

**Alpha Counseling Service
20730 Bond Rd/Suite S-180
Poulsbo WA 98370/360.779.3624
alphapoulsbo.org
September, 2023**

Dear Friends,

Much of this letter was written just months before COVID 19 attacked our world. Since then the focus on adversity has grown more important. So I hope this will give you courage during our present struggles.

Adversity is defined by Webster as 'a state or instance of serious or continued difficulty or misfortune.' Other similar words are opposition, hostility, misfortune, hardship. Adversity is something that causes suffering and can require special effort to overcome.

There is no limit to opinions about adversity! Dr. Charles Stanley says; "adversity is God's most effective tool for advancement of our spiritual lives!" The circumstances and events that we see as setbacks are oftentimes the very things that launch us into periods of spiritual growth. Once we begin to understand this, and accept it as a spiritual fact of life, adversity becomes easier to bear."

Romans 5:3-5 ...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame....

The apostle Paul is saying; that 'What doesn't kill us will make us stronger... spiritually!'

2 Corinthians 4 7-12 ...we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not in us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest in our bodies. Chapter 4:16-18 so we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Almost everyone who visits Alpha is struggling with some kind of adversity and they are looking for help to overcome the difficulties in their life. We hear stories of betrayal, abuse, marital strife, and struggles with children, teens, and adult children. Often health complications add to all the other problems. Any one of these problems can tear a person apart. We hear from people struggling with depression and/or anxiety who have been on medication for years and still have no satisfying relief.

Today we live in a culture where people seem more interested in "being a character" rather than developing good character. Not that many years ago a person's word was their bond, meaning that what they said was truthful and they would keep their promises. Today we have to check every fact and even then they may misrepresent the truth.

Not everyone matures through adversity we have the choice to become bitter instead of better when suffering. It's our choice! I currently know families that are being torn apart because people are unforgiving, vengeful and causing generational conflict.

The Scripture is full of encouragement to be victorious in adversity. In James 1 he encourages us to handle our trials with joy knowing that an attitude of faith creates steadfastness or patience, a valuable character trait. I Peter 4:12-19 states we should not be surprised that difficult problems confront us as tests but, we should choose to rejoice as we share Christ's suffering. He states that judgment is coming and how we overcome adversity will be a consideration in that difficult time. His last statement in verse 19 *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good!*

Keep looking up while doing your best for His glory. Thank you for your faithful prayers and support!

Richard