it does not have to be. We can at any time refocus the crisis by chopping it up into manageable pieces. I like to say, “when life brings you lemons, chop them up and find something sweet to mix it with. You may consider baking a lemon meringue pie or sweetening the smell of your home with a lemon fragrance. Here’s the thing, you don’t have to drink the bitter liquid that lemons offer. Instead, you can drink the sweetness of God’s love. It is up to you to decide what you will do with the lemons in your life.

This Leadership Lesson from the Word is designed to outline some nuggets that will help us become more effective in overcoming life’s disappointments and difficulties. The first step we must take is to define the words disappoint and difficult. Webster defines disappoint as failing to meet the expectation of something. It is being frustrated with an event in your life. Whereas, difficult is defined as, hard to deal with, manage, or overcome, hard to understand, puzzling.

In our text 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, Paul is saying, we will experience disappointments and difficulties and we may not know what to do about them, but we must not give up hope while we are going through the process. He was facing some things that were hard to deal with, hard to manage, and hard to understand, but he knew that there was hope in God. As leaders our story does not always have a happy ending. We face difficult situations almost every day. And most times, where there is difficulty, disappointment is soon to follow. Let’s look at the two words and see how one feeds into the other. Here is an example, I would be disappointed if I did not get the job, however, if I lost my job, I would immediately face difficulty in my finances and eventually be faced with difficulty in my relationships, my emotional state of mind, my body, and in my spiritual life, but God’s word reminds us that is not the end of the story. Just put one foot in front of the other and take one step at a time!

◆ *My Notes* ◆

**REFOCUS!**

#### *A Question to Consider:*

*How do you refocus when you are in a crisis?*



## Four Steps to Overcoming Difficulties

### I. CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS REGARDING YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES (2 Corinthians 4:8 & Daniel 6:16-21)

You cannot always control the circumstance, but you can control your emotions regarding the circumstance. You can control the way you feel and the way you react. As a leader it is important that you don't allow your emotions to get the best of you. Daniel had some good things going on in his life. He was favored by the king and he held a prestigious position in the king's administration. Daniel was a faithful man of God. However, his faithfulness to God was used against him, and some of his colleagues who were jealous of him conspired to have him punished. Daniel could have lost it in his moment of crisis. However, Daniel realized even though he was disappointed, there was only one favorable response to his difficulty and that was to trust in God. Imagine how he must have felt once he realized what was happening. How might you react if you found out your friends had turned against you? Not only that, but they turned against you because of your faithfulness to God.

When we find ourselves in troubling situations we must not allow the difficulty of the crisis to move us to being disappointed with God. We must remind ourselves that God is not the author of the confusion or the cause of the trouble. Then work to maintain control of our emotions. God's Word is full of instruction concerning controlling our feelings about our difficulties:

1. **"Wait patiently for the Lord.** Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord." (Psalm 27:14)
2. **"I waited patiently** for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry." (Psalm 40:1)
3. **"He gives power** to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:29-31)

When you are faced with difficult circumstances do not react in a negative manner instead keep hope alive and keep your faith in God.

### II. COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS (2 Corinthians 4:9 & Philippians 4:6)

Our need levels vary when we are faced with a difficult situation. In the example I shared earlier about losing a job. While it is evident that I need a job, I also need many other things such as patience, strength, direction, courage, understanding, self-control, wisdom, integrity, to offer support, and to give security just to name a few. It is vital that we communicate our need to family and friends as well as communicate our need to God. Yes, we are hunted down by our past failures, but we will never be abandoned by God. We are going to get knocked down by the cares of life, but we are not going to be destroyed by them. Note the pattern? We are going to experience difficulties, disappointments and crisis, but God! When you have the responsibility of leading others it may be difficult to refocus. I challenge you to remember the pattern—*"But God!"*

Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. When you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." His peace is contingent upon your life experience with Christ.

◆ My Notes ◆



### **III. CAPTURE THE OPPORTUNITIES (Philippians 4:11-13)**

In every difficult situation there are opportunities to learn. If you will view your difficulties as a learning opportunity, you will have a different perception of your current difficulty and every future difficulty. Paul said that in every situation he had learned to be content. He knew what it was like to be in crisis. He also knew what it was like to be under pressure, be persecuted, and knocked down. He certainly know what it was like to be disappointed. A modern example is Joni Erickson Toda. Injured in a skiing accident and paralyzed from her neck down. Was that difficult? Yes. Was it disappointing? Definitely Yes. Did she refocus? Absolutely Yes. Now she is an accomplished artist, singer, author, and speaker.

Going back to the lemon analogy. You may get lemons in your basket but what will you do with them? As leaders we must capture the opportunity to refocus in the face of our crisis. One of the most beneficial tools for refocusing is God’s word. God’s word provides exactly what we need.

### **V. CONQUER YOUR FEAR**

When faced with a difficulty it is natural to experience fear. This is a God-given emotion to direct your response. It is known as “fight” or “flight.” However, this seed of natural fear that offers protection, if left unchecked, can overcome you and keep you from moving forward in life. When my younger sister Shauna was twelve, she tripped while walking down some steps. She was walking in front of me, and she was close to the bottom of the steps when she tripped. I glanced down to make sure I was on the next step and when I looked up she was lying on the floor at the bottom. Immediately, I felt fear. Fearful that she had broken her leg, or arm, or that she may have been seriously hurt. Without thinking I ran down to assist her. After some close examination we discovered that everything was okay. It was fear that motivated me to act, it was my love that compelled me to move. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Another remarkable tool that we can use is prayer. When we are in crisis and fear arises, we must take our fears to God in prayer.

As this Lesson from the Word comes to a close, when you are faced with difficulties in life remember to refocus by controlling your feelings, communicating your need, capture the opportunities, and conquer your fear. "We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up the hope of living. We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NCV)



### *A Thought to Ponder:*

Most Believers have a set time each day to read the word and spend quality time with God. Yet we are constantly being bombarded with negativity that can stress us. It can feel like the world’s chaos is filling our minds much more than God’s peace.

#### *A Thought:*

What are you doing to refocus your mind in order to counteract all of the worldly difficulties and disappointments you receive during the day?

### *What Difference Would It Make:*

1. In what way(s) do you strategically refocus your thoughts?
2. What spiritual disciplines would help you experience deeper transformation during times of crisis?
3. What tools do you use to counteract the stresses life presents daily?

### *Suggested Resources:*

#### **The Struggle Is Real**

*By Jennie Allen*

<https://www.amazon.com/Struggle-Real-Getting-Stronger-Keeping/dp/1496427475>

#### **God In Our Stress**

*By James Klotzle*

<https://www.amazon.com/God-Our-Stress-Christians-Management/dp/0557454026>