

# Straight Bible Talk

Manchester Church of Christ, Share Christ's Love and Share His Message

## Surviving the Bad Times

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to know that a lot of people are experiencing bad times. Perhaps you are one of those people.

I do not intend to give you more bad news. There is enough of that on the nightly TV news and in the newspapers (and on the internet). People have been making money for years writing books about the coming bad times. I really have no idea what life in this country will be like next year.

Let me just say something about getting through the bad times this year. I want to talk about the light at the end of the tunnel. I want to tell you that it does not always have to be as bad as it might be right now.

Whatever your problem, whether unemployment, illness, trouble with the kids, marital difficulties or your dog just bit your big toe off, there is a way to get through the bad times. This is not a five-step solution that guarantees that you will get a job, get well, etc. It is a way of approaching life that evens out the rough places and gets you where you want to be.

First of all, decide what is really important. It does no good to try to save your baseball card collection while your house is burning down. Are you going to keep the collection in a corner of your tent?

People are more important than things. Love people and use things. Today is more important than yesterday or tomorrow. So make the most of your time. Spend it on the things that are important. Do what is right and your time will be well spent. Do what is evil and you will spend tomorrow regretting today. You cannot survive the bad times by misusing

your time today. The bad times will only get worse. They might get worse anyway, but they will have been made even worse by the way we frittered away today.

Jesus gave some sound advice. He said, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." These words were spoken by one who experienced a great many "bad times."

Another way to get through the bad times is to work on improving your attitude. There are attitudes that help you survive and there are attitudes that will literally, bury you. Your attitude will not make the bad times go away, but it will allow you to survive with your sanity intact.

Even when you are sick you may improve your lot by your attitude. While energy and physical resources may be greatly reduced, you can still expend effort to make the life of those who are ministering to you as pleasant as possible. Adding crankiness and cantankerousness to an already unpleasant state will help no one and will do much to prolong and worsen the "bad times." In fact, if you do enough complaining and criticizing directed at those who are with you through your illness, you will probably be able to add loneliness to your other woes in fairly short order.

Consider unemployment and the devastation that such a state of affairs brings to one's ego, not to mention the economics of the situation. How is one to make the best of such a situation? Besides the obvious suggestion of seeking employment

September, 2008

Volume 3 Issue 9

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Church of Christ

Meeting at  
595 Tolland Turnpike

Sun Bible Classes—9 AM  
Sun Worship—10 AM

Sun Eve Worship—6:00 PM  
Wed Bible Class—7:00 PM

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:31

All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless

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there is much that one can do to improve the situation. For example, bringing home bitterness, anger, jealousy and complaints instead of a paycheck will certainly make the bad times worse. Taking frustrations out on one's family and friends will probably not encourage anyone to help you in the search for a job.

While unemployment, severance pay and other financial arrangements that go with a job loss do not make up for the loss of the job, one can still be thankful for those arrangements. A wife who is willing to work, children who are willing to help out by considering the family's reduced financial straits, can also help to get the family through the bad times.

Bad times test us. They bring out the worst in some. They bring out the best in others. What makes the difference? Why do some people glow in the midst of adversity while others glower? Why do some maintain their positive outlook while others give in to gloom and despair?

Christians are made for bad times. Jesus, the leader of those who call themselves Christians, set the example. His ministry was beset by troubles. He lived in poverty and under a cruel and oppressive government. He experienced all the fickleness of

people, in those who came for healing, and in those who came to be taught the word of God.

The religious leaders were out to get him. His followers argued with him about what he ought to do. His family thought he was crazy and his townspeople tried to throw him over a cliff. Life for Jesus was not easy.

There were also good times. There were those moments when understanding swept over the apostles like a mighty wave. The crowds sought him for healing and came to him to receive God's blessings. Sometimes they listened.

There is an interesting passage in the book of Hebrews that explains Jesus' survival in the face of all difficulties. "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Did you hear that? He does not

want us to lose heart. Bad times threaten to destroy our very souls. They discourage us and drag us down. What is it that can lift our spirits and enable us to go on?

It is here that hope enters the picture. It is the hope that things will not always be thus that allows us to endure. It is the hope that there will be a better day that pushes us on. But right here there is a danger.

Are things bad today? They may be worse tomorrow. And the day after that they may be even worse still. What is one to do? There is no assurance that our sickness will pass. There may be no new job or if there is it may be worse than the old one. There is no assurance that the kids will turn out all right, nor that your spouse will stick with you in spite of those wedding vows.

For Jesus, the end came when he sat down at the right hand of God. He died, but he was raised. He left for glory. There came a better day, a day with God.

Because of Jesus we have been assured that there is a better day ahead for those who follow him. No one can promise you health, wealth and happiness, but God does promise eternal life to those who come to him through Jesus. You can survive.