



I have a friend who's going through some tough times. Do you have some verses I could give them that would help out?

That's a great question, one that comes from the correct foundational belief that God's Word has what we need for life. To best answer questions like that one, it is helpful to know a bit more about the specific situation or specific need. After inquiring about the situation here are a few of the passages that came to mind that are helpful in most "tough times" situations. The first is Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

That verse is actually part of a message from God to the Israelites who had (as God had warned them) lost their place in the Promised Land due to their idolatry. They were feeling as though God had abandoned them. Through this verse God reminded them that He hadn't. In fact as the following verses make clear, God allowed this exile to happen in an effort to bring His people back to Him - even though they were the ones who had abandoned Him.. *"Then you will call upon me and come a pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart. I will be found by you."* (Jeremiah 29:12-14)

Another verse that came to mind along those same lines is this one from Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

That verse reminds us of the great truth that as believers who love Christ, we can be assured that God indeed has a purpose for our lives. We are not "accidents of chance" with no meaning in life. It also reminds us that God has the power to take the bad things that happen to us and turn them around to make something good come from them. And, just as importantly, God has the

power to take the bad things we ourselves have done and turn those things around and make something good come out of even them (as was the case with the Israelite situation referred to in Jeremiah 29:11).

[An interesting side-note about Romans 8:28: Within the span of just five minutes after I had typed the previous paragraph, the Romans 8:28 verse was presented to me two additional times. One in a song on the CD I was listening to; the other from someone who works at the school and had stopped by to chat. God obviously wanted that verse highlighted - maybe it's one you needed.]

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find our two most recent letters from Heidy, the 12-year-old girl from Ecuador that we support through Compassion, Int'l. In one of those letters she commends to us a passage that has meant so much to her: Psalm 23. To say that Heidy isn't the only one to find hope in that Psalm would be one of the all-time understatements. Psalm 23 presents to us the comfort of being reminded that God is powerfully present with us - even (and especially) in the darkest of times. The comfort of knowing He is our perfect guide, protector and leader. The comfort of knowing that He is the source of rest and restoration for our souls.

In a past letter, Heidy had shared this final verse (verse 6) of Psalm 23 with us:

Surely goodness and love / mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

The word usually translated as "follow" in that verse literally means "pursue." What an amazing comfort to know that God and His accompanying love and mercy are pursuing us, not content to let us live apart from His love and mercy! Of course, there is no greater encouragement than the certain hope that believers have of "dwelling in the house of the Lord" forever.

When someone asks questions like the one above, usually the passages that "come to mind" are also ones that you personally have turned to in similar situations. I'll close with another such passage:

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Sometimes people get the wrong idea that Christians should have "an easy time of it." Jesus dispels that myth by telling us (here and many other places) that just the opposite is true. Because we follow Christ we can expect Satan to attack us with all kinds of "trouble" in an effort to destroy our faith. But in the midst of those troubles we can "take heart" - have courage and hope - knowing that Jesus is in control, has already overcome Satan, and does have the power to get us through.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net