

WHEN LIFE IS A BUMMER

Job is a well-known Bible character that faced the kind of hard times that most of us will never have to endure. Job once said, “*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not*” (Job 14:1,2). Job was right: our life on earth is “only for a while.” And, yes, life can seem to be filled with troubles, some of which we bring on ourselves, and some of which are totally out of our control.

Do *you* ever get bummed out? Most people do from time to time. When some folks face tough times, even though they may get down in the dumps for a spell, they seem to be able to cope well with their difficulties and sorrows. Despite the fact that things in life do not always go the way that they would like to see them go, they refuse to become bitter or throw in the towel.

Others do not fare so well. They, too, can get bummed out with what is going on in the world, and in their own personal lives in particular. But, they do not handle it well, not well at all. They may not turn to drugs or other destructive habits, but they really struggle finding anything positive to think or say. They are convinced that life is one big bummer.

LIFE REALLY CAN BE A BUMMER.

Not everything in life goes like we want it to. In fact, there are times when we may feel that we are having a whole lot more unpleasant experiences than pleasant or joyous ones. What are some of the things that cause people to be bummed out?

Disappointment – A bad grade on an exam, losing a ballgame, losing a sentimental object, failing to get a job that one wanted so badly, or seeing one’s children or grandchildren get their lives in a mess. These are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to real-life disappointments.

Mental pain or grief – Loss of a loved one, breaking up with a girlfriend/boyfriend, having to live with a mistake that we have made. Our pain in such situations sometimes seems unbearable.

Financial struggles: Feeling the pinch when a job is lost, facing astronomical medical expenses, ridiculously high gas prices, or the arrival of another

hungry mouth to feed. Serious money problems cause people everywhere to feel bummed out.

Health issues: Who has not experienced them personally or seen others pulled down by them?

Family issues: Marital strain, divorce, serious conflicts between kids and parents, tension among siblings, or even violent “domestic disturbances.”

Does it bother you that not all people are “dealt the same hand” in life? Some seem to have special privileges which help them bypass or avoid major troubles. Others, through no fault of their own, seem to struggle in life from the word “go.”

Reflect for a moment on some of the things that the 1st century saints had to endure: (1) They had to live with the unpleasant reality that there were some in the family of God who were wolves in sheep’s clothing, such as the two liars, Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); (2) They were severely persecuted, even to the point that they had to move from one location to another in order to avoid being killed (Acts 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27); (3) They lost loved ones, as in the case of the apostle John losing his brother, James (Acts 12:1,2); (4) Some faced such difficult financial times that the Bible describes them as living in “*deep poverty*” (2 Corinthians 8:1-3); (5) They faced health problems, as in the cases of Trophimus and Timothy (2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Timothy 5:23).

There is no doubt about it: many of the early Christians faced situations in their lives that had the potential to make and keep them bummed out. Their hard times were not imaginary, and their pain was not make believe. So it is in the lives of people today. Life *really can be* a bummer.

WHEN WE ARE BUMMED OUT: SOME THINGS NOT TO DO

1. Do not keep crying, “It’s not fair.” You bought the same exact car that your sister did, but yours is always having problems and hers has never been in the shop. Perhaps the drunk driver walked away from the accident without a scratch, but your innocent loved one was killed in the wreck. If may not seem fair, but continuing to dwell on the thought, “It’s not fair,” cannot change things.

2. Do not sing the song, “I’m the most pitiful person in the world.” Joseph, the son of Jacob, was

hated, sold, lied about, and wrongfully imprisoned. Yet, in all of the mistreatment that he received, he did not forget Jehovah, and the Lord did not leave him (Genesis 39:2,21,23). I read about a man that, due to his physical limitations, had to read the Bible with his tongue. He refused to give up on something that was important to him, even when most people would surely count his situation as a bummer.

3. Do not take it out on God. He loves and cares about you (1 Peter 5:7), so do not question Him. Do not push Him aside until you settle things on your own. He is the very One that we cannot do without, ever! What we need to do is “*Trust in him at all times*” (Psalm 62:8). When Job’s life was in shambles after the loss of his children and livestock, his wife suggested that he “*curse God, and die.*” He wisely refused to do so (Job 2:9,10).

4. Do not take it out on other people. When we hurt, we often lash out at those who are totally innocent. Since we do not appreciate it when others do that to us, we ought to avoid doing it to others (“the Golden Rule,” Matthew 7:12).

5. Do not develop a bitter disposition. God wants us to “*put away*” all forms of bitterness (Ephesians 4:31). Even though King Saul tried to kill David when the latter had done him no wrong, David refused to be bitter or lift his hand against Saul. Saul later admitted, “*Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil*” (1 Samuel 24:17).

6. Do not be a bum. Being bummed out is no justification for turning into a bum and doing nothing. There are things that need to be done for friends, family, and the Lord. Like Jesus said about Himself, we must work while it is day for the night comes when no man can work (John 9:4). Get at it!

7. Do not bum out others by your attitude or example. Being bummed out can be contagious. If we are facing difficult times, though the common thought is, “Misery loves company,” we must be certain that we do not ruin other people’s outlook by any negativism on our part. Despite anything that comes my way in life, I am supposed to exhort others regularly (Hebrews 3:13), not depress them.

8. Do not forget how to smile and laugh. Look for positive things in life. Not always, but many times things are not as bad as they first appear to be.

Remember, “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance,” and, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine” (Proverbs 15:13; 17:22).

9. Do not call it quits in the Lord’s service. Keep on looking to Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), knowing that “*in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*” (Galatians 6:9, NKJV).

10. Do not take your life. The very mention of such sounds depressing and drastic, yet, sadly, that is the choice that a great number of bummed out people make. Think about the horrible night that two of Jesus’ apostles had. On the very same night, Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord and Peter denied Him three times. But, how different their reactions were! Judas chose to kill himself. Peter, on the other hand, repented of his wrongdoing and went on to faithfully serve the Master until he died. Be a Peter.

WHEN WE ARE BUMMED OUT: SOME THINGS TO DO

1. Remember that you and I are not the first and only ones in history to face difficulties in life, “. . . knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:9).

2. Ask self: This scenario that has me so upset, in the big scheme of things, is it *really* that big of a deal, or is it more like a little bump in the road?

3. Whatever it is that has me bummed out, can I do anything to change the situation? If it is unchangeable, then I will have to accept it as a reality of life and not a problem that can be solved.

4. Be grateful for all the good things we have in life. God says, “*Be ye thankful*” (Colossian 3:15). Let us focus on our list of “Things That I Have,” and not dwell on “Things That I Don’t Have.”

5. Think on good, positive things. “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*” (Philippians 4:8).

6. Try to get busy and stay busy serving others. “. . . by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). Serving others is good for everyone involved. When we serve others, not only do we help them and feel

better about ourselves, but by focusing our attention on them and their needs, we tend to forget about (at least for the time being) what has us bummed out.

7. Try to spend time with upbeat, faithful saints. To me, one of the most depressing things in life is to have to listen to people that seemingly know how to speak in only one way: their tone in every conversation is negative, pessimistic, doomsday, nothing is good, and everything is bad. In contrast, it is so uplifting to be around Christians that are encouragers, those who make it a point to provoke others unto love and good works! (Hebrews 10:24).

8. Try to carry out the three-fold instruction of Romans 12:12: “*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.*”

9. Draw near to God. When we feel like the affairs of life have us down or in a corner, rather than run *away* from God, we ought to run *toward* Him, expressing our thanks and requests in prayer (Philippians 4:6,7). Take heart – “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*” (James 4:8).

10. Keep our sights on the greatest goal in life. More than anything else, we want to go to heaven, so let us keep the desires and affections of our heart centered there (Colossians 3:1,2).

11. Seek out and talk with those that have traveled the road of hard knocks, yet through it all they have maintained a healthy attitude and strong faith. Listen and learn from their experiences.

As we learned earlier from Job 14:1,2, life is short and sometimes filled with things that bum us out. Yes, life really can be a BUMMER. The question that each of us must face is, “When my life is a BUMMER, how am I going to deal with it?”

Please contemplate two final thoughts. First, God has prepared a place that is perfect in every way. It is called heaven, and there will be no bummers in heaven. Second, the biggest BUMMER of all would be to miss out on going to heaven!

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