

Too Much On Purpose
August 21, 2016

There are myths in America. There are commonly believed untruths in our culture. There are things people believe, and tell each other, that are just not true. Often they are things that SOUND true, that make SOME sense, and people WANT them to be true. But they are just myths.

For example, several people have told me you can drive up to five miles over the speed limit and the police will not give you a ticket. That isn't true. And I don't know anybody that REALLY believes that. I have never seen anyone drive five miles over the limit when a police car can be seen. Instead, when a police car is following, often the guy in front of me slows down below the speed limit. I've not seen anyone test the five MPH rule when a police car is in view.

Just as there are cultural myths floating around, there are also religious myths that some people choose to believe. You might have adopted one of the following myths.

God wants me to be happy. Usually the person saying this is NOT defining happiness by heaven's riches, like salvation from sin or receiving eternal life. No, the person has in worldly riches. I want to get married. I want kids. I want a house. I want a good job. I want all the modern comforts and toys. This is what the person is thinking when they say, "God wants me to be happy."

While God may allow you some of those things, He is most concerned that you be saved and know the joy of His salvation. But nowhere are we promised to be happy by the standards of the world.

When you die, God gains another angel. There is nothing in the Bible that even hints that humans who die and go to heaven become angels. Instead, the Bible presents angels as a whole other creature that God created. Believing that humans become angels is like saying dogs become horses in heaven.

Cleanliness is next to godliness. The people around you will certainly appreciate you staying clean, but this is not a verse in the Bible. Parents may use this saying to motivate their kids to clean their rooms. But it would be better to use something that's actually in the Bible, like Colossians 3:20, which says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

The last myth I want to mention is a common myth, and a very dangerous myth. It is not dangerous like your life is in danger. It is dangerous in the sense of presenting a false view of the Christian life. I wouldn't be surprised if the devil invented this one.

Let me introduce this one with a question. What do you say to comfort someone whose life is falling apart? What do you say to comfort someone when they are dealing with a really hard life situation? Maybe they have lost a job, a home, a spouse, a child. Maybe they are just overwhelmed with many different kinds of problems all at one time. What do you say to someone in such a situation in order to comfort them, to encourage them?

Well some people, even some Christians, say something like this:

"God won't give you more than you can handle."

This is a myth. It is a false statement. It puts the focus on me instead of God. The saying "God will never give you more than you can handle" tells me that I have what it takes. It tells me I can bear whatever comes my way. It tells me God permits trials according to MY ability to endure.

Yet I have been in situations beyond my ability to cope. If someone had said that to me in that situation, I would not have been encouraged. To the person who cannot cope such words are more like a taunt than a comfort. When we are down and out and feeling discouraged, hearing those words can cause us to feel like we are not measuring up. It causes us to ask, "If I am supposed to handle this, then why can't I handle it?" The words that are meant to encourage often add to our discouragement.

This statement is a myth. It is wrong. It sounds like something that IS in the Bible. This myth may have originated from a misunderstanding of 1 Cor. 10:13.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT) The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

In 1 Corinthians 10:13, the apostle Paul is not writing about life's problems and troubles. He is writing about temptations. He wants us to know that God always provides us grace to resist temptation. That does not mean you always will resist temptation, only that it is possible.

But temptations and troubles are two different things. Just because God promises you won't be tempted beyond what you can bear does not mean He won't allow more troubles than you can bear. I contend that the Bible shows that you may be troubled more than you can bear. God may allow you to experience more than you can handle. God will let you get yourself into problems that you alone cannot solve without help. He does so to draw us to Him

See, we are not to be living life in our own strength. We are to be living every moment in Him, in His strength. I point you to two passages of scripture that support this. The first one I preached from several months ago.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV) "...be filled with the Spirit."

The second one is similar and teaches why.

Galatians 5:16 (NIV) So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Live by the Spirit of God and you will not sin. You keep sinning because you aren't living by the Spirit of God. We are supposed to be living by the Holy Spirit every day. We are never to say to God, "Don't bother helping God, I got this." I doubt any of you said that this week. But all of us lived it this week. We lived in our strength, in our wisdom, and so we sinned. If we were living in the Spirit we would not sin.

But temptations and troubles are two very different things.

Life often gives us more troubles than we can handle. There's never a good time for your life to be wrecked with troubles. But they come anyway. Troubles come in all shapes and sizes. And God allows them to come. He doesn't allow them in order to show how strong we are, how much we don't need God. That isn't God's goal at all.

God MAY give us more than we can handle if that is what we need in order to learn how to live by faith in Him. Let's look at some examples.

Gideon had more than he could handle. He was facing an army of over 120,000. Yet he only had 32,000 men of his own. Now possibly that 32,000 could have defeated the 120,000, but probably not. But if they won, they might take credit for the win, instead of giving God credit. So God reduced the amount of men Gideon had. He did so to show the Israelites that they must depend on Him and not on themselves. Look what God said.

Judges 7:2 (HCSB) The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many people for Me to hand the Midianites over to you, or else Israel might brag: ‘I did it myself.’”

So God reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 soldiers to only 300 soldiers. Gideon and 300 soldiers could not possibly, on their own, ever, defeat an army of over 120,000. But God could, and God did. God won the day. Let's look at another example.

The missionary, Paul, recalled a time when God gave him more than he could bear. In a letter to the Corinthians, he wrote...

2 Corinthians 1:8-9a (NIV) We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.

Paul and his companions thought they were going to die. They had come close to dying before. But this time it looked like it would happen for sure. But they did not die, or else he would not have written this letter. Look at what they learned through this experience.

2 Corinthians 1:9b (NIV) But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

God purposely gave Paul and his companions more than they could bear so that they would learn to depend on God and not themselves. They had to learn not to rely on what THEY could do, but on what GOD could do.

God may do the same in your life since you too have to learn this lesson. God will allow more trouble into your life than you can handle so that HIS great power might be displayed in your life.

Gideon needed to learn to depend on God. Paul needed to learn to depend on God. Each man was looking at himself, at his own resources to see if he could meet the need. That is not where God wanted them looking. God wanted them to trust in Him and look to Him to meet their need. We too need to learn to depend on God.

Here is the main problem with the myth that God won't give you more than you can handle: **This myth points people inward, instead of to God.**

All through the Bible we are pointed to God in our troubles. We belong to God. So we need to recognize that our problems are really His problems. We should say so in our prayers and look to see how God is going to handle the situation.

Gideon learned that. So did others, like the Sons of Korah. They wrote Psalm 46.

Psalm 46:1-3 (NIV) God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

When our strength is failing under crushing burdens, the answer is not within us. God is the answer we need.

One man lost his dad to a very painful cancer. He said, "I've come to learn—slowly but surely—why I need Him (God). I suppose it's because of pride that I always thought I could just do things on my own. I'm strong, I'd say. I'm a tough cookie. I can help others through their tribulations while carrying mine all by myself. Well...wasn't I wrong?"

Here are **Four reasons God allows us to experience more than we can handle:**

1. Our faith needs to grow.

Gideon's faith needed to grow. Israel's faith needed to grow. Paul's faith needed to grow. So does our faith.

2. Our self-reliance needs to die.

God reduced Gideon's army so that Gideon would HAVE to depend on God. His only hope was God. He needed to learn that. We proud, self-reliant Americans need to learn that too!

3. We need to learn that God is faithful.

We need to learn that God will meet our every need. As we learn to live by the Spirit, we will see Him meet our needs. We will learn that God is faithful. Too often we take Him our big, overwhelming troubles and not the smaller ones. Take all of your troubles to God and learn how faithful He is to meet them.

4. God will get the glory due Him.

Who got the glory from Gideon's impossible victory? God did. Who got the glory when Paul did not die that day? God did.

When God meets your need, praise Him in your prayers. Tell your friends what God did for you. And, when you handle, with God's help, things that most people cannot handle, some people around you will notice and ask how you did it. Then tell them how God met your need. Give God the credit before them.

God may allow even the toughest of us to experience too much for us to cope with in-order-to teach us to live by faith in Him. **God doesn't need us to be tough followers, but rather full-of-faith followers.** Our message to the world is not supposed to be,

"See how tough Christians are." Our message to the world is, "See how mighty our God is."

God can show His might better through our helplessness than He can through our strengths. So He DOES allow us to experience more than we can handle. If it happens to you this year, don't be surprised. And don't think there is anything wrong with YOU when it happens. Look to God to meet your need.

But don't wait for more than you can handle. Begin living by the Spirit today. Give your problems over to God in prayer. And leave them there. And see God handle them.

I told you about Gideon and Paul. There is one more example we need to see. Look at Jesus the night before He was executed.

Matthew 26:38 (NIV) Then he said to them (His followers), "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."

What did Jesus do then? He prayed. He prayed a long time. But when He was through, we see a very different Jesus. We see a calm Jesus. We see a courageous Jesus. We see a wise and well-spoken Jesus. We see no sorrow. We see no panic. We see no stress or anxiety. Jesus lived the longest day of His earthly life in the power of God. That is what God needs to teach us to do.

God gave Gideon more than he could handle so he would have to rely on God.
God gave Paul more than he could handle so he would have to rely on God.
God gave Jesus more than He could handle so He would have to rely on God.
And God may give you more than you can handle so you will have to rely on God.

You will grow through the experience.
God will be faithful to you in the experience.
And then give God glory after the experience.

Invitation

We all have a sin problem that is more than we can handle. There is nothing anyone can do to solve their sin problem. Our sin will bring us death and judgment and condemnation to hell... unless someone comes to our rescue.

That is exactly what Jesus did when He died on the cross. He died in our place. But the rescue is not automatic with the death of Jesus. You have to choose to personally receive Him as your Savior. You have to recognize Him as Lord and turn your life over to Him.

Do so today.