

How Can We Make Lemonade from Painful Situations?

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There's an old saying that goes *when life hands you lemons, make lemonade!* Funny, but that's easier said than done, because real lemons are truly bitter. If you were to take a slice and bite into it, your face would become contorted and nasty. There's just no controlling it. However, if you took that same lemon, and added water, sugar and ice, it transforms into a perfect summer beverage!

Over the past year, people have been handed some pretty massive lemons – from unemployment to loss of loved ones, failing businesses, depression, and fear. But as bad as 2020 was, the reality is that everyone gets handed lemons at some time, even biblical greats like David.

“When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. ... David was distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the Lord his God” ([1 Samuel 30:3-4](#), 6).

Like all of us, when life dealt him lemons, David stood at the intersection of a “bitter road” and a “better road.” It's an intersection of decision. What do we do? Bite the lemon and become bitter in spirit, or go to God and make lemonade?

Realize You Have a Choice

David and his men had been dealt a lemon of epic proportions. In a minute, everything they owned, everyone they loved had been taken from them or destroyed. The men were deeply hurt, angry and looking for someone to blame. They were overwhelmed with grief to the point where they had no strength left and each one became bitter in his spirit. Like many people would do, the men blamed David and focused their anger on seeking revenge. But notice in the face of the same “lemon,” David took his pain to God and found strength to move on.

No matter what kind of loss we encounter in life, or how deep the pain may be, we always have the power to choose. Always. It is our greatest power! Scripture puts it like this:

“This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live” ([Deuteronomy 30:19](#)).

We can't choose whether or not we receive lemons in life, but we can choose how we respond to them. If we choose to go to God, we will find supernatural strength, because He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak, and He is near to the broken hearted ([Isaiah 40:29](#); [Psalm 34:18](#)). Indeed, weeping may endure for a season, but joy comes in the morning! ([Psalm 30:5](#)) We have the power to choose life, and like David, to find strength in the Lord.

“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” ([Hebrews 12:15](#)).

“See to it”... *you* see to it! Those are some pretty aggressive words that reinforce the truth that we can choose the path we're on, whether that's a “bitter road” that leads to more pain, or a “better road” that leads to healing in God. “See to it” means we actually have a responsibility to war against the root of bitterness, because it is a spiritual cancer.

We must understand that bitterness is not something that can stay contained; it spreads like a wildfire, consuming our lives and scorching those around us. It may start in private, but it never stays in private. It will eventually spring up and contaminate your attitude and conversation, your health and relationships, even your intimacy with God! It corrupts your hope and destroys your joy. Everything gets tainted when bitterness is allowed to grow in your heart. It's always the wrong choice.



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God Blesses the Right Choice

“David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives” ([1 Samuel 30:18](#)).

David made the right choice and God blessed him for it. [Romans 8:28](#) promises that God causes all things to turn around for good for those who love God. “All things” includes lemons of epic proportions! But it’s only by choosing to do it God’s way that we can find recovery, restoration, and future success.

When we are obedient and patient, God rights the wrongs and takes the sting out of pain. God works through the evil circumstances brought by the enemy and the lemons that life throws our way, and he puts in some sugar, water, and ice to refresh us. You just have to trust Him and put it in His hands.

Avoiding the “Why Me” Syndrome

“Why me” is a common and normal question to ask when we encounter lemons in life. I believe God understands our distress and why we ask that question. He doesn’t get angry or upset with us for processing our pain that way. In fact even David, at times, had trouble processing through his pain and fell into the “why me” syndrome:

“How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?” ([Psalm 13:1-2](#)).

“Why me” is the wrong question to ask because, although it may dull the pain in the moment, ultimately it is unproductive. It leaves us stuck in the pain and paralyzed from moving forward. “Why me” causes us to anesthetize the pain by avoidance or procrastination, or pretending it doesn’t exist. It may also lead to alcohol abuse, fornication or any other addictive trap to dull the pain. But it’s the bait of Satan on a stick – don’t take the bait of “why me”! The better way is to focus on what God can do, by asking “what now?”

What now. What can You do with what I've been through? It starts with your choice to pray "God, I'm going to keep serving people as I always have and love to do, and to trust You to take my pain and repurpose it. Point me in the right direction and turn this around so that I can help others. Take my pain, and give me a platform for healing... and allow me to kick the snot out of the Devil in the process!" This is how God makes lemonade from bitter lemons.



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Been There, Done That, Got the T-Shirt

I hear all the time people complaining, "But Pastor, you just don't understand what they did to me!" Well, perhaps not, but I do know a thing or two about pain and betrayal, and standing at the intersection of "bitter road" and "better road."

You see, several years ago, I was co-owner of a small business with my best friend. Things were going fine until it all fell apart... at once! The economy tanked; our Christian school was hit with a massive deficit. Our church members lost jobs or moved, and we suddenly lost 25% of our budget, and yet I still had a full staff of employees to protect from unemployment. Then the worst possible thing happened – I was betrayed by my best friend. It came to light that he had been embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars from the business, now deeply in debt... and I was a personal guarantor.

I was emotionally flat-lined. I cried out to God for supernatural intervention, a financial miracle. I stood in [faith](#), I quoted Scripture, I prayed like there was no tomorrow. And in response? Crickets. I can honestly say I got angry with God and bitterness began to tarnish my heart.

Fortunately, God is bigger and more merciful than my angry accusations. Eventually things turned around for good, just as He promised in [Romans 8:28](#). In spite of the impossible circumstances, God brought me through and healed my heart. And at the same time, He brought me to a new place of worship.

In the wee hours of the morning, I would awaken with song lyrics running through my mind that I would quickly write down with the stubbiest little pencil you ever saw! Those songs have been set to music and sung on Faith Worship albums, in our congregation, and recently gathered into a book that I call “Modern Day [Psalms](#).” In a way, I feel very much like King David; I have been through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and survived without becoming bitter against God or man. And my heart is filled with gratitude and praise because of God’s goodness toward me.

So clearly, God has made lemonade from some very bitter lemons in my own life. What about you? What lemons do you have that you have not placed into His hands yet? Don’t wait! Summer’s coming, and God’s lemonade stand is open for business!

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