

## **LIFE IS DIFFICULT, BUT LIFE ALSO IS GOOD**

**By Jim Mathis**

Life is difficult. This is a basic fact and the sooner we can come to accept and appreciate that reality, the better off and happier we will be. Let me explain.

If we know life is hard, that it is inevitable we will face many kinds of trials and difficult situations, we can begin to see life as a series of problems to be solved. We can face each day knowing we will have an opportunity to address problem situations, work through issues, and deal with difficult circumstances. Each time we solve a problem, we can feel victorious. The more victories we chalk up, the happier we are. Happiness always seems to be related to victory in some form.

If, on the other hand, we think life is supposed to be a leisurely cruise, a smooth journey from womb to grave, every problem we face will be perceived as an interruption, a disruption to our "happy" life. As these interruptions build up, we will find ourselves becoming embittered and discontented with our circumstances.

The wonderful humorist and writer, Erma Bombeck, authored two books that described these different attitudes. One she titled, *The Grass is Always Greener Over The Septic Tank*, and the other bore the title, *If Life is A Bowl of Cherries, Why Am I Always in the Pits?* Which one do you think reflected the view that life's struggles and adversities should be approached in an optimistic manner?

One of the main reasons I have always been an entrepreneur because I enjoy solving problems. When you have your own business, life is a continual series of problems to be solved. Perhaps some people fail as entrepreneurs because rather than finding motivation and challenge in solving problems, they choose to regard them as annoying disturbances and obstacles blocking the realization of their dreams.

I have found this to be true in my photography business, especially when I engage in the restoration of old or damaged photographs. Sometimes this work can be extremely challenging, requiring me to use all the creativity, ingenuity and every technological resource I can muster. However, rather than becoming disheartened by difficulty, I see it as an opportunity to learn, apply my years of experience – and bring delight to customers when they receive cherished photos I have been able to restore.

This holds true for every enterprise, whether your vocation is banking, retail, engineering, sales, home repair or some other pursuit. Your life can be full and rewarding – even victorious – when you view each day as bringing something different, accompanied by new challenges and issues for you to confront.

In a similar way, the Bible speaks honestly about life's struggles. It says, *"...we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 5:3-5). It also states, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything"* (James 1:2-4).

Yes, it is true – life is difficult. But it is also true that life is good.

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

1. How do you typically react when you encounter difficulties in life?
2. What can be the advantage of approaching difficult situations as problems to be solved, rather than as interruptions or disruptions to our peaceful lives?
3. Do you enjoy solving problems? Why or why not?
4. The Bible speaks about the benefits of experiencing suffering and trials in everyday life. Do you think this is realistic, or do you think our focus in life should be to avoid problems of all kinds, as much as possible? Explain your answer.

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 12:11, 21:5, 24:30-34; Romans 8:35-39, 12:12; 1 Peter 1:6-9, 4:12-13