

# Accepting All Outcomes

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Life rarely turns out the way we prefer. Someone hurts us. We get sick. We suffer loss. If we believe in God, we turn to God for help. We pray for reconciliation, for healing, for provision. Sometimes, our requests aren't granted, even when our requests are legitimate and sincere.

One reason people lose faith is because they relied on God to help them, but God seemed to let them down. They asked for something important, but God didn't give it. Their conclusion is that God doesn't exist or God doesn't care. In either case, they lose faith.

## **Foolish Expectations**

It's foolish to expect God to grant our every request. What I mean is that we need to be careful with our expectations. It's virtuous to ask God to meet our needs and to trust Him to do so. But His answer to our need may not align with our desired result. If we expect a certain result, then we set ourselves up for disappointment. God is not obligated to deliver the result we want.

When I was bedridden with a back injury, I prayed for healing, but I got worse to the point where I was in too much pain to move. I was trusting God, but it wasn't working as I expected. Eventually, I realized that I had misplaced my trust. My trust was in getting healed, not in God Himself. Notice the difference. I was putting my faith in a specific outcome, not in God's care for me.

## **Trust in God, not Outcomes**

God wants me to put my faith in Him and not in an outcome. I had to be willing to trust God with permanent disability. That required a much deeper trust than I knew. I needed to entrust God with my life and my future. This was the level of trust that God wanted from me, trusting Him with any outcome, believing He would take care of me no matter what the circumstance.

So when you pray, be careful with your expectations. Don't "expect" God to meet your desires, although you can still ask God to meet them. Rather, expect God to work in your life or the lives of others according to His good purpose.

His purpose for us isn't a trouble-free life. His purpose for us is to know Him and to grow in love and trust. And those things only happen when life challenges us. So rely on God, not outcomes. Learn to trust God with those outcomes. Believe that His love is enough to carry you through any trial. Allow His purpose to transform you into the person He wants you to be, a reflection of God Himself.

## **We Decide How Bad Things Are**

One way to accept undesirable outcomes is to realize that things are only as bad as you judge them. Your response to circumstances depends on what you tell yourself about them. We decide how bad something is. Then we respond according to our judgment. Imagine that you discovered the word “bigot” spray-painted on the side of your car. This would upset most people. If you tell yourself this is a terrible and unbearable situation, your emotions will escalate in response. You will be more upset and angry. If you tell yourself this situation is manageable, then your emotions will be more tempered.

You think you respond to situations. The truth is that you respond to your “thoughts” about a situation. If you think something is horrible, then you will act as though it’s horrible. If you think something is not so bad, then you will act in accord. So, be careful what you tell yourself about your circumstances. Your thoughts determine whether your life is awful or manageable. Your judgments can create more stress for you, or not.

## **Resistance Versus Acceptance**

A situation has no inherent emotion. It’s neutral. It’s just an event. We decide what emotion to attach. We decide how upset we should be. We make a story out of it. “This terrible thing happened to me and I freaked out because it messed up my plans.” An alternative narrative for the same event could be, “This thing happened, and I accepted it while learning how upset I still get when things don’t go my way.” We can choose to accept a circumstance or resist it. When we resist it, we make it our enemy, and we create stress for

ourselves. Resistance takes a toll on our bodies. When we accept it, we place our trust in God and try to enter His peace, at the same time asking for wisdom for what we can change about the circumstance.

Release your judgments about your life and entrust your circumstances to God. "With God all things are possible," says Matthew 19:26. "Surely God is my help. The Lord is the one who sustains me," says Psalm 54:4. With God, all things are manageable. We have no reason to tell ourselves that our circumstances are intolerable. If we can learn to avoid judging our circumstances, we will be more at peace and we will find it easier to trust God. God wants us to trust Him more, and He is willing to help us do so.

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