

# Hope for Uncertain Times

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Seasons of adversity—economic or otherwise—do not catch God off guard. He knows everything that is going on in our world. He also knows what lies ahead. He is orchestrating all things to fulfill His eternal, redemptive purposes and to glorify Himself.

God cares about how adverse circumstances affect the lives of His children. Those circumstances may be intense and painful at times, but they do not have to overwhelm us or steal our peace. In fact, in the ultimate sense, anything that makes us need God is a blessing!

Crises can provide opportunities for God's people to flourish spiritually and to point others to Christ who is our only Rock and hope—not only in this present time, but for all eternity.

Many practical strategies and tools are available to help people weather financial crises. Here is some biblical counsel and perspective to help strengthen your heart in the midst of these uncertain times.

- **Look upward, rather than outward or inward.** Our response to turbulent times will be determined by our perspective and where we place our focus. People should be able to look at Christians and see a response to pressure that is distinctly different—"unexplainable"! (Phil. 2:14-15)

## Natural response

Focus: outward (circumstances); inward (self)

Fear/insecurity

Hoarding (hold on to what you have)

Depression/despair

## supernatural response

Focus: upward (God)

Faith/confidence in the Lord

Generosity (share what you have!)

Joy/hope!

Which of these responses best describes where you find yourself at this time?

- **Tell God your needs.** Ask Him for provision, wisdom, direction, and grace to persevere. Ask God to use this season of turmoil and uncertainty to bring about revival and spiritual awakening in our churches and in our country. (Luke 11:2–3; Phil. 4:5–6)
  - Have you prayed about it? Are you asking Him to provide your “daily bread” and to show you what steps of action He may want you to take? Are you praying for revival?
  
- **Learn the secret of contentment.** Contentment flows out of believing that God has provided everything we need for the present moment and that He will provide all we need in the future. (Ps. 73:25; Phil. 4:11–13; 1 Tim. 6:6–8)
  - Are any seeds of discontentment evident in your words or spirit—murmuring, complaining, fretting, expressing that what God has provided is not sufficient to meet your needs?
  
- **Ask God to fulfill His purposes.** God uses adversity to show us what is in our hearts, to purify us, and to deepen our dependence on Him. Seasons of leanness can prove to be times of great blessing, as people are stripped of self-reliance and their hearts are turned toward the Lord. (Deut. 8:3)
  - Are you more focused on meeting your own needs and solving your problems or on seeing God’s redemptive purposes fulfilled in your life, in those around you, and in our world? Are you willing to suffer loss, and if necessary, to be materially poor, if that would result in God being glorified and His Kingdom being advanced?
  
- **Allow God to purify your heart.** Lean times can be a means of God’s chastening—both personally and corporately. Ask God what He is trying to say through these circumstances; let Him search your heart, and then respond in humility and obedience. (Ps. 139:23–24)
  - Is there any sin you need to confess—e.g., living beyond your means, fear, greed, temporal values, bitterness, withholding your tithe from the Lord, lack of compassion for others in need?
  
- **Allow God to reorder your priorities as needed.** Times of economic hardship or loss expose what matters most to us and what we really love. They provide an

opportunity to identify any tendency to accumulate “stuff” we don’t need, and to take steps to develop a more moderate lifestyle. (Luke 12:15, 31, 34)

- Do you need to redefine what your “needs” are? Do you need to make any adjustments in your spending, so as to be able to live within your means and/or to give more to meet the needs of others?
  
- **Place your confidence in the Lord.** He can be trusted. He loves you, He knows what you are facing, and He cares for you. These circumstances have not caught Him off guard. He is still on His throne and is accomplishing His purposes in your life and in the world. Trust Him to meet your needs—He will provide. Now is a time to see what God can do. (1 Kings 17:1–16; Matt. 6:25-34)
  - Remember what God has done in the past. (Deut. 8:2)
  - Rely on His character. (Ps. 36:5, 7)
  - Rehearse His promises. (Josh. 23:14)
  - Refrain from taking matters into your own hands. Don’t let fear drive you to places God doesn’t want you to go. (Gen. 12:10f; Ruth 1:1f)
  - Are you relying on God to meet your needs, or on some other source? Does your response to adversity demonstrate faith or fear? Dependence on Him or self-reliance?
  
- **Reach out to others.** Be sensitive to those around you who may have even greater needs than your own, particularly those in the Body of Christ. Don’t just think about your own problems; put the needs of others ahead of your own. (Phil. 2:4)
  - Pray for others in need. (2 Thess. 1:11-12)
  - Look for ways to encourage those who may be struggling. (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13)
  - Share with one another—help meet material needs, as the Lord has blessed you. This is an opportunity for Christians to demonstrate the gospel and compassion of Christ, so the world will say, “See how they love each other!” (Deut. 15:7, 14; Prov. 21:13; James 2:15–17)
  - Who do you know who is struggling to make ends meet? How can you be an instrument of God’s grace to them?
  
- **Practice Christ-like giving.** The natural tendency in times of financial uncertainty is to hold on to what we have and give less. But what an opportunity to demonstrate the greatness and power of God in our giving! Ask God how you can exercise faith and reflect His generous heart in your giving at this time. (2 Cor. 8:1–4; 9:8)

- Does your giving reflect the generous, giving heart of Christ? How might God want you to grow in the grace of giving during this season?
  
- **Rejoice in the Lord.** Don't let the enemy steal your joy—regardless of what is going on in the world or in your personal financial situation! If we have Him, we are rich, we have everything we need, and we have reason to rejoice! ( Hab. 3:17–18)
  - Are you manifesting the joy of the Lord to those around you—in your countenance, your spirit, and your words?