



# **Beyond Coping: Transformation of Suffering**

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# An Overview

- **The problem of stress and suffering**
- **The riddle of life: What's the point?**
- **Coping: What works and what doesn't**
- **Changing yourself: How you can grow through suffering**
- **Changing your life: How you can find meaning and happiness**

# Introduction: Life is an uphill battle

- Life is a constant struggle
- Lessons from Lance Armstrong
- Recovery from cancer
- Recovery from the accidental fall
- What accounts for his success?
- What accounts for Apostle Paul's success?

*Life is a marathon, not a sprint. Ending well is more important than having a good start.*

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim.4:7)*



# Part I. Coping with stress and suffering

- Why do some thrive under stress?
- Why do some fall apart?
- Cases of counselling clients
- Negative effects of stress
- Positive effects of stress
- How does stress affect you?

***Your choice alone determines the outcome.***

# Negative effects of stress (Distress)

- Psychological disorders
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Other physical illnesses
- Migraine headaches
- Tension & irritation
- Anger & aggression
- Conflict & argument

***Stress is an invisible silent killer.***

# Positive effects of stress (Eustress)

- Self-efficacy & confidence
- Resourcefulness & creativity
- Personal growth
- Character education
- Mental toughness
- Becoming fully alive
- Empathy & understanding
- Spiritual maturity

***What does not kill you makes you stronger.***

# Where is God when life hurts?

- Spiritual struggles
- Why does God allow suffering?
- Where is God when I need him?
- Does He care? Is he able?
- Shattering of assumptions
- God's dark face of rejection
- The riddle of life: What's the point?
- Renewed faith and hope

*Faith is a double-edged sword.*

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt.27:46)*

# How can you cope effectively?

- A matter of survival & sanity
- Effective vs. ineffective coping
- Mature vs. immature defense
- Need for a correct diagnosis
- Applying the right medicine

***Don't use a sledge-hammer to crack a nut.***

***"If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?"(Gen.4:7)***

# What's your problem?

- Can you describe the problem?
- Who owns the problem?
- Who is at fault?
- Is it controllable?
- Is it a spiritual problem?
- Is it a “hot button” issue?
- How serious is the problem?

***Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.  
“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.”  
(Matt.9:12)***

# Coping responses

- The fight-or-flight reaction
- Problem-focused coping
- Emotion-focused coping
- Social support
- Existential coping
- Spiritual/religious coping
- Proactive coping
- Collective coping

***Don't be a prisoner of your coping habits.***

***"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."  
(Philippians 4:13)***

# Coping resources

- Family resources
- Social resources
- Cultural resources
- Personal resources
- Spiritual resources

***Be careful not to use up all your resources***

***“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor.12:9)***

## Part II. From coping to transformation

- Coping with stress is not enough
- Life is more than crisis management
- Need to change yourself
- Life as a victim of external forces
- Life as a hero's journey
- Life as higher education
- Life can be lived on a higher plane
- Need to grow in maturity, love, faith, hope

***Make sure that you are not part of the problem.***

***“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (Rom.8:37)***

# From spiritual coping to spiritual formation

- Beyond religious/spiritual coping
- Beyond religious activities
- Beyond spiritual experiences
- Beyond conversion
- Spiritual quest as a lifelong process
- Spiritual formation as a life goal

***Character counts more than religious piety.***

***“Become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”(Eph.4:13)***

# From social support to a community of healing

- Church as a support network
- Church as a family
- Church as a healing community
- Self-giving and self-expansion
- Living the truth in love
- Practicing “embrace”

***Community matters more than friendship.***

***“Speaking the truth in love.” (Eph.4:15)***

# From striving to self-transcendence

- Tired of getting stuck
- Tired of being tripped by personal issues
- The power of deliverance
- The power of detachment
- The magic of transcendence
- Letting go and letting God

*Freedom of choice means the capacity to choose freedom.*

*“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)*

# From positive thinking to tragic optimism

- Loss of self-confidence
- Loss of positive expectations
- Acceptance of reality
- Affirmation of life
- Courage in facing tomorrow
- Self-transcendence
- Faith in God

*The only hope that never fails is that born of despair  
and sustained by faith.*

*“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and  
secure.” (Heb.6:19)*

## **Part III. From suffering to happiness**

- Life is full of stress and suffering
- Reduce stress through effective coping
- Reduce suffering through changing yourself
- Transform suffering through meaning
- Find happiness through suffering

***Suffering is an ally rather than an enemy of happiness.***

***“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”***

***(Phil.4:4)***

# What is true happiness?

- Looking for happiness in all the wrong places
- Happiness is like a butterfly
- Shallow vs. mature happiness
- Rejoicing in the midst of suffering
- Sorrow and joy can coexist
- Authentic happiness based on your core being and calling

***An unexamined life is not worth living.***

***“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” (Eph.4:1)***

# Five important questions

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?
- What is meaning of suffering and death?
- How can I find meaning and happiness?

*Meaning can make suffering not only bearable but also enjoyable*

*“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

*(John 10:10)*

# Conclusions

- Life is a mixture of suffering and happiness
- **Change the problem** through coping
- **Change yourself** through personal growth
- **Change your life** through transforming suffering
- Clear your junkyard and build a new home
- Rise from the ashes to pursue a new future

*The Cross is the way to happiness and life through suffering and death.*

# Apostle Paul's secret to his success

*“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”(Phil.3:13.14)*

**You can do it too.**