

Leaning into the Joy of the Lord will Change Your Perspective and Liberate You

(When You Lean You are Dependent in His Hands.
It's the Safest Place on the Planet.)

Bishop Ron Libby

Notes

When life is difficult, learn to lean into the joy of the Lord. We normally don't do so well with this. This lesson will help us learn to "lean".

"What a fellowship, what a joy divine

Leaning on the everlasting arms."

These **words** are a few lines from a great song titled, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," written by Anthony Showalter and Elisha Hoffman in 1887. The church used to sing this song many years ago, and for years it was very popular in church services. It was sung with a great deal of gusto and power even in our own church back in the 70's and 80's.

The definition of **lean** in the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* is defined as "to rely on, trust in, to believe on, to be sure of, and to have faith in."

What does it mean to "lean" into the joy of the Lord? It means we should **completely depend** on God. In other words, we must "lean" into the joy of the Lord to obtain the strength that comes from it versus standing upright on our own. We should "lean" when we face something that we feel we can't do, when we're over-whelmed or even when we think about running away. That's when we go deeper in our life--deepening into new depths by surrendering. It's the opposite of standing up on your own strength.

Psalm 46:1 in the King James Version (KJV) teaches us, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

Proverbs 18:10 in the King James Version (KJV) states, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe."

Nehemiah 8:10 in the King James Version (KJV) instructs, "Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

When we learn the gift of "leaning" into God's hands we can draw from God's reservoir because we are depending on Him and not depending on "us". By leaning on Him, and trusting in Him, we will attain more and more strength from Him. We're not just talking about normal strength when we speak about this. This is **supernatural strength! Holy Ghost strength!**

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James 1:2-3 in the King James Version (KJV) states, "2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

It's not so easy to do. The amplified version states it this way,

James 1:2-3 in the Amplified Version (AMP) states, "2 Consider it nothing but joy, my [a]brothers and sisters, whenever you fall into various trials. 3 Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity, and inner peace]."

How cool is that??? Read this again to yourself many times. Really meditate on it until it's clear and in your being.

Does that mean it's good for you and me to go through tests or trials, because it's how we grow..... and it causes us to humble ourselves? The answer is obviously, yes. Do we like that? No, because we're carnal, and when we go through trials and tests, we get frustrated. We need to be more spiritual about our trials. We should consider how we look at trials. We can and should rejoice in our trials because it's going to change us, grow us, and teach us how to "lean." That cannot be overstated! Maturity will cause you to adapt to that truth.

The tests and trials that we go through produces endurance. Endurance is so important. Football players do not get strong by not being tested and stressed, neither do we build up our endurance by not going through trials. Our trials are to build us up in our endurance. Your trial is not God being mean. It's God building you up. He's building your endurance, which is difficult. Do you get it? It's a blessing to go through trials because it drives you to become deeper and stronger.

Can anyone relate-maybe not like it but relate to it? So, knowing that, rather than getting discouraged, upset, and depressed, know it's what we're supposed to do. Enjoy the trial – know that it's going to do what it's supposed to do to grow you. Let it do its work like the football player analogy. It builds up your endurance.

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I remember when I tried out for football as a kid, and I thought I was going to throw the football right away. After three or four sessions I hadn't even got to throw a ball. They were preparing us to be on the field by training us to build up our endurance, and then we started with the ball. I hated it. I just wanted to throw the ball, but I first had to build up my endurance. Does that imply that we should be striving and growing to get to that level? YEAH!! In order to grow yourself spiritually, it takes striving.

In the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* strive is defined as "to devote serious effort or energy, and to struggle in opposition: CONTEND."

Part of the trial is accepting the challenge to get going with growing-meaning the lack of resistance from ourselves. We don't like it. We fight against it. However, we should flow into it, lean into it and let God do the work. How are we doing with that? What do I mean by that statement?

Generally, when bad things or hurtful things hit us harshly often the first thing we come up with is, "why?" Why did this happen to me? Why me? That is the wrong response to the problem. The response is not "why me", but it should be more like "Why NOT" me? How can this grow me in deeper ways? What is God orchestrating through me? How does God want to change my life through this trial?

Maybe you've heard of Joni Eareckson Tada. She became a quadriplegic after she dove into the Chesapeake Bay and miscalculated the depth of the water. In the face of this tragedy she went on to become a teacher, a powerful speaker for Christ, and encouraged so many people around the world by teaching them how to overcome difficulties. She is a wonderful person. She did not give up. She could have given up. She could have become depressed....and maybe she did struggle with depression at some point, and maybe even thought about killing herself. However, she pulled herself up and used her trial for victory showing others that Jesus can help us no matter what our problems are.

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James 1:4 in the Amplified Bible (AMP) instructs, "4 And let endurance have its perfect result *and* do a thorough work, so that you may be perfect and completely developed [in your faith], lacking in nothing."

Let it! Allow it! Rather than kick against it or have anger or lack of faith. You have the choice to let it do its work? So how are you doing with "letting it"? Are you learning how to let go? If we're in a situation that we cannot change but it is bringing grief to us, we must learn to trust, to lean on God and have patience and forbearance.

The definition of **forbearance** in the *Cambridge Dictionary* is defined as "the quality of being patient and being able to forgive someone or being able to control yourself in a difficult situation."

James 1:2-3 in the Message Version (MSG) tells us to, "2-3 Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors."

A Sheer gift!? We would think that a gift is getting us out of the problem, but maybe God is giving us a gift by letting us go through the trial. Have you ever thought about that.....? This is where children of God don't do so well. It requires maturity to be able to know that He is giving us a gift. Can immature people understand that? No, because they are immature and carnal. They can't get it! But that's the point, they can become more and more mature.

According to the scripture we should be joyful for the opportunity to go through a trial. We must learn how to graciously allow God to try us because by letting God try us graciously and lovingly, we go deeper and learn to lean more and more on God. Therefore, we must get better about trials. We must embrace them, and not get an attitude, or become angry or bitter. "Why is God not being good to me?" He's not being mean. He's growing you. We must learn this. I must learn this, or we will be stuck!

You cannot get the blessing that God wants to give you if you cannot understand this. You will be "puny". That means we should become more deepened in Him by "dying" to self. We should show the fruit of dying and become mature about it by knowing that God is building us up. Hello? None of us "like it", but that is part of the trial.

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What does it mean to be deeper? Could it mean that we shed our carnality and let go of our "baby ways" perhaps? What do you think? What about becoming more stabilized understanding that our trials and difficulties work for us and having a mature acceptance for this process. Also, when maturity grows you will become a help to someone else going through a trial who needs to be encouraged in this walk. You can be an aid to them. Your trial is going to be a joy when you're able to use it to help someone else.

So, knowing that, how are we doing with it? I would suggest we don't do so well with having joy in the trials knowing that we will benefit from it or we will be stuck in our walk and never grow and mature. Are we just gutting it out and holding on instead of being joyful? Did you really get lifted and joyful or did you just hold on? We should do it joyfully!

I suggest that when you get some troubles immediately thank God for the troubles rather than become depressed or upset. Just go to Jesus so you do not go downward, but instead you can go upward immediately knowing there is a purpose. Having done that don't allow the enemy to steal your blessing by becoming depressed or angry. Continue to give glory to Him. It will keep you "up", and you will continue to grow. The enemy will try to steal your victory away from you. When you see you're going down in a negative way, pull yourself up again, and in trusting and praising you will truly get growth if you maintain it. That is also called maturity.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines **mature** as "of or relating to a condition of full development."

James 1:4 in the Message Version (MSG) states, "So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. **Let it** do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way."

Can you handle that? In other words, don't try to resist it. Let it flow. **Let it have its work**, because we need deepening, and that only can come through painfulness or trials. When we really submit and go deeper, we change. It's the only way. It's the Jesus way.

Just go through the process of surrendering to God and the trial and become **transformed**. Know that He is carrying you. Don't try to tough it out. Surrender and go through it. This also requires trust. In other words when we are in the

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midst of the trials that come our way, we shouldn't try to force our way out of it because we'll just have to go back around and do it again. So, settle into it, lean into it, rest in Him and in the trial--this is how we mature.

We should just surrender and lay ourselves into His arms. We're not supposed to grit it out. That won't work. We just lay in His arms. He is a good Father. Allow God to love you through the trial--depend, lean, and trust. Don't freak out. Release it into His care and know that He is giving you time for growth. We must learn to "drape" in His arms.



The definition of drape in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* is defined as "to cause to hang or stretch out loosely or carelessly."

You do want to grow, right? You do want to become more mature, right? You don't want to be puny, do you? So, God gives you an opportunity to grow. What do you think? Are you up to it.....? It hurts my heart when I think about great children of God that waste the potential that is right before them, but they just can't give it all. I grieve myself that I am not really reaching my potential.

Dear Lord, help us with trials that really mean something, and that hurt. Trials that bring us to our knees and changes us. When can we learn to embrace the crucifixion of Jesus, and parallel it to us where we can really break out of carnality? I know we don't want to hurt, but for the sake of the mission and our growth quotient, we give ourselves over to Him and allow Him to change us.

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You can rest in the trials and setbacks-that is true trust. Are you in His hands or not? Good question. Anxiety is not trusting. Trusting has an element of tranquility. Apostle Paul taught us many lessons on growing and suffering.

In the book of Acts Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison. The word of God states in **Acts 16:22-31**, “²² And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes and commanded to beat them.²³ And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:²⁴ Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.²⁷ And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.²⁹ Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,³⁰ And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

This is a classic presentation of the point that I am making. Paul and Silas didn't fall apart in their trial. Not at all! What trust! Imagine that! ...and without offense and losing faith. They were “still.” They maintained their trust in Jesus. They “leaned” into Jesus. That is what we are supposed to do when we have difficulties. They prayed and worshiped...trusting.... leaning! It's amazing! They could have sat there cried and been in despair, but they didn't. They trusted. They were “dead” to themselves. They didn't know how they were going to get out, but they didn't panic. They just trusted. What would have happened to Paul and Silas if they didn't stay calm?

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We need more of praising God, and not "freaking out" when things are not so good. What a great example! Also, in their trial they turned it around and helped someone who was going to kill them.

Can you see it? Do you see what there is to be captured when we go through this process? Can you see the riches and the golden nuggets that God is giving us? It's an opportunity for great joy.

Don't back out-lean into it.... then lean deeper again, and then lean deeper into it, again. That means you'll be going deeper. Isn't that the way we say we want it to be? So, let's face ourselves and find deeper opportunities rather than complaining and becoming aggravated, but instead see it as an opportunity to deepen because you're going to have trials. You're not going to get away from it, but if you can accept the process of submission and dying out to yourself you will have a wonderful **flowing** experience rather than fighting God all your life. What do you think?

Most Christians don't lean so much as fighting with it or complaining and getting frustrated or depressed even thinking that God's not being fair. Have you ever felt that way? What is God saying? He's saying surrender, die out to yourself, and let God be in control. You'll have more peace and tranquility settle upon you and trust rather than frustration. Don't forget about Paul. He was tranquil even though he was suffering.

I wish we could all get a sweeter countenance about our trials knowing that they are growing us. **It's not about just getting through it, but it's how we get through it and our attitude when we are going through it** like Paul and Silas in jail. They were praising. They had the sweet "nectar" of the presence of Jesus and weren't worried about the fact that they were in a terrible situation. They just praised with joy. That is when you are really becoming mature.

Can we become "people of leaning and depending" knowing we can't, but He will if we get deeper? Sometimes God requires us to do our "spiritual exercises" to help us learn to lean and to grow us. We should master the art of "spiritual exercises" instead of just wanting a blessing.

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The word **exercise** in the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* is defined as "something performed or practiced in order to develop, improve, or display a specific capability or skill."

It's like going to the gym, it hurts if you do it right. Calisthenics, weightlifting, and running are all exercises that hurt if you do them well. We resist doing these exercises, because it hurts. It's painful! The way to obtain success is by embracing the exercises that hurts if you do it well. That is what we're talking about in our walk with God. God "exercises" us to develop us. We must build up our "muscles" of endurance.

If we have a hurt, whether it be physical or emotional, that we must bear-it will teach us endurance. There is also a self-induced suffering. It's called "fasting" when we don't wait for someone or something to cause us to suffer, but we willingly create suffering upon ourselves i.e. fasting. It's called denial of "self" when we bring ourselves down willingly by surrendering to God and denying our flesh through fasting.

Fasting is self-induced suffering which causes us to lean...i.e. the denial of carnality. It kills carnality. We tend to run from it, but as saints we should regularly fast to bring ourselves into **SELF-INDUCED DEPENDENCE**. Now we're getting somewhere. Have you left me?

The maturity factor really comes into play in our lives when we are willing to fast with joy. If we don't have the "joy" of it, we will fail. If we're just enduring it, we're not getting the best "BANG for our buck" if you will. We must be joyful about it.

Fasting is almost a lost art. The Apostle Paul was very much an advocate of "much" fasting. When we fast, we're rejecting our pleasures and when we do that we change. We become more and more transformed by self-denial. Its counter intuitive because our tendency is to eat. By denying that, we are transformed into freedom from the power of carnality i.e. eating. It sets us free. That is what fasting is about...controlling our carnality and dying out to the power of carnality. It's not fun, but it works powerfully. Do you want to try it, or would you rather just be stuck? What do you think???

The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines **carnal** as "relating to or given to crude bodily pleasures and appetites gluttony and other carnal activities."

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If that is true, and we're being carnal that's something we should address in our lives. Look at the world and how the world loves carnality. It is a place of carnal pleasures which go against God's lifestyle. Carnality is anti-Godly. That is why it's so hard because there is pleasure in carnality. We must reject it and deny our flesh. One of the ways we can do this is through fasting. The more we deny it the weaker it becomes, and the more powerful God becomes in our life.

As we deny our carnality, our carnality loses its grip. That's why we have fasting. We are attacking the carnality in our life. We get smaller, and God gets bigger when we fast. There is some discomfort, but there are boundless benefits from fasting.

In days gone, we have on several occasions gone to fasting, sometimes for several days, and sometimes for just one day. It always did the job. When our church was somewhat "blah" we went on a fast, and the church flourished again. When you fast, you get freedom from your carnality.

Matthew 17:21 in the King James Version (KJV) states, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Mark 9:29 in the King James Version (KJV) teaches us, "And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

Apostle Paul was a great example of what it means to "lean". In II Corinthians Paul spoke of the difficulties, trials, and pains, that he experienced.

Paul writes in, **II Corinthians 11:22-31 Amplified Bible (AMP)**, "²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they [self-proclaimed] servants of Christ?—I am speaking as if I were out of my mind—I am more so [for I exceed them]; with far more labors, with far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, and often in danger of death. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews [e]thirty-nine *lashes*. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent *adrift* on the sea; ²⁶ many times on journeys, [exposed to] danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own countrymen, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger on the sea, danger among those posing as believers; ²⁷ in labor and hardship, often unable to sleep, in hunger and thirst, often [driven to] fasting [for lack of food], in cold and exposure [without adequate clothing]. ²⁸ Besides those external things, there is the daily [inescapable]

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pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I do not feel [his] weakness? Who is made to sin, and I am not on fire [with sorrow and concern]? ³⁰If I must boast, I will boast of the things that reveal my weakness [the things by which I am made weak in the eyes of my opponents]. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed *and* to be praised forevermore, knows that I am not lying.”

This is how Paul learned to “lean”!

II Corinthians 12:1-3 in the Amplified Bible (AMP) states, “It is necessary to boast, though nothing is gained by it; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a ^[a]man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, [only] God knows—such a man was caught up to the ^[b]third heaven. ³And I know that such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, [only] God knows— “

This was Paul speaking about himself in the third person. Do you think he would have been able to do this if he wasn't fasting, praying, and completely leaning on God? Maybe things would be more powerful in our lives if we did a little bit of what he did. What do you think?

Paul was in the ethereal. He wasn't in the world nor was he out of the world. That means he wasn't sure if he was in heaven or on earth. He didn't know. Isn't that interesting that he himself was not sure whether he was in heaven or on earth. He was in the ethereal. How cool is that? He told us he wasn't sure. How would you like to go to the ethereal? We need to do some fasting if we're going to do that!

The word **ethereal** in the *Meriam-Webster Dictionary* is defined as “relating to the regions beyond the earth; celestial, heavenly, other worldly, spiritual.”

II Corinthians 12:4-6 in the Amplified Bible (AMP) continues, “⁴was caught up into ^[c]Paradise and heard inexpressible words which man is not permitted to speak [words too sacred to tell]. ⁵On behalf of such a man [and his experiences] I will boast; but in my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. ⁶If I wish to boast, I will not be foolish, because I will be speaking

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the truth. But I abstain [from it], so that no one will credit me with more than [is justified by what] he sees in me or hears from me.”

Can you see the humility in that passage from our brother Paul? He is decreasing his flesh and increasing God. He is doing his very best to stay humble yet trying to share these wonderful truths that he knows hoping that no one thought he was bragging. He put himself in a lower place so that God could be glorified, and the disciples and the brothers and sisters would receive it for themselves, not because they were excited for what Paul was, but so that they themselves could be partakers of it.

All the stories of the apostles and the great preachers, etc. demonstrated how they grew through their trials. It made them mighty. We as humans want an easy way so much that we reject what needs to take place in our walk. There is a price to pay.

The Apostle Paul, after he was born again, slipped away for about three years doing his “exercises” meaning he recalibrated his being before he launched his ministry. What was he doing during those times? He was “exercising”! He didn’t just become saved, and then become an apostle. He had to recalibrate. God worked on him for three years, and then God sent him prepared to deal with the pressure, the pain, the hurts, and the rejections, and powerful revival and successes as he established the new testament church--great rejection, and great success simultaneously.

He became the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was mighty. He was resolute. He was tried. Then he was sent. Did you know that? What do you think about that? It’s right there in the book of Acts. He did that so that he could get everything out of him (Paul), so only Him (Meaning God) was in him--“Paul out and God in”.

It took three years of training, developing, transforming, deepening, discipleship, and prayer; seeking deeper, and deeper so that he could be successful in his mission and ministry. He became “dead” to himself. The trials that he experienced kept him humble and taught him to lean. He had plenty of opportunities to “die” and “die” again so that he could keep his flesh in

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subjection, and he gladly embraced it. In other words, he could be completely led because he was "dead" to himself.

Let's look at it from the perspective of being "alive in sin". That would mean "full of sin". He had perfected his being, so that he was "dead to sin". He was in a place that he was able to not have any ill feelings or bad attitudes. It was as if he was "dead". He did not respond to anything negative even to those who hurt him. He didn't retaliate.

Sis. Nona Freeman, a great woman of God, along with her husband spent years as missionaries in Africa and witnessed many miracles in their ministry. She once said it like this, "If a person is dead, someone could spit on them and they wouldn't care!" This is a good example of how to be "dead" as if you didn't have feelings about what was done.

When Paul was persecuted and hurting, he didn't respond. Paul just became still and did not respond even emotionally as if he was "dead". He did that so he could become something else. God could clearly and totally control him by the lack of resistance. He was broken completely, so he could be led completely. He was broken and shattered so God could reshape him into the vessel he was supposed to be. He "leaned" completely on God.

Do you know those little hang ups that you may have...those little hang ups that irk you, and sometimes people will even make you angry? That's what he burned out of him, so that he didn't have any reactions like we do when people hurt us. Paul became "dead" to reactions. He was "still" even while in pain. He could do this because he had matured through his trials. This is paramount.

I believe our world is "fat" and "sassy". What I mean is...no real sense of godliness (pompous, arrogant, haughty, and sinful). I wonder--follow my folly--if the coronavirus is a gift from God to wake up America and the entire world. This has never happened before in America.

Many times, God will shake people up through trials, suffering, and pain, getting us out of our pompous ungodliness. God will bring us down to our knees. It sure seems like something is going on folks. I do believe that God is using this coronavirus that is rolling across our world to call us to lean upon Him and repent. What do you think about that?

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If that is true, maybe we should be falling on our knees seeking God more fervently, and really praying for our nation and the world. If we don't pray nobody else is going to pray. We need Christians to fall on their knees and wail. Meaning we need "real" prayer! We need fervent and passionate prayer...not "Now I lay me down to sleep" type of prayers. Would you agree with me about that or not?

We see that we are absolutely called to have suffering, so we can become more and more developed, mature, and perfected. It's like doing calisthenics. You don't use calisthenics to be hurt or diminished. It's so that we can become stronger to build up spiritual muscles. It hurts! When working out for example-- lifting weights break down your muscles, so your muscles can develop stronger. I wonder how much "muscles" Paul had after he finished his "exercises" at the end of his life. He must have had some "big spiritual muscles".

Paul knew what it meant to "lean into the joy" of the Lord. The point is Paul's joy was transcendent, that's how he was able to be joyful even though he was going through EXTREME difficulties. He had EXTREME joy simultaneously, and EXTREME suffering. His body in the flesh was negative, and in the spirit it was positive. He had suffering, but he had ecstasy simultaneously and he knew his sufferings were to help him get deeper and broader. That is why he was as great as he was. He was willing to do that, and yearned to do it, so he could become completely Christ like-like Jesus did. He knew the church needed someone who could be totally given to it. He was willing to go the full measure.

In the book of Acts chapter 28, imagine when Paul swam safely ashore to the Island called Melita, practically being almost drowned. On the island, he gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on a fire. When he did this a venomous viper came out of the fire because of the heat and bit Paul. Paul shook it off. The people when they saw that nothing happened to Paul, they thought he was a god because they knew he should of fell dead after being bit by the venomous viper. Paul suffered, and God used it bring the gospel to the people of Melita. Can you imagine having been in the ocean, practically drowning, getting to an island miraculously, and then getting bit by a venomous viper? Paul wasn't destroyed, and God used it as a miracle to open the entire area for the gospel? What a guy!

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It's the Safest Place on the Planet.)

Bishop Ron Libby

Notes

No matter what is happening in the natural, you can still have joy. Therefore, we can be joyful even when life is overwhelming, difficult, and painful. Not only can we, we must despite our circumstances by getting into the "manifested Spirit" until we get the joy of the Lord and get "above it" meaning both having trials and ecstasy at the same time. Jesus did that exact thing on the cross. He had ecstatic joy and deep pain at the same time. What do you think about that?

The only way out of the trial is to go into it and through it, leaning more and more on Jesus. Don't waste your pain, persecution, or rejection because it is developing you into a Christ like life. Running away will cause you to go back around again. If you are going "through it", don't run from it, stay there and deepen in it, (whatever your suffering is) or you will have to just go back around until you get it. Do you get it? **Lean**..... depending on it...into the joy of the Lord even if you're being persecuted. Get your joy from God and His presence the manifestation of joy and know your reward is coming from God, and that can take you all the way to eternity! People will hurt you. People will hate you. Don't strike back. Go deeper into your experience and your walk with God--less of you and more of Him The world needs you and I to be the salt of the earth.

We can walk in the Spirit and let the "joy of the Lord" help us overcome with joy, and not become depressed, heavy, or gloomy. We can have the joy of the Lord and know it's an honor if we suffer for him. Do you agree with me that it is an honor? Is He worthy of it? If you become mistreated for your faith, it's joy! The more the suffering and struggles.... i.e. unsaved family can make life miserable sometimes....co-workers can make problems for us sometimes.... etc. The more the difficulties for the gospel, the more the joy. We don't have to lose our joy if we focus on Jesus and not our pain. If you look on the trials, you're going to lose your joy.

If you focus on Jesus and lean on Him, you can have joy even though you are in pain. Just keep your focus on Jesus and not your pain. Jesus did it on the cross. He was in pain, and He was still joyful, because He knew He was saving Himself for eternity although He was in agony at the same time. **It's not what is hurting me, it's what I'm receiving.** It's not the cost that I suffer, "the joy of the Lord is my strength." We should focus on His strength and His joy.

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We should be sure to continually check in on our "leaning meter". We need to constantly look at our "leaning meter" to gauge whether we are leaning on ourselves or are we leaning on Jesus **completely**. If our meter is hot for Jesus, we'll have more strength and power. Weak Christians who are cold on the "leaning meter" will be subject to being weak, not deepening, and vulnerable to the enemy. Where are you on your "leaning meter"? We should be depending on God. In other words, we should be leaning all the time into the joy that God gives us.

When Jesus was dying on the cross He was leaning as the son of God. He was depending on God's strength. Isn't that amazing?! That is why He was triumphant, because He "leaned". There were also two thieves crucified with Him. One thief "leaned" into God and the other didn't. The one who "leaned" on Christ was red hot on his "leaning meter! He depended on God even as a raggedy sinner. He turned to Jesus on his cross saying, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." He repented. He was humble. So, when Jesus died and the thief that leaned into Him died, they both went to be in paradise together that very day.

Now there was only one left, and he died also. However, he went to hell when he could have gone to paradise. He didn't **lean**. He was arrogant, unbelieving, self-centered, bitter, and unrepentant. SAD! think about that. It started with three and only one didn't lean-and he could have, but he rejected it!!! It could have been nobody!

Just like the thief that became angry with Jesus on the cross, we also can become bitter and angry when going through trials and difficulties, and turn against or away from God, when instead when we go through trials and difficulties, we should be turning to God and leaning on Him deeply. Make it a daily exercise, so that you can **lean regularly**, depending on God regularly. Be conscience about it in your prayer life, in church, in your school time, etc., and remember to lean

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depending on Him. If you'll lean in the Spirit regularly, you will walk in the Spirit like the apostle Paul did.

Do you want to be a puny Christian-a weakling? Think about it. My personal trial could kill me, or it could grow me to more depth than ever before. It's my choice. What if I would become bitter and angry? I would blow the opportunity to have greater joy. What do you think? When going through difficult times we must learn to lean, depend, and rely on the joy of the Lord. It is our strength.

The Greek Meaning of Joy (chara) (and rejoice) describes a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. Joy in the New Testament is virtually always used to signify a feeling of "happiness" that is based on spiritual realities (and independent of what "happens").

Romans 15:13 in the Amplified Bible (AMP) states, "13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope *and* overflow with confidence in His promises."

What would it be like to be in an overflow? What do you think that will feel like? Would we be able to handle that? I'd sure like to try. How about you?

Psalm 16:11 in the King James Version (KJV) tells us, "11Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

When we get in God's presence, we can have a banquet regardless of our suffering if we choose by transcending. Yes, sometimes we will suffer, but it's such a small tiny thing. We can transcend the natural and rise above it and have joy even though we are suffering. That's how the apostles did it. They transcended. Get in the Spirit. What I just shared on transcending is so important. When we go through trials and difficulties, we can go into a "transcendental" place in the spirit by letting go of self. You may do this and maybe, not even realize what you are doing meaning when you get in the Spirit and let go.

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Transcend in the *Meriam Webster Dictionary* is defined as “to rise above or extend notably beyond ordinary limits.”

When we pray and worship when things are difficult, hurtful, or “downish”, we can transcend as children of God. We have a “right” to step into the ethereal and find ecstasy. God will mitigate the pain, meaning He will make it doable. We must focus on Jesus and not our problems. Probably most of you, and other good Christians have been doing that for a very long time but haven't really understood it. We often call it the “anointing.”

The Foxe's Book of Martyrs speaks of accounts where Christians were persecuted and suffered horribly for Christ's sake. Despite their horrific sufferings and almost unbearable pain they were able to depend and lean into the joy of the Lord which gave them strength to endure these atrocities. **Take some time to read about how they suffered. This will cause you to go deep.**

One such account involved a man named Thomas Hawkes. He was a protestant martyr who was burned to death in 1555. He refused to allow his son to be baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. The Foxe's Book of Martyrs states, “While he was burning, Hawkes threw up his hands and clapped them three times, a sign to his friends that the pain could be endured.”

Here are a few more accounts...

During the The First Persecution under Nero in 67 A.D. Nero committed such atrocities as sewing skins of wild beasts on Christians and then allowing dogs to attack them until they died; and others were dressed in shirts made of wax, attached to trees and set on fire in his gardens in order to illuminate it.

Trajan, another Christian, boldly vindicated the faith of Christ before the emperor, so he was thrown into prison and tormented. He was beaten, and forced to hold fire in his hands, papers were dipped in oil, put on his sides, and set on fire. His flesh was then torn with red hot pincers, and lastly, he was thrown to wild animals to be torn to pieces.

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Julian, a native of Cilicia, was apprehended for being a Christian. He was put into a leather bag, together with several serpents and scorpions, and in that condition thrown into the sea.

Nichomachus, another Christian, was ordered to sacrifice to the pagan idols. Nichomachus replied, "I cannot pay that respect to devils, which is only due to the Almighty." This made the proconsul so angry that Nichomachus was put to the rack. After enduring being tormented for a time, he recanted; but scarcely had he recanted when he fell into great pain and dropped down on the ground and died immediately.

Denisa, a young woman about 16 years old, who saw this terrible judgment, suddenly cried out, "O unhappy wretch, why would you buy a moment's ease at the expense of a miserable eternity!" Optimus, when heard what she said called to her. Denisa vowed herself to be a Christian and was beheaded soon after.

You can read these accounts for yourself. These are just a few of the many accounts. They are all in the Foxe's Book of Martyrs. THESE WERE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS. Sobering isn't it? They had temporary suffering for eternal joy **forever!** That is true joy. They had a joy that would not be quenched. What are you going to do if you come to that place?

Colossians 1:11 King James Version (KJV) states, "11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;"

Let's look at the same scripture in the amplified version.

Colossians 1:11 Amplified Bible (AMP) states, "11 [we pray that you may be] strengthened *and* invigorated with all power, according to His glorious might, to attain every kind of endurance and patience with joy;"

The apostles were giving them encouragement and helping them as they suffered for Jesus's sake. The apostles were admonishing them to be invigorated in their faith. They taught them to invigorate themselves. Invigorate means to motivate. So how did they do that when they were drained? They fell on their knees, and lean into Jesus deeper, seeking, seeking, and seeking. Deepening, surrendering self, and discovering **new wells of glory**. That's how you do it.

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Just like those in The Foxe's Book of Martyrs they leaned more and more. Remember the one named Nichomachus that gave up, and he died anyway when he recanted and then he couldn't repent. Foolish! Keep seeking deeper, surrendering self, leaning and dying to self, until you get what you need to deal with what you must deal with in the spirit. It's there! You just need to go get it!!! It's all about motivation or the lack of motivation. The man who recanted, and then died anyway was foolish. He died, but he didn't die saved. He didn't seek enough. He didn't lean enough.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines invigorate as "to give new energy or strength to someone or something." Some synonyms are to revitalize, energize, refresh, rejuvenate, and motivate.

Through my years I've seen a lot of people come and go. Many of them could have easily made it with a little effort and passion, but they just gave up. They became discouraged or angry because of trials, some offense, or angry with standards and rejected God—these are just a few examples of why they gave up. They just didn't LEAN enough!

When we find ourselves going through difficult or challenging times, we either deepen and seek for more or die and give up spiritually. Much of that could be accounted to laziness's, slothfulness, and a lack of love for God and life. The enemy tries us, and oftentimes we are not up to the trial. That is where we must go deeper. It demonstrates to us how we are not so deep, and we must do the work of seeking passionately to find Him anew in deeper places, surrendering ourselves and leaning.

When God seems to be prodding you through trials or difficulties, perhaps He might be trying to help you get through a "rough patch". When you feel like you can't do it, God will prod you to encourage you. We need Him and should call out to Him to get us through the "hump" of resistance. He will show up! Give Him worship and praise. Let Him flow into your life more and more and more. Keep praising Him. It is a supernatural relationship! What do you think about that?

God will come along and help you when you feel you need strength. You're not alone. You're not by yourself. LOOK to Him and praise Him, seek Him, and just

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keep **LEANING!!!** When you lean you are dependent in His hands. It's the safest place on the planet.

Just like the words to the old song....

"Safe and secure from all alarms
Leaning, leaning
Leaning on the everlasting arms"

Don't ever forget those arms. You will need them, and He is so willing to wrap you into His arms.