



What Christians Need to Know in Difficult Times

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I was asked a few days ago three questions related to our finances and needed perspective during these challenging times with the COVID-19 (coronavirus) crisis.

Honestly, our needs as Christ followers right now are the same as they are in times of ease, plenty, and comfort. But suffering and difficulty can make our calling and purpose much clearer. Puritan Thomas Watson said, “God takes away the world, that the heart may cleave more to Him in sincerity.” Let’s not waste this difficult season, but instead use it to study and learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior ([2 Peter 3:18](#)).

The grace that saves us is also the grace that sanctifies and empowers us. God’s power isn’t needed just by unbelievers to be converted. It’s needed by believers to be obedient and joyful. This is the grace Jesus offers you today, and every day, as you seek to follow Him faithfully.

What do we need to know?

We need to know who our God is and that He has many attributes, and not just love. (I highly recommend J. I. Packer’s book [Knowing God](#), as well as Wayne Grudem’s large [Systematic Theology](#) and also his abridged [Bible Doctrine](#).) We need to know all that’s true about Him, including His sovereignty, justice, love, grace, wrath, happiness, mercy, patience, unchangeableness (immutability), and His providential workings to bring about His eternal plan. A central part of that plan is using adversity to topple our idols, including the idols of health and

wealth, and to make us more Christlike, and thereby more faithful representatives of the Jesus we proclaim. This will result in people being drawn toward faith in Him.

“WE KNOW [not wish or hope] that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” ([Romans 8:28](#)). “Now this is eternal life: THAT THEY KNOW YOU, the only true God, AND JESUS CHRIST, whom you have sent” ([John 17:3](#)). We need to know that the people of God will truly live happily ever after with Jesus and each other on the New Earth, a redeemed world that is our true country and our eternal home. This is not wishful thinking, but the blood-bought promise of the risen King Jesus. Meanwhile we are pilgrims, strangers, and aliens in this fallen world, and we should never expect anything in it to meet our deepest needs, which can only be met in Him ([Hebrews 11:13-17](#)).

What do we need to be?

We need to be disciples who bear Christ’s likeness, including integrity, trust, and faithfulness to God. We need to be trusting children who believe the promises of God, not the promises of American pop culture and celebrities and financial cheerleaders, including Christian ones, who are convinced America’s long-term prosperity is a given, somehow guaranteed. (Where do you find that in the Bible?)

We need to be people who realize our dependence on our Savior and King, and that apart from Him all we do amounts to nothing: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” ([John 15:5](#)).

We need to be Christ’s ambassadors ([2 Corinthians 5:20](#)), meaning that we accurately and unapologetically represent who He is, what He believes, and what He says is true. Our job isn’t to be His make-up artists, speech writers, or PR staff who go before Him, but His servants who follow behind Him and faithfully convey His true agenda, whether or not others like it or we’re comfortable doing it.

We need to be children who understand “God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness” and “no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” ([Hebrews 12:10-11](#)). Richard

Sibbes said, “When we grow careless of keeping our souls, God recovers our taste of good things by sharp crosses.” So we should be people who see that “our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” ([2 Corinthians 4:17](#)).

What do we need to do?

We need to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. We need to love our neighbors as ourselves, caring not only about our children but all children.

We need to ask God for wisdom and seek to act wisely ([James 1:5](#)) but also lovingly, which sometimes means taking great personal risks for the good of others who need our help. “What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” ([Micah 6:8](#)). We need to understand that some things are far worse than death, and failing to walk with Him and obey Him and be willing to die for Him are among them. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” ([Luke 9:23-24](#)).

We need to store up our treasures in Heaven, not on Earth, knowing that they are never safe when stored up on earth, but only when placed in the hands of our God in Heaven ([Matthew 6:19-21](#); [1 Timothy 6:17-19](#)).

We need to happily serve Him in a spirit of continuous prayer, overflowing with joy and gratitude: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)). We need to adopt an eternal perspective, and “fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” ([2 Corinthians 4:18](#)). Knowing our Lord went to Hell for us on the cross so we could live with Him forever in Heaven, even in hard times we should fix our eyes on Him and “sing” and “shout for joy” and “be happy and rejoice with all our hearts” ([Zephaniah 3:14, NCV](#)).