

## The Purpose of Troubles

When a person enters into the ministry, he feels that he is there to serve God and to serve men. Often, along with the attitude of living for others comes an attitude that “bad things shouldn’t happen to me.” When we make prudent life decisions, we tend to miss a great deal of trouble in life. Care in our choice of marriage, money, and time management eliminates many of the difficulties that most people face. We read of Jesus, and He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Hebrews 4:15 “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Again, the book of Hebrews speaks of the priest being “taken from among men” that he may know our infirmities.

Hebrews 5:1 “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:”

vs. 2 “Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

To properly intercede for the hurting people, it took a man who has wrestled with the troubles of this life.

To be an effective leader in the ministry, we have to be able to relate to people; we have to “feel their pain.” The little frustrations we face from day to day are often the doorway to better sermons, more effective counseling, and more compassionate living. When I buried my father, I was, for the first time, able to be truly compassionate to those who lose a close loved one. When I sat in the hospital watching my son go through the terrible treatments that went along with a stem cell transplant, once again, I found myself learning compassion toward those who suffer. When our church faces financial difficulties, and I wrestle with too many bills and not enough money; once again, I am drawn nearer to the folks in our church who face financial burdens. When I find myself entangled in hours of bureaucratic red tape over a building or confusion with taxes, permits, or foolish regulations (yet a common part of life), I am drawn nearer to the hearts of the men and women whom I pastor.

When I suffer or face battles, the door opens to a much more effective ministry. My troubles are not because I am bad or because God is unhappy with me, but in most cases, my troubles fit with Romans 5.

Romans 5:3 “...knowing that tribulation worketh patience;”

vs. 4 “And patience, experience; and experience, hope:”

vs. 5 “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

My troubles open my heart to the hearts of those I serve. My trials drive me to the Bible and prayer, and as I find answers, I also find my sermons for the future — sermons that will touch hearts for the truth (which was first found in my own heart).

May we not look with disdain on our troubles, but rather look at those difficulties as opportunities to be drawn into the hearts and lives of those people to whom we love and minister.

Pastor Bruce Goddard