

Face and Endure Hardship Together

Help one another with the difficulties of the Christian life. Troubles are to be expected, but they are much easier to face together.

**Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:32; Acts 14:21-22;
1Cor 13:6-7; 2 Cor 6:4-5; 1 Peter 1:6; Rev 2:1,3**

Lots of things are not easy in this life. God wants Christians to help one another with these difficulties of life. Troubles are to be expected, but they are much easier to face together. That is the way of the kingdom of heaven!

When the Apostle John was mysteriously carried up to heaven, he wrote that Jesus said this to the angel of the church in Ephesus: *“These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. . . . You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.”* That is found in Revelation 2, verses 1 and 3. Note that the message was not to an individual Christian but to the church. As believers, we are clearly expected to face and endure hardship together.

Three areas of difficult living are addressed by three different Togethers.

There are the difficulties that come our way as God acts to mold us into better people for his kingdom. We will deal with that when we talk about the Together titled “Face Discipline and Judgment Together” in Course Four.

Then there are the troubles we bring on ourselves by not thinking, feeling and acting God’s way, what is considered “sin”. Helping one another with unbearable consequences of our sin will be covered under the Together “Carry One Another’s Burdens” in Course Two.

The third area of difficulty in life is normal hardships associated with everyday living and serving God. That is what we are discussing now. Many hardships of daily life and serving the Lord are too difficult for individuals to handle alone. Knowing this, God wants us to face trouble and hardship together.

Learning to stand with and help others in facing hard things now is great preparation for heaven. Obeying the Scriptures that indicate we are to face and endure hardship together will change our spirits, who we truly are down deep inside, to fit into service for God in heaven.

In heaven, God will want us to serve others in one capacity or another. Jesus said that He will reward us based on what we have done. So, think about this with me for a moment. In heaven, people there will be very important to God. He is to be the most important Person in heaven, but next in priority are the citizens, people for whom God sent His Son to die on the cross so that they could be in heaven. God cares for His people and takes care of Christians largely through them serving one another. Everyone in heaven will serve God and others.

It should not be surprising that heaven will have difficulties. Just because there will be no sin there does not mean that some of the sinless things we will do in heaven will not be hard. We are used to thinking that hardships always come from problems. But, there will be hardships that come from challenges we undertake and are not consequences of bad behavior, like things that are difficult now such as skiing,

auto mechanics, and knitting.

In heaven, if I want to learn to quilt or knit, it will be hard. It will be easier than it would be now since there will be no sinful distractions or self-condemnation. But, it will be a challenge, and I would want it to be. Otherwise, heaven would be pretty boring.

There may be hardware stores in heaven. Why wouldn't there be? Building things and having things wear out over the endless years of eternity has nothing to do with sin. So, the absence of sin in heaven does not mean the absence of problems not coming from sin. Someone will have to run the hardware store with God's loving concern for customers. Also, someone will have to sweep the floors and keep the store looking like it belongs in heaven. The position of store manager will require someone with a spirit that automatically puts people's needs above her or his own. But, the store custodian will not need such a strong spirit from facing and enduring hardship with others.

Hopefully, you would prefer to spend eternity as the store manager. The store custodian will be just as content in that job as you would be as manager. The question is, in what position would you like to serve God?

Most likely, if those two choices were yours, the Holy Spirit would want you to develop your spirit to care more about people than floors. Because God cares more about people than floors. Don't be worried that there will not be anyone to sweep floors. There will be plenty of Christians who did not care that much about others with spirits only qualified to sweep floors. Hopefully, you would like to manage the hardware store and see that people, not floors, are taken care of.

Regarding facing troubles and hardships together to advance our spirits more into the kingdom of heaven, there seem to be three categories not related to troubles coming from our sinfulness or God's molding us into His design for us. First, there are hard things we must do just to live, not easy like cooking, but difficult like cooking a big holiday meal; not easy like putting gas in the car, but troublesome like taking care of a flat tire. Second, there is the difficulty of challenges we take on, like exercising to lose weight or taking up a new sport. And, third, there are troubles and problems when we help others, like disciplining children, teaching an immigrant English, and leading a Bible study.

With such troubles and hardships of daily life, we need one another's help. We need to face and endure together. This is especially true when the hardship is long-term, like an illness, going through mourning a death, education, and dealing with unemployment and unexpected debt.

We help each other deal with hardship through shared faith, hope, love, and other spiritual powers. We do not deal with hardship as the world does. We pray to a God we know personally and ask for guidance about what to do, whether that be praying that God supply something or Jesus telling us to do something. We allow God's power into the situation, trusting Him, and not just superstitiously going through some ritual to gain His blessing. We wait upon God, never giving up hope or washing our hands of the situation in helplessness.

All of these things we must do together to please God who told us to face and endure hardship together. But, in doing so, we are preparing ourselves for higher places of service in heaven, for greater ability to hear God in heaven, and for God's appreciation now and in heaven.

All of us in heaven will need help with things that are hard for us. No problem there, because many will want to help. But, those most able to help others in heaven will be those who helped others before death face and endure hardship. In assigning to each of us our reward of place of service for God in heaven, the King will look at our resumes. The better jobs with people will go to those who stepped up to help others when life got difficult.

Another important thing to consider is that in facing and enduring the hardships of others, you will need to listen carefully for God to tell you what needs to be done. This will improve your spirit's ability to listen and hear God's voice. Therefore, in prayer ask God to help you seek out His voice, through your relationship with Jesus and the help the Holy Spirit can give you, so that you can hear how to face and endure specific hardships with those around you.

To prepare yourself in this way for heaven, analyze what hardships others are going through. Start with those in your family and then proceed to those in your Christian Inner Circle. Make a list of their struggles and sufferings related to just regular life.

It can be difficult to stay focused on just the difficulties of living. To prevent, for now, losing concern for the difficulties of normal, regular life, ignore troubles your Christians friends and relatives are facing because they acted contrary to God or troubles brought into their lives by God to disciple them to greater faith. Just list hardships related to the normal problems of life.

Use this list first in praying for them over time. If there is any way that you can walk alongside them as they deal with a hardship, be with them physically or show your support on the phone, in texts, or by email. If there is anything you can do to provide something needed, either your effort or your resources, ask God if He wants you to do so. And always continue praying, bringing their need before the Lord.

Often people will not let you know what hardships they are facing. Because of individualistic culture, people don't think of asking others for help, sometimes even in the most dire situations. So, ask those in your Christian Inner Circle what they are going through. Sometimes if you ask what you can pray for, they will tell you about hardships. But, you can just plain ask what things are troublesome for them, mentioning the biblical importance of facing and enduring hardship together.

Another way that you can get people to tell you the hardships they are facing is to tell them yours and ask for their prayers and support. It is important for us to ask other Christians to help us with the difficulties of life and service. Get over thinking that you need to stand on your own two feet all of the time. God will get much joy when we show one another love through facing hardship and trouble together.

It is not difficult to understand what it means to face and endure hardships with one another, but to encourage you to really put some effort into it, remember that there are eternal benefits to the level that you face and endure hardships with others. You can qualify yourself for a much better career in heaven for all eternity because your spirit will be aligned with taking care of God's people. You will be able to hear God's voice more clearly because your spirit will be better tuned in to what He asks you to do. And, you will be more appreciated by God for helping others, and receive special attention and affection from God in whatever heavenly form they will take.

* * *

There is more about facing and enduring hardships at our website ChristiansTogether.org. Just go down the list of the Togethers and click on "Face and Endure Hardship Together".

Prayer to Embrace this Together

Lord of All who provides for us in all our troubles, I and those in my Christian Inner Circle will need Your help to grow our spirits to help one another with the hardships of life. Help us to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit for all of us to give You more glory in the way we face the normal difficulties of this life together.

Please help us all to become more like Jesus and find joy in going through the struggles of life together. As Jesus spent so much of His time doing this, help us to increase the time we take to walk along with others in our Christian Inner Circles as life gives them difficult things with which to deal.

May our lives worship You more because we step in and help with hardships and difficulties that others have to face. You walk with and endure with us in our hardships of life, so we want to do the same and worship You by reflecting back to You your own nature. So, help us to not surround ourselves only with Christians who have stable, uncomplicated lives.

Make us strong in Your power to defeat the devil by facing the many hardships he sends upon us to tempt us to complain that God is not protecting us. Let us, as soldiers in the army of God, to stand against Satan and his destructive acts in the lives of people. Please give us wisdom as to how to face and endure hardship together in our Christian Inner Circles.

Help us all to prepare for heaven by growing more completely able to walk by one another's sides and watch out for one another, helping with hardships as they constantly arise. Fortunately, in heaven such hardships will be less, but we will still face hard things, just not things coming from sin. Let our efforts to face and endure hardships together now be preparation for serving one another in heaven in similar ways, just not with such horrible hardships as we face from the hand of evil now.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.