



TEEN TREE OF LIFE Facing Life's Challenges July 15, 2018

BEFORE we begin, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, take a moment to name your sins to God the Father. This will allow you to be filled with the power of The Holy Spirit as you read this booklet (EPH 5:18 & 1JOH1:9). IF YOU HAVE never believed in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have that opportunity right now. Simply tell God the Father that you are believing on His Son Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you make that decision, you are now a believer and will always be a child of God! When you die, you will spend eternity with Him forever in heaven! (JOH 3:16 & ACT 16:31)

As you go through life, there are going to be many challenges you will have to face. You will face challenges with people in your life and circumstances in which you find yourself – whether as a result of your own choices or because God has placed you in them. You will face challenges with health, school, friendships, authority and finances. Facing challenges is a fact! How we face them is entirely up to each of us.

When we are walking in God's Plan for our life, we present ourselves to God as vessels of Christ's Light to shine onto this lost and dying world. When we walk in Christ, God uses our lives as a witness of His Grace and Glory, His Righteousness and His Justice. Our witness comes in many ways. We are witnesses in what we say and in what we do. We witness in how we respond to life's challenging situations and through our response to the temptations we face. But one thing is clear for the believer who is walking in God's plan. The challenges and temptations we face will not be greater than what we are capable of handling at any time in our spiritual walk with God: **No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (1COR 10:13)** Something important to remember is a temptation can also include being tempted to be afraid or to turn your back on God's Word.

Let's look at two temptations that Jesus Christ faced at two very different times in His Ministry here on earth. The first was when He began His Ministry and is recorded in **Matthew 3 & 4. MAT 3:16-17 & 4:1: After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.** In these verses, we see Jesus Christ prepared for a challenge. He has purpose, He has drive, and He has vigor.

He is ready for the fight. We see His Father Praise Him and, more importantly, Empower Him with The Holy Spirit. He is ready for the fight.

Jesus ended up in the wilderness for forty days and nights without food. And then He was tempted by Satan. This was a difficult challenge but nothing compared to what He would face later on. This challenge was right for where He was at that time in His Walk with God. This lesson teaches us how to endure the challenges we face in our own lives.

Sometimes we head into the wilderness of life with vigor and gusto. We are prepared with the Word of God. We are confident that God is with us. We have a mission to accomplish, and we are ready to conquer it. At those times, God has allowed the challenges to come and we stand or fall, based on our application of His Word and use of the Power of The Holy Spirit. These challenges are great lessons in life for us. We are able to see where we were successful and learn from the areas in which we failed. Always remember: if we keep ourselves in God's Plan, we ultimately will grow spiritually and become greater vessels of honor for God. And we remain in God's Plan by continuing to rebound when we sin and to study and apply God's Word. Those are the challenges we must face in order to glorify God.

As we continue to learn God's Word and then grow in His Grace Plan, we'll see these challenges getting greater and greater, while at the same time we see ourselves growing spiritually and conquering more and more of the temptations.

Then there is the other kind of challenge that comes into our lives. In these challenges, we don't have all of the gusto. We are not as bold and ready to face them. Many times, we do not think we are ready to face them. Many times, we don't want to face them. But still the challenge looms before us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, with all of His knowledge of God's Word – which gave Him tremendous spiritual power – He too had a challenge that He did not want to face. This second challenge is found in **MAR 14:32-36: *They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."*** This last statement is emphasized even more so in **LUK 22:42: *"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."*** The Message Bible translates it nicely: ***"Father, remove this cup from me. But please, not what I want. What do you want?"***

God is aware that we don't always want to face the challenges of life. As we are shown in the Bible, Jesus Christ did not want to face this challenge in His life, either. The pressure on His soul was great, as indicated in **LUK 22:44: *And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.***

When faced with difficult challenges, we are apprehensive and don't feel we are ready for the challenge. But in times like these, God knows we are ready for the challenge. Trust that! We can be confident of this because of His promise found in **1COR 10:13: No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.**

When faced with difficult challenges, we have to rely on previous intake of the Word of God and the Filling of The Spirit. What you receive in return is Divine Power – God's Power! God's Power in your soul equates to your preparedness.

Another thing that will prepare you in difficult times is remembering that you may leave God, but He will never leave you alone! **HEB 13:5** states this: **for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you..."** Think of that the next time you are afraid or stressed.

An Important thing to think about is that although God is All-Powerful, we only have the amount of His Power equal to the proportion of the Word of God that is inside our souls. If you have only a small amount of the God's Word in your soul, you will only have a little bit of His power. In that case, we will be challenged in little ways, bring a little glory to God, and receive a little bit of blessing and rewards. But if you have a lot of the God's Word in your soul, you will have a lot of His Power and will be challenged in great ways, bringing a tremendous amount of glory to God, while receiving a great deal of blessings and rewards.

Now back in Gethsemane, Jesus said something very important in his prayers: **"Father, if you are willing."** Even though Jesus wanted a way out of what was about to come, He left the matter in The Hands of The Sovereign Father. Jesus had enough doctrine in His Soul to recognize that sometimes we don't want to face a challenge and we don't think we have what it takes. Yet, He understood that if God's Will is for us to face the challenge, then apparently, we must have what it takes to face it! You should always remember that. If you're facing it, you've got what it takes to overcome it! The appropriate attitude of the Christian soldier is to accept the challenge because of Faith in God! Like Jesus we must place ourselves wholeheartedly in The Hands of The Father, saying: **"If this is your will Father then so be it."**

The story never ends with the challenge; it ends with the victory. Jesus faced the challenge of The Cross. He was tempted completely, physically, mentally, and spiritually. These were part of the final challenge that He faced, because God knew He had all the right stuff. As **HEB 12:2** tells us: **...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** As a result of **"enduring the cross,"** He won the strategic victory of the Angelic Conflict, by paying the price for our sins with the result that spiritual death was defeated. He endured a challenge He didn't want to face, but still had the God's Happiness at all times. This is evident by the words: **"who for the joy set before Him."** This joy was inner peace and contentment through His Relationship with The Father plus knowing that all of mankind would have that same opportunity for everlasting peace and happiness.

Christ maintained the inner peace and happiness that comes as a result of God's Word being resident in His soul and He endured The Cross – the most difficult challenge in the history of the world! If Christ was able to meet and endure the challenge set before Him, you and I are also able to endure the challenges set before us.