

## STUDY 46 – HOW YOU CAN BE YOUR BEST WHEN THINGS ARE AT THEIR WORST

### ❖ THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

*When I was in my first year of college in 1966, Clint Eastwood made this cowboy movie called “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”. Now, about the only thing that I remember about that movie was that he was always smoking this real thin little cigar that was supposed to make him look kind of cool. He was the ultimate “hombre” for a western film. The movie was cast during the Civil War and Eastwood teamed up with a Mexican outlaw named “Tuco”. The deal they cut was that Eastwood would turn Tuco in for being a bandit and get the reward money, then rescue him just as he was about to be hanged by shooting the rope that Tuco was being hanged on. They would escape and split the cash. Now, I am not recommending that anyone watch the movie, but I am a little intrigued by the title of the movie “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”.*

So, I want to provide a Key Principle that I have learned in my own personal life. I have mentioned this before, but not as a Key Principle, and it deals with finding the good, the bad, and the ugly things in other people. Here is the principle.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 159: YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN SOMEONE ELSE’S LIFE – EITHER GOOD OR BAD.<sup>1</sup>**

You can always find what you are looking for in someone, either good, bad, or ugly. Once you develop a distaste for someone, this actually becomes a no-brainer. You can find what you are looking for whenever you want to find it. For instance, on the negative side:

1. If you want to find someone else’s faults, you can surely find them. Everyone has faults and shortcomings and flaws, and most of the time, they are really easy to recognize, so this is easy.
2. If you are looking for reasons not to like someone, you can surely find them. There are a lot of people who have personalities and temperaments that will just grate on you, and before you know it, you just do not like them, nor will you want to be around them.
3. If you are looking for reasons why it is okay to criticize someone else, you will surely find them. There are so many irritable things that surround us that you could spend an entire day making a list of all of the things that you can justify that make you critical of others. No problem at all.

So, whatever you are looking for, that is exactly what you will find. However, this principle works both ways, and God wants you to see that reality. Why? It is because if you are always finding the worst in someone, you will never be able to help them. Rather than becoming a channel through which God is able to work, you actually become a hindrance to what God wants to do in someone’s life who actually needs the help. Just as examples again:

1. If you are looking for good things in someone else, you can find them. Most of the time, not everyone is quite as bad as we make them out to be. In fact, I would say that very often we could be the one with a log in our eye trying to get a speck out of someone else’s eye. [Matthew 7:3](#) says,

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<sup>1</sup> Groeschel, *Winning*, 136.

**Mt 7:3 (NKJV) And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?**

2. If you are looking for some good reasons to love the unlovable, you can find them. Jesus actually told us to “**love your enemies**”. I know that some people are really difficult at times, but in many cases, God has brought them into your life so that you can actually help them. If you do not see life from God’s perspective, then this will be really difficult.
3. If you are looking for reasons to be patient with people, you can find them. The Scriptures talk about being patient, enduring, persevering many times over, and the reason is because those are the qualities that God wants to develop in your own personal life, and very often God’s instrument is someone who makes you very impatient. They are someone who frustrates you and makes you irritable, and so you find yourself asking God to change them, when in reality, He is using them to change you.

The goal and the neural pathway to develop is that **you want to always be looking for the goodness of God in every negative circumstance of your life.** As they were nailing Jesus to a cross, He was not cursing those doing the nailing, but rather asking God to forgive them for their total ignorance of what was happening. You do not want to waste one single negative circumstance of your life by not seeing how God is in it and how He wants to change you to be more like Himself. For instance,

1. If someone hurts you, you want to see God’s goodness in it and how He strengthened you to bear up under the hurt and how you did not say ugly and hurtful things back at them. God never wants you to retaliate with ugly and hurtful words.
2. If someone says something ugly about you, you want to see God’s goodness in how you were able to not become angry, bitter, or resentful towards them. That is Christlikeness.
3. If someone takes advantage of you, you want to see how God can turn it into good for your life. **Matthew 5:40-41** says,

**Mt 5:40 (NKJV) If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also.  
<sup>41</sup> **And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.****

The goal is to be like Christ. That is always the goal. So, one of the principles that we have to appreciate is that God is very often the One who has initiated your unpleasant circumstances to help you change something in your life that needs to be changed. I have stated it before, but if you allow God to change your character through your difficult circumstances, the sooner God is free to change your circumstances.

My favorite story in the Scriptures is the story of Joseph. He had a dream that was given to him by God Himself, so he shared the dream with both his brothers and his father. It embittered them greatly, and the result was that he was wrongly treated by his brothers, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, and thrown into jail for seven years. You can imagine just how bitter he could have become over those years, but he never did. In fact, he became one of the most gracious men in the Scriptures. Listen to what he told his brothers after he had revealed himself to them in **Genesis 45:5,7**. He made these two amazing statements,

**Ge 45:5 (NKJV) But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.**

He could look back on his life and see how the hand of God was overseeing and providentially caring for him, even when it may not have looked like that was what was happening.

**Ge 45:7 (NKJV) And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.**

This is such an amazing statement because he was telling his brothers that God had allowed them to do to him what they did, but that God was so sovereign that He was going to use it to actually save his brother's lives, his father's life, and all of their wives and children. Joseph was able to see the goodness of God and the hand of God in everything that had happened in his life, and most of it very undeserved. Later on in [Genesis 50:20](#) is the most sublime statement that I know on the sovereignty of God.

**Ge 50:20 (NKJV) But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.**

Joseph was constantly able to see the goodness of God and the hand of God in every negative circumstance of his life, and because of that, God was able to use him in ways he never even imagined possible. I also want you to note how kind and gracious he was with his brothers when he said the following to them in [Genesis 50:21](#),

**Ge 50:21 (NKJV) Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**

This is as perfect a picture of Christlikeness in the Old Testament as you can find. This is the goodness of God at work, and the grace of God being manifested in a man's life who trusted God fully with his life. He refused to become bitter or angry. He refused to compromise his morals. He refused to take revenge. This is what it means to be Christlike in all that you do. Men and women, this is how you want to live. This is how you want to think. This is how you connect your mind with your life.

Having had six surgeries in fourteen months from February 2021 to April 2022, I found the goodness of God in all of my surgeries. Here is just a partial listing of all that I found related to the goodness of God.

1. I had my Stage 4 cancer removed and it had not yet metastasized at that time.
2. I have not yet had to take chemo-therapy or radiation after the surgery.
3. I have had great doctors who were skilled and efficient.
4. Issues with my bladder control have helped me to see that the grace of God is sufficient.
5. I am thankful that my insurance has paid for everything.
6. I have seen God's peace overwhelm my life as I have had to face Stage 4 prostate cancer surgery, bladder surgery to remove bladder stones, a major incisional hernia repair, a two month removal of fluid out one of my lymph nodes, and the implant of a urinary sphincter device twice.
7. I did not have any major complications.
8. I did not have to take many antibiotics.
9. I did not get Covid during all of the times when my body was weak and susceptible.
10. The church I pastor was so good to me during my necessary absences.
11. God brought our church a wonderful Associate Pastor to help fill in for me when I was absent.
12. I learned to trust God even more with my life.

13. I watched my amazing wife relentlessly and ceaselessly care for me before, during, and after every surgery.

I could go on and on and on with things where I see the goodness of God. I simply do not want to miss all of the good things that God is bringing out as He continues to weave the tapestry of my life. His hand is over all things and He is in sovereign control of all that happens to my life.

I imagine that if you want to find the goodness of God in your life, that it would not take long for you to actually find it – **if you will just look**. The more you look, the more you will find God working in your life. The more that you look for the goodness of God, the more you will be amazed at how God is actually working in your life and how good He is to you. I read something in one of the books that has helped me in developing these studies, and what the individual said, and I thought this was utterly amazing, and I quote – “*You are at your best when things are at their worst.*”<sup>2</sup> When I read that I realized that that was exactly what God wants from our life.

1. He wants us to be at our very best when things are at their very worst.
2. He wants us to be Christlike when everything in our life screams that it would be okay not to be.
3. He wants us to yield to His perfect will in the most imperfect circumstances.
4. He wants us to be “**strong in the Lord**” when the battle is raging for our minds.
5. He wants us to be the very best we can be when nothing is going our way.

This is what God desires for us and from us – to simply know that God is right there beside us in the worst that life can bring our way. Now, I do not want this to sound trite or demeaning in any way as if Christ was not always this way, but **Jesus was at His very best when things in His life were at their very worst**. Betrayed, falsely arrested, falsely accused, falsely convicted, falsely beaten, and falsely murdered. Jesus is your model and you want to become like Him no matter if you may have to suffer through things in your life that are very painful. It was this moment in history when everything went dark for three hours as God the Father could not look at God the Son as He was being made sin for us, but it was this very moment when Jesus excelled in enduring the worst that became your salvation.

Just assume that you know of a very stressful situation that you will have to face with someone in a couple of days. Before you know it, you have worked yourself into an absolute frenzy about the whole thing. You have no peace and you are even somewhat afraid. Not one single thing inside of you wants to face this upcoming moment, but you have no choice. What do you do? Well, you simply have to determine ahead of time how God wants you to respond. It really is that simple. You cannot make it complicated. Jesus was going to the cross and this is what He said “*Let me wash your feet*”, then “*We need to go pray*”, then He said, “*My hour has come. It’s time to go.*”. Just remember that the will of God is always the very best path for your life, so if you will predetermine how you are going to respond before you ever enter the conflict, then you will have a strength that you did not previously have.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 160: IF YOU ALWAYS FOCUS ON YOUR PROBLEM, YOU WILL NOT SEE GOD AT WORK IN YOUR LIFE.**

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<sup>2</sup> Groeschel, *Winning*, 144.

So, here is how you attack your problem. **Determine what you know is the perfect will of God for your life in a difficult situation.** Write it down, memorize it, go over it and over it again, then commit your life to God's best for your life. You might write down that "*I will not become angry. I will not express frustration. I will glorify God in what I say and how I say it. Even if I am hurt emotionally in this circumstance, I will not retaliate. I will be as Christlike as is humanly possible no matter what the cost to me.*" You constantly remind yourself of [Philippians 4:13](#) which declares that "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**" This is your neural pathway to becoming what God wants you to become. I have six areas where this will help you.

1. This is how you spiritually prepare for conflict.
2. This is how you continue to commit your life to Christ.
3. This is how you allow the Holy Spirit to lead you.
4. This is how you become a godly man or a godly woman.
5. This is how Christ lives in you and how He lives through you.
6. This is how you live out the Christian life in a way that glorifies God.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 161: GOD IS ALWAYS ENOUGH AND HE IS ALWAYS BIGGER THAN YOUR PROBLEMS.<sup>3</sup>**

No matter how difficult the situation, God says "**I will never leave you or forsake you**". That is His way of simply saying that as long as He is in your life, you will be fine. Nothing can have a greater bearing on your life than to know that God is always with you. Even if you lost everything that you owned, God will be with you. [Psalm 145:17-19](#) expresses it this way,

**Ps 145:17 (NKJV) The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works. <sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. <sup>19</sup> He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.**

Now, the problem that forgetting about God creates in your life is that you will not be inclined to pray to Him until something really devastating happens to you. In essence, your thoughts are moving in the wrong direction, and they will leave you both empty and unfulfilled. [1 Peter 5:6-7](#) says,

**1Pe 5:6 (NKJV) Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**

I have found in my own life that the more that I pray, the less anxious I become about things and the more peace I have in my life.

❖ **FEELING OVERWHELMED**

*I once received a phone call from one of our professors that he was feeling overwhelmed in ministry and was no longer willing to finish out the second half of the semester with his students. My heart was burdened for this individual who was actually a really good professor, but the ministry had simply placed too much stress on his life and he just felt that he had to let go of some things that he was involved in. I agreed. The problem was simple though – who could take his place in the middle of a*

<sup>3</sup> Groeschel, *Winning*, 164.

*semester? I could panic or trust God. I had a choice and I immediately chose to trust God. I knew that this had not caught God unawares and that He had someone that could and would help us out by finish teaching this course. I did not know who the individual might be, but God did, and He provided and all was well.*

I must admit that I deeply prefer God's peace over my personal panic, and prayer is one key element that provides that peace for my life. [Hebrews 4:16](#) says,

**Heb 4:16 (NKJV) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

I want you to think through something with me for just a moment. What if you found yourself being thrown into prison like Paul and Silas in [Acts 16](#)? Jails in the first century were not like the jails we have today with exercise rooms, chaplains, comfortable beds, and three meals a day with your own private restroom. You get to have plenty of physical time outdoors and many prisons actually have libraries where you can go and read. Jails in Paul's day were dirty, had hard dirt floors, not much light at all, were very cold in the winter, and I have no idea where they went to the bathroom. Paul and Silas had actually been beaten, but there were no medications and bandages that they could use for their wounds. They just threw them in the cell and walked away. So, what would you have done? Well, they decided that they would praise God that they had been counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. What happened is that God sent a great earthquake and all the cell doors opened so that all the prisoners could flee. The jailer was scared to death and drew a sword to kill himself. Well, you know the rest of the story. The jailer got saved and his whole family. He even got baptized that evening. The jailer actually brought Paul and Silas into his house, cleaned their wounds, fed them, and began to rejoice that he and his family had gotten saved. Praising God for where you are in your life and for what is happening to you is a great way to think.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 162: GENUINELY PRAISING GOD FOR YOUR PROBLEMS HELPS YOU TO SEE THROUGH YOUR PROBLEMS.**

Most of the time we are always looking at our problems, and at times that can be overwhelming if we continue to think that way. If you can learn to look past your problems, you can better see God. When you get nervous and anxious about something, what it actually means is that you are looking at the wrong thing. You are believing some lie of the devil who always wants to help you take your focus off of God.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 163: THE MORE YOU FOCUS ON YOUR PROBLEMS, THE MORE YOU WILL BE OVERWHELMED BY YOUR PROBLEMS.**

You will feel trapped with no way out. However, when you are able to look through your problems, what you will see is an omnipotent and sovereign God who is able to help you more than you realize.<sup>4</sup> Once again, all of this simply gets back to how you think. Whatever it is that is controlling your mind is exactly what is controlling your life. I beg you, let it be God.

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<sup>4</sup> Groeschel, *Winning*, 193.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Groeschel, Craig. *Winning the War in Your Mind*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Books, 2021.