

# Higher Life Christian Centre

## Higher Living June 2010

### Count it all Joy!

*James 1:2-4 (HCSB)*

*Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.*

James the leader of the Jerusalem church was writing to saints who were having a rough time living out their faith in a hostile world.

Persecution was normal. The account of Stephen's martyrdom in the book of Acts, paints a picture of the kind of treatment believers were subjected to in those days ([Acts 7](#)). The scripture clearly states that Paul brutalised the church and dragged men and women off to prison ([Acts 8:1-3](#)). He was ruthless!

People lost their property, their businesses, their jobs and some even paid the ultimate price - death. This happened simply because they accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Personal Saviour. Their association with the brethren and their acceptance of the faith brought them a lot of heat ([Hebrews 10:32-34](#)).

In the United Kingdom, we don't experience the same level of heat. But believe me, there are Christians in other parts of the world currently suffering extreme hardship because of their faith. The countries they live in clampdown on them and make life very difficult. This is not because they have no faith and are incapable of engaging in spiritual warfare. Read the Bible yourself, you will discover that hardship is also a part of the Christian walk and endurance is a necessary quality we need to develop.

This scripture poses some serious questions to us. How do we respond when we are going through the trials of life? What should be our stance as Christians? Should it be an occasion for Joy? Or is it time to get depressed and offended?

Let's look at what other scriptures have to say about the matter. I feel it will be an eye opener, as it seems some of us have lost our edge and have become unable to put up with anything. We get offended at the drop of a hat and shut down completely.

God is a generous Father, but He is not a genie. He does not cave in to our every whim. He is more interested in our development and growth than just being our cash cow. He looks beyond what people see, he looks at our hearts. People might be singing our praises all day long and telling us how wonderful we are, but He sees beyond the gloss ([1 Samuel 16:6-7](#)). Our character is of more importance to Him than our charisma. He is more interested in substance than style.

#### **Trials and tests don't discriminate**

Both Christians and non Christians go through tests and trials. Nobody is completely immune from them. The scripture indicates that there is nothing that anyone is going through that is not common to human experience. Yes I do accept



It's all about Christ in You expressing Himself through you!

that when you are going through it, it might seem as if you are the only one in the world with a problem. However, if we want to get our thinking in line with scripture, we need to understand that our problems are not unique ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)). There is somebody, somewhere, who has gone through, or who is currently going through what you are going through. You are not alone.

#### **You are not alone**

Sometimes, when we are going through hellacious times, our feeling of abandonment makes us feel alone. I want you to get this. You are not alone. Your Heavenly Father has said He will never leave you, nor forsake you ([Hebrews 13:5-6](#)). You ought to believe this with confidence. No matter what you are going through, you are not alone!

This was a great reality in the early church. Take time to read their story in the book of Acts. It is very enlightening. God the Father was real to them. God the son was real to them. God the Holy Spirit was real to them. They knew, they were not alone ([Matthew 28:20](#)).

#### **Development is the key**

There is a popular analogy motivational speakers use when communicating with their audiences. They take an empty glass and pour water in it from a jar. Now, they don't fill it up to the brim, they only feel it halfway. Then they ask the audience, "Is the glass half empty or half full?" Some will say, "Half empty!" Others will say, "Half full!"

The whole essence of this exercise is to expose how people perceive situations. Some people are optimistic while others are pessimistic. The optimistic guy will see the glass as half full, while the pessimist will see the glass as half empty.

How you view the trials and tests in your life will determine how you respond to them. Do you see them as this overwhelming avalanche that is going to crash and smash your world into oblivion? Or do you see it as an opportunity to grow as a person and develop your emotional, mental and spiritual muscles? [James 1:3-4](#), clearly shows us that developing endurance was on the Father's agenda. God wants you to grow up!

#### **You can always choose how you respond.**

The scripture does say that you should count it all joy or consider it pure joy ([James 1:2](#)). Which indicates that it is something that you have to choose to do. It is something you have to do by your own volition. Most of us are reactive; very few of us respond to situations effectively.

No matter what you are going through, you can choose to respond to it with joy and faith instead of fear and unbelief. Paul and Silas made a choice to praise God and pray when they were locked in prison after they had been severely beaten. They could have moaned and complained, or blame God for their predicament, but they chose not to ([Acts 16:16-40](#)).

I know it is not easy when all hell breaks loose, but you can still choose how you respond. Why not get a good praise and worship CD to inspire you rather than listen to lyrics that don't match your values. I would rather fill myself with stuff that will keep me out of the dumps than disempowering songs that would keep me in it.

You can choose today to walk in joy instead of depression. You can choose to pray rather than complain. You can make your choice, make that choice today. Count it all joy! Paul and Silas did it and so can you. For further reading check out [Habakkuk 3:17-19](#).

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