

The Blessing of Adversity: Finding Your God-given Purpose in Life's Troubles

Barry C. Black

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The mere mention of the word 'adversity' stirs up negative thoughts—trouble, pain, hard times. Not exactly the term that someone would expect to find coupled with 'blessing.' But Barry Black explains that Christians need to understand how the two concepts work together to build a stronger spiritual life.

Besides using many scriptural scenarios to support his points, Black employs a wealth of practical experience to relate contemporary examples. A retired US Navy admiral, he served as the 62nd chaplain of the US Senate and has been a counselor, theologian, and psychologist for thirty years. He explains how a biblical perspective of adversity can turn negative aspects into blessings.

Black begins by laying a foundation of basic steps in facing troubles, such as controlling one's doubts, believing in God's kindness, living with hope, and surrendering to God's providence. He does not simply toss out nice-sounding phrases, but provides brief but effective examples for each point without sounding preachy. Nor does he pound the reader with deep theological ramblings, understanding that he is addressing Christians who may be going through difficult, painful times and need encouragement and loving guidance to restore joy to their lives.

Black builds on his foundation by moving into topics that are often overlooked by those enduring adversity. He encourages the reader to trust God's plan, accept the inevitability of trouble, and deal with God's silence. An underlying theme throughout all of these subjects is that the Christian should not "waste suffering." These times, he stresses, are actually opportunities to deepen one's faith and use those situations to bring blessings to others.

Black uses the second part of the book to describe how to avoid many sources of trouble. He explores how to tame temptations, win over worry, find gain in the pain, endure the test, and gain by losing. His simple suggestions are not only invaluable aids in being aware of potential pitfalls, but are also strong biblical principles that will strengthen one's faith (perhaps regardless of religion), in many areas of life.

The book's final section allows Black to end with a strong, encouraging message of hope. He provides assurance that no matter how dark the situation may seem, the proper perspective will reveal the blessing of adversity.

JEFF FRIEND (March / April 2011)

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