

Suffering is What You Make of It

Most of us don't cope with any form of suffering. When we do suffer, panic and fear grip us and we spend our thought-life thinking about its consequences. At the same time, many believers spend considerable time entreating Father to take the suffering away. Their response is interesting, seeing that Jesus of Nazareth told his disciples (and therefore us) that coming into the Kingdom entails suffering of one sort or another.

For us today, in our cushy society where we pamper ourselves all the time, difficulties of any sort aren't tolerated. We've managed our lives and circumstances so much that we've eliminated most of the problems and issues that plagued previous generations. This life of ease that we live will make suffering in the future very hard to take and even harder to bear.

So how are we to handle suffering when it comes. We could take onboard the observations of Austrian psychiatrist and Nazi concentration camp survivor, Dr. Viktor Frankl. He noted that the suicide rate of teenagers was higher in modern, affluent Austria in 1979 than it had been in Auschwitz when he was there. Even though life in the concentration camp was among the most stressful and crushing on internees, he observed that neurotic¹ symptoms were virtually non-existent within the camp.

In his famous book, "Man's Search for Meaning"², he wrote that he had observed that the mental and spiritual health of the camp prisoners, who were living in deprivation, was far superior to most modern Westerners who have access to every comfort and luxury. What did he actually discover?

*"He witnessed that the mental health of the prisoners depended not on scraping together a few odd comforts, desperately pursuing scarce pleasures, living out delusional fantasies, or even convincing themselves that their sufferings would soon end. Rather, their mental and spiritual health—and sometimes even their physical survival—stemmed from their ability to find meaning and purpose in their suffering. And in his book, Frankl emphatically argues that such a feat is possible, that meaning can be found even in the most extreme of circumstances, lending dignity and even honor to the sufferer. The human soul can burn brighter the more complete the darkness."*³

Frankl uncovered a human characteristic that we can all draw on in any type of suffering. Basically, that's an ability that affects our attitude to suffering allowing us to handle it, instead of being destroyed by it.



Instead of complaining about our suffering, wanting to get out of it, or trying to force Father to stop it, we should set our attitude properly so we can go through it. That's what Jesus taught, and it's what he demonstrated. Therefore, suffering is what we make of it.

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(Readers will need to look up for themselves any scriptures alluded to in this document)

1 – "Negative or obsessive thoughts can take over your mind to the point that it's hard for you to handle everyday situations."

www.webmd.com/mental-health/neurotic-behavior-overview

2 – www.amazon.com.au/Mans-Search-Meaning-classic-Holocaust-ebook/dp/B00EKOC0HI (First published in 1946)
(ia601809.us.archive.org/19/items/mans-search-for-meaning_202104/Man%27s%20Search%20For%20Meaning.pdf [FREE PDF])

3 – www.theepochtimes.com/bright/searching-for-meaning-viktor-frankl-walker-percy-and-modern-malaise-5498765