

## **Food for Thought**

For the week of July 21, 2013

*(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)*

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1. Larry talked about embracing our new normal when life gets difficult. When life is good, being content isn't all that difficult. But when our circumstances are tough, it's another story. What resources do you find in the following passages that can help you cope with, handle or even grow through a hard season in life?

John 14:25-27

Philippians 4:6-7

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

2. The Bible gives us windows into the lives of many people who experienced great pain, hardship or loss. Read the following Scriptures and take a look at how each person responded to their situation. Pay attention to what they learned or taught as a result of their trials and jot down any observations.

Paul: 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

David: Psalm 27:1-14

Peter: 1 Peter 4:12-19

How is Paul's perspective in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 contrary to how most of us would normally think when facing physical or emotional challenges?

3. Understanding who God is and how he is personally engaged in our lives is important when learning to embrace the pain and grief that comes with the new normal. Use Psalm 33:12-22 as a prayer guide to help you thank God for who he is, how he cares for you, and how he gives hope to all of us who commit our lives to him.

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1. Larry talked about embracing our new normal when life gets difficult. When life is good, being content isn't all that difficult. But when our circumstances are tough, it's another story. What resources do you find in the following passages that can help you cope with, handle or even grow through a hard season in life?

### **John 14:25-27**

25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. [NIV]

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [NIV]

### **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

9 Two are better than one,  
because they have a good return for their labor:  
10 If either of them falls down,  
one can help the other up.  
But pity anyone who falls  
and has no one to help them up.  
11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.  
But how can one keep warm alone?  
12 Though one may be overpowered,  
two can defend themselves.  
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. [NIV]

2. The Bible gives us windows into the lives of many people who experienced great pain, hardship or loss. Read the following Scriptures and take a look at how each person responded to their situation. Pay attention to what they learned or taught as a result of their trials and jot down any observations.

### **Paul:**

#### **2 Corinthians 11:16-33**

Paul Boasts About His Sufferings

16 I repeat: Let no one take me for a fool. But if you do, then tolerate me just as you would a fool, so that I may do a little boasting. 17 In this self-confident boasting I am not talking as the Lord would, but as a fool. 18 Since many are boasting in the way the world does, I too will boast. 19 You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! 20 In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face. 21 To my shame I admit that we were too weak for that!

Whatever anyone else dares to boast about—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast about. 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death

again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. 33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands. [NIV]

**David:**

**Psalm 27:1-14**

Of David.

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation—  
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—  
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked advance against me  
to devour me,

it is my enemies and my foes  
who will stumble and fall.

3 Though an army besiege me,  
my heart will not fear;

though war break out against me,  
even then I will be confident.

4 One thing I ask from the Lord,  
this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,

to gaze on the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek him in his temple.

5 For in the day of trouble

he will keep me safe in his dwelling;  
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent  
and set me high upon a rock.

6 Then my head will be exalted  
above the enemies who surround me;

at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

7 Hear my voice when I call, Lord;  
be merciful to me and answer me.

8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"  
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me,  
do not turn your servant away in anger;  
you have been my helper.

Do not reject me or forsake me,  
God my Savior.

10 Though my father and mother forsake me,  
the Lord will receive me.

11 Teach me your way, Lord;  
lead me in a straight path

because of my oppressors.  
12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,  
for false witnesses rise up against me,  
spouting malicious accusations.  
13 I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.  
14 Wait for the Lord;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the Lord. [NIV]

**Peter:**

**1 Peter 4:12-19**

Suffering for Being a Christian

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. [NIV]

How is Paul's perspective in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 contrary to how most of us would normally think when facing physical or emotional challenges?

**2 Corinthians 1:3-11**

Praise to the God of All Comfort

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. [NIV]

3. Understanding who God is and how he is personally engaged in our lives is important when learning to embrace the pain and grief that comes with the new normal. Use Psalm 33:12-22 as a prayer guide to help you thank God for who he is, how he cares for you, and how he gives hope to all of us who commit our lives to him.

**Psalm 33:12-22**

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,  
the people he chose for his inheritance.  
13 From heaven the Lord looks down  
and sees all mankind;  
14 from his dwelling place he watches  
all who live on earth—  
15 he who forms the hearts of all,  
who considers everything they do.  
16 No king is saved by the size of his army;  
no warrior escapes by his great strength.  
17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;  
despite all its great strength it cannot save.  
18 But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him,  
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,  
19 to deliver them from death  
and keep them alive in famine.  
20 We wait in hope for the Lord;  
he is our help and our shield.  
21 In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.  
22 May your unfailing love be with us, Lord,  
even as we put our hope in you. [NIV]