



Experiencing
GOD
in Difficult Times

lessons from the lives of women

Ng Poh Yeen

Ministry to Women
Hebron Bible-Presbyterian Church
2026

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Difficult Times	6
Emotional Reactions	8
Where was God?	11
What was God Doing?	15
What Helped?	19
Final Thoughts	21
Reflection Questions	23

Acknowledgments

This booklet is first of all owed to women in Hebron Bible-Presbyterian Church who contributed their stories. I am thankful that they took time from their busy schedule to be interviewed, and responded to my inquiry with authenticity and courage. Their stories have furthered my learning on Christian living and facing difficult times.

Our former pastor, Rev. Nathanael Tan, has often ministered to women in our congregation together with me. His sensitivity and gentleness towards people who are hurting is an asset in pastoral work, which many in the congregation appreciate, and so I am thankful that he readily agreed to be the editor because I know he will do so with much care. Many thanks to Jennifer Silas for the design work and administrative support. She has always given her best to every project with smiles and enthusiasm even when she had to work overtime.

Most of all, my gratitude to God who gave me the motivation to work on this project even though writing is not my forte. Last but not least, I thank everyone who prayed for the completion of this booklet, so that God is made known in a simple way.

Ng Poh Yeen

Introduction

I remember vaguely a story that I read during my school days about a woman who was deeply grieved by the death of her only child. She sought a sage about her grief, and he instructed her to ask each household that has never known sorrow for a handful of rice grain until she filled a bowl. As she went from house to house, she realised that she was not the only person who experienced deep grief, and sharing stories comforted her. Indeed, we are not alone; we can sometimes benefit from one another's story. A large portion of my time in pastoral ministry is spent visiting women in our congregation, giving them unhurried attention and listening to their life stories. Sometimes, I was let in to their past and present struggles that taught me lessons of faith and human vulnerability.

This booklet brings together the stories of 12 women (age range from 20s to 60s) and my reflection on Christian life, suffering and pain. I do not attempt to explain the existence of suffering or explore its meaning; I just acknowledge it—issues concerning health, relationships, parenting, work and finance. More than what happened to them, this booklet focuses on the women's responses to their pain as well as the insights they offer. In order to protect the identities of their family members, their circumstances are not detailed, and most of their names have been changed. Since people have various views of what qualifies as suffering and pain, I have chosen the term "difficult time" to refer to any experience that causes mental-emotional and sometimes spiritual distress. Chapter 1 states the reality of difficult times, and two common responses people may make about God.

Chapter 2 names a few common emotional responses people have during difficult times. Chapters 3 and 4 reflect on the women's stories to situate God and his actions during difficult times. Chapter 5 identifies some attitudes and behaviours that helped the women through difficult times, followed by some final thoughts in chapter 6 and some reflection questions in chapter 7.

The goal of this booklet is not to demonstrate the women's strength, but God's. It affirms that God is among us at all times, including difficult times. Although this is a product of Ministry to Women, and only women were interviewed, men are welcome to use this resource too. If you are going through a difficult time, may you draw comfort and be encouraged. Even if you are not going through a difficult time, may you learn something that will help you in the future. This booklet may be used for your personal reflection or for your small group time. Scripture is quoted from the ESV translation.



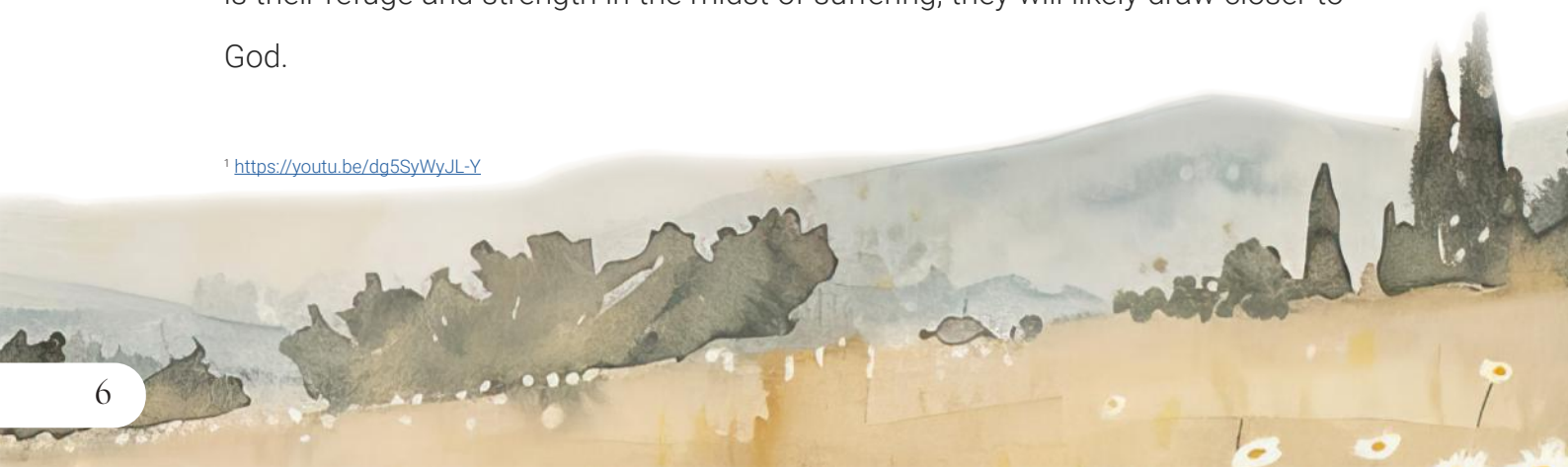
1

Difficult Times

Life is not a bed of roses. No matter how hard people try to avoid getting into difficult times, they still encounter them in one way or the other, in different intensity. Difficult times often affect one's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, and Christians are no different. Heroes in the Bible like Jacob in the Old Testament had frightful nights because of an earlier conflict between his brother Esau and him. Job struggled in pain at the loss of his children, livelihood and health. Queen Esther and the Jews faced a life-threatening situation. The apostles suffered persecutions. Many psalms were also composed during difficult times. Our energy is often depleted during difficult times, leaving us fearful and helpless.

Sadly, some Christians become disillusioned during difficult times and turn away from God. Yet, some Christians and non-Christians sought God more earnestly during difficult times and found solace and hope in him. Dr David Geisler, president and co-founder of Norm Geisler International Ministries, had a sister who committed suicide. It was a painful episode for him and his family, and they stood together in faith. Pain did not turn him away from God. In fact, his testimony brought others to God.¹ From his example, we see that one's response to God rather than the presence or absence of difficulties plays a big part in the direction of one's faith. In other words, if Christians think that God should ward off all bad things from happening to them so that they will never have to suffer, they will likely become disillusioned when they encounter difficult times. However, if they believe that God is their refuge and strength in the midst of suffering, they will likely draw closer to God.

¹ <https://youtu.be/dg5SyWyJL-Y>



Consider hymns such as “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”, “’Tis so Sweet to Trust in Jesus”, “Just as I am”, “God hath not Promised” and “Does Jesus Care?”. They were written by men and women who experienced difficult times. Some Christian songs such as “One Day at a Time”, and “I have Decided to Follow Jesus” were words uttered in difficult times. Drawing close to God does not eradicate all struggles. It means we do not struggle alone, and certainly not meaninglessly. We shall see how this is played out in the women’s experiences; but first, let us turn our attention to some emotional reactions that are normal during difficult times.

But for me, it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.

Psalm 73:28



2

Emotional Reactions



“Save for rainy days” teaches us to be prepared for future needs, especially unexpected needs that require large amount of money. Financial preparedness, however, does not mean emotional preparedness. Even though we know that life is not a bed of roses, we seldom think of preparing ourselves emotionally for difficult times in the future. In fact, we are seldom emotionally prepared for difficult times; hence our immediate reaction when difficult time hits are often shock, disbelief, and protest. We ask: How can this be? How come it happened to me? Why?

I remember how devastated my mother was when she learned that my late sister was diagnosed with late stage cancer. She searched frantically for a cure and asked many ‘why’ questions, to which no answer satisfied her. On hindsight, that could be her shock reaction and protest against the impending loss. As the healthiest person in her family, Suzanne could not believe that she had cancer, and wished that the diagnosis was incorrect. “Why me? Why do I have to go through so many difficult challenges for so many years?” After she got over the initial shock, she began to ask herself, “If it were not me, then who?” Names of her friends, family members, relatives, and colleagues went through her mind, until she finally told herself that she would rather be the one to be stricken with cancer than any of them. She reasoned that since she was physically the fittest, she must be the best person to endure cancer treatment. From that moment, she braced herself to undergo an intensive treatment that disrupted her career and an active lifestyle. Accepting the reality that she has cancer enabled her to start working on recovery. Anger and depressive moods are common emotions due to a sense of powerlessness over the situation. More often than not, different emotions come together all mixed up. Maggie was confused and anxious after her husband became very ill. Besides caring for him, she had to take over responsibilities from



her husband. It was so overwhelming that she thought it would be easier for her to just die. Elise was frustrated each time her husband gave in to addiction, especially when she was caught in the conflicts between her husband and her children. Anger, disappointment, helplessness and sometimes hopelessness are just some of her emotions rolled together.

It is not easy to identify emotions when they are so mixed up. It is harder to name them if we grew up in families that do not talk about emotions, be it love or hate, happiness or sadness. There are also some who feel bad for having certain feelings, which they then try to suppress. Growing up, Emma's emotions were disregarded as she had always gone along with her parents' decisions. After she broke up with her boyfriend, she started to pay attention to how she felt, and began to process the losses in her life slowly. Bella went to Sunday School and read many Bible stories. However, she went through a spiritual struggle because she could not reconcile her knowledge about God with her experience of God. Her parents' frequent quarrels made her wonder why a sovereign and loving God did not intervene to stop them. God seemed distant and indifferent. She resented God, yet she was afraid that God would punish her for resenting him. That resulted in much spiritual turmoil.

Even though some emotions are less pleasant than others, we need not be afraid of them or judge them. After all, there are no good or bad emotions. Identifying and acknowledging emotions may be uncomfortable, but it helps us to regulate ourselves, which in turn enables us to make healthy choices. Roslyn's children were young when her husband came down with a severe illness. There were so much to take care of every day and so many decisions to make that she had no time for self-care. Sadly, no one asked about her well-being either. Over time, Roslyn

2 Emotional Reactions

became tired, irritable, empty, and hurt. Even then, “I was embarrassed to ask for help,” she confided. It took her a couple of years to recognise the hurt and then work on establishing healthy boundaries in order to build a healthier sense of self. Vicky has been living with Parkinson’s disease (PD) that gives her much physical pain. In order to manage the symptoms, she would read a lot about them on the internet. The more she reads, the more depressed she becomes. To avoid falling deeper into depression, she tries to take her mind off by signing up for courses. What we do with our emotions is important.

Clare’s experience demonstrates the complexity of emotions, the importance of acknowledging them, and the benefit of working with them. Clare was very happy when she conceived after a few miscarriages, and so she took all precautions to stay healthy. At the 2nd trimester, however, her gynaecologist broke the sad news that the baby’s chance for survival was very low due to a severe and rare abnormality that happens to one in a million babies. That was so disheartening, and it was no surprise that she wondered why such a tragedy had to fall on her baby out of a million others. Despite the poor prognosis, Clare decided to carry the baby to full term. While she could not stop praying and hoped for a miracle, she also grieved for the impending loss. She gave birth to her baby boy who lived two days. Clare pointed out that she was able to say goodbye to her son and grieved well afterwards because she started grieving early.

The LORD is near to the broken-hearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18



3

Where was God?

Vicky's symptoms range from muscle stiffness to aches and pains. Getting out of bed, hanging her clothes, and reading require effort; yet she has told me repeatedly that God is good. "How is God good?" I asked. With a twinkle in her eye, she revealed that there were days she woke up without any pain, as if she did not have PD at all. Although few, those days were God-given relief and a foretaste of how her body will feel when she gets to heaven. She also recounted the way God timed it perfectly for her Malaysian nephew to move in after her children got married so that she can host him. "I know God is with me," Vicky said in quiet confidence. When difficult times drag on, and the situation remains unresolved in spite of our efforts, we may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us or that he is not interested in us. The truth is: God has never left.

In a few weeks' time, Faye would participate in a tournament that she had always wanted. She trained diligently because she loved the game and her team. Unfortunately, she had to pull out of the tournament after sustaining an injury during a training session. The let-down cut deep when she announced to the team about her withdrawal. The recuperation process was the next thing she had to manage, which required endurance and discipline in physiotherapy. She hated the feeling of being weak and abnormal—unable to function the way she normally did. Through the care she received from family, church and university friends, and even the physiotherapist, she saw that God cared too. He was in their care.

Bella's spiritual struggle lasted a few years until she met a spiritual mentor who listened to her patiently and nonjudgmentally. Her mentor's unconditional acceptance motivated her to study the Bible carefully to know God afresh. Emma recounted about 15 years of family and personal crises, during which she wondered whether God had any good plans for her life at all. God seemed harsh on her by

3 *Where was God?*

letting one crisis happen after another. When her Christian friends reached out to her after she broke up with her boyfriend, she joined their Bible study groups and discovered that God was not what she had thought. God was in the company of people who reached out to Bella and Emma. In Elise's journey, there were numerous difficult episodes but God always sent her friends, such as her Christian boss and a colleague. It was not surprising that her workplace became a place for respite, where their support helped her regain emotional and spiritual equilibrium. God was in that healing environment.

While the comfort, empathy and kindness shown to us reveal God's presence, some of us also hear God speaking tenderly during difficult times through Scripture and songs. Amber cried out to God over a financial issue that was unresolved for a couple of years. Friends who knew about her situation rallied around her to pray, but her anxiety kept disrupting her sleep. Then one day, she chanced upon a Chinese Christian song 我不为明天忧虑² (I will not worry about tomorrow), which penetrated her heart in a least expected way. She fell on her knees and surrendered the matter to God. Just as her tears streamed from her heart, God's peace flowed into her heart. Instantaneously, she felt a great weight lifted away. Not only did Maggie feel God's nearness through friends who encouraged and helped her, Don Moen's song *God will Make a Way*³ has been God's voice that reassures her that she is not alone. Whenever she feels overwhelmed by her responsibilities, the song reminds her that God is her helper.

2020 was remembered for the COVID pandemic that disrupted lives. The WHO reported a 25% increase in anxiety and depression cases during COVID⁴, and Zoey was one of those badly affected. In a short span of time, there were three bereavements in her family overseas. Then, her family's home was hit by a

² <https://youtu.be/olvB0WJTikY>

³ https://youtu.be/bc_YDNMVQKk

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide>

monsoon storm that resulted in major damages to their house. Unfortunately, Zoey was unable to travel home to help her family or attend the funerals because the international borders were closed. On top of all that, her husband was not in Singapore to support her either. The circuit breaker, social distancing and safety measures inevitably deepened her loneliness and sadness. Soon, depression set in and she had thoughts of suicide. Although Zoey knew she needed help, she could not talk to anyone about it. Late one night, as she felt the weight of despondency, she searched the internet about suicide. Then there was a pop-up message from SOS that woke her up instantly as if someone had poured cold water on her. She realised that suicide was not the solution because she still has a child to care for. Instead, she opened her Bible to read and listened to worship songs. Scripture like Psalm 77 and songs like *It is Well with My Soul*⁵ gave expressions to how she felt.

It is Well with My Soul is meaningful to Suzanne too. Several years before the onset of cancer, she had cared for her husband and daughter who were both mentally unwell. Caregiving became so overwhelming at one point that she fell into depression too. Non-Christian neighbours who found out about her depression came to help with grocery and meals, and her church friends helped in other practical ways. Once, Suzanne's cell phone broke. Before she could buy a new one, a friend gave her a used one. On the screensaver of that phone were the words "Be Still". Those two words spoke peace into Suzanne, and those words have been her anchor since. Around that same time, another friend sent her the hymn *It Is Well with My Soul*, which she listened every day in tears. God was in Zoey and Suzanne's darkness.

It is a great consolation that God is with us, caring for us every day like good parents care for their children. When her daughter was very young, Carmen took extra care that her daughter stayed healthy because there was once her daughter

⁵ <https://youtu.be/i4Mo9pkmd98>

3 *Where was God?*

had a high fever that led to severe fits, which was almost fatal. One day, however, her daughter had fever again. Carmen did everything she knew but the fever did not subside. Fearful and helpless, Carmen prayed, "Lord, I give her to you." Shortly afterwards, her daughter sat up, vomited, and the fever subsided. What a relief! Carmen had no doubt that God healed her daughter. As her daughter grew older, schooling was an issue because of her special needs but there were not many schools in Singapore at that time that catered to her daughter's need. Carmen witnessed God opening new learning opportunities at every crucial point of her daughter's education and had teachers there who cared for the students. God had always been there throughout her daughter's growing up years.

Sometimes, we are so preoccupied by the problems at hand that we fail to notice God; but that does not mean that God is absent. A friend once remarked that she had very negative feelings about God during depression, which was not true because her perspective was distorted then. Things may not make sense during difficult times, but we can be sure that God sees, hears, speaks, and acts as recorded in the Bible. In Daniel chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace and then the only way out was shut. The furnace was so hot that no one could get close; yet God entered their space to preserve them and remained there till they were released. In Matthew chapter 27, Jesus' body was laid in a tomb, the entrance was sealed, secured and guarded so that no one could enter the tomb to steal the body. Instead, Jesus rose from the dead and left the tomb. God cannot be trapped; no scheme, evil or person can keep him out.

The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
he is their stronghold in the time of trouble.
The LORD helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

Psalm 37:39-40

4 *What was God Doing?*

Difficult times are painful, so we want God to deliver us quickly. However, God may choose to go through difficult times with us instead. What might he be doing then? Whatever or whoever was the reason for the difficult times we experience, can God use them constructively for our benefit? Can we reap something good from pain?

Elise's husband has been in recovery from addiction for more than 20 years, an arduous journey with relapses. After listening to her struggles at some of the lowest points, I asked whether it was worthwhile enduring all those years since there were many relapses and heartaches. She answered affirmatively and started to name her treasures: friendships, a stable job, her own home, children who completed their tertiary education, etc. She appreciates the good times no matter how long or short they last. She became more empathetic, not to judge people because of their circumstances. Most of all, God beckoned her to rely on him totally. Every morning, Maggie prays for God's guidance and strength to carry out each new task that she needed to complete that day. In a short time but with great effort, she overcame her shyness to ask for help, and is less afraid to take on new challenges. Difficult times pushed her out of her comfort zone to hold on to God more tightly. When we find ourselves in unfamiliar and fierce storms, God invites us to himself.

Both Suzanne and Vicky said that the difficult times they went through earlier gave them confidence to trust God in their current illness, even though it is still difficult. The side effects of chemotherapy were awful for Suzanne. Once the side effects subsided, she had a few days to think, read, study the Bible and be encouraged before the next round of chemotherapy. Those were precious times with God because she had been too busy at work prior to her illness to ponder on God's word at length. Vicky was a cancer patient many years before she was diagnosed with PD. She recalled that her life was extremely busy and the onset of cancer forced

4 *What was God Doing?*

her to stop, like a sudden smash on the windscreen while she was driving at high speed. She began to re-prioritise her life and re-build her relationship with God and her family. In her blog posted on 12th of July 2010, she wrote:

Life is short and I learnt no matter how right I am, accepting others as who they are rather than trying to change them is more important, and forgiving rather than drowning in bitterness gives me the capacity to live a more love-centred life.

Gradually, Vicky noticed that her spiritual health improved, and her family grew closer and stronger—all of which are needed for the difficult times ahead. Difficult times changed Suzanne and Vicky's agenda. God builds up our resources as we turn our eyes to him.

Many years after her son died, Clare went through another difficult period whereby she was unfairly posted to another position at work. As it happened during the COVID circuit breaker, commuting to her new office at a remote location and not having lunch partners felt very lonely. Clare quickly took advantage of those quiet moments to turn her attention to God. She prayed and listened to devotionals during her long journey to work and lunch time. During those unhurried moments, God gave her strength to persevere in her situation until he opened another employment opportunity. Similarly, Faye decided to spend more time reading her Bible, and journaling while recuperating from her injury. Her reflections were

insightful: first, instead of focusing on getting the best result from hard work, it is better to focus on being a good steward of the resources God has given us and leave the result to him. Second, if God allows pain, he will also heal. Difficult times do not last forever; there is always hope in God.



Zoey hoped in God during a very depressive period. As she walked with God daily, God gave her enough strength for each day, and lightened her burden a little at a time until her emotions stabilised and she could smile again. She testifies that God's word illuminates one's heart when feelings darken it. When Emma and Bella studied the Bible carefully, they were pleasantly surprised at who God is. God convinced Bella that she can have a personal relationship with him. In fact, God invited her to be honest with him about her feelings like the psalmists. Emma was delighted to discover that God was not sadistically making things difficult in her life, but he was tearing down the unbiblical assumptions and values that she had built her life on. Although difficult times were unwelcomed, God brought reconciliation to Emma and Maggie's family during difficult times. Emma still does not understand all of God's ways, but she is able to trust that her future can be beautiful because she knows God now. Her confidence echoes one of Oswald Chambers' well-known words: faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you cannot understand at that time.

The difficult times in Carmen's parenting journey were intense encounters with God whereby her husband and her found courage to entrust their children to God's care. God went ahead of them to prepare their daughter's education path, and celebrated with them at each of their daughter's milestones. From her experience, Roslyn realised that no matter how hard she tries, she has no control over anyone's life; not even hers. When Roslyn finally gave God the driver's seat after many years of leaving him in the back seat, she felt the warmth of a prodigal's homecoming. God had brought her back, and led the rest of her family to himself. She is thankful that by surrendering to God, she is set free from an unhealthy family dynamic and poor self-esteem. Even though care-giving continues to be demanding, God has given her meaning for her life.

4 *What was God Doing?*

After my late-sister passed away, I asked God to help us grieve differently. Tears were abundant, and we had many conversations as a family. Although my mother was too grieved to talk much, she listened to the questions and responses the rest of my sisters and I had about God and heaven. That was the first time my mother, a non-Christian, listened without interrupting. God understood our pain and he comforted us in those tearful conversations. God also knew Amber's breaking point, and he was there to hold her through a song. That divine encounter was unforgettable, and it emboldened Amber to be his witness.

All the way my Saviour leads me, cheers each winding path I tread,
Gives me grace for every trial, feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter and my soul athirst may be
Gushing from the Rock before me, lo! A spring of joy I see.
Gushing from the Rock before me, lo! A spring of joy I see.

Fanny J. Crosby

5

What Helped?

Difficult times can last for a while. What helps people pull through? Depending on their personality, some people like to keep to themselves during difficult times. They hesitate to ask for help because they are afraid it will inconvenience and burden others. Some may also feel ashamed to acknowledge that they need help. Some people believe that others will not or cannot help, and some believe they do not deserve help. Perhaps they were told in their growing up years not to bother others but to resolve issues themselves; or that to ask for help is a sign of failure. Such beliefs must be challenged.

“Do not be afraid to let others know about your circumstances, and do not be afraid to ask for help because God will respond with help. There are people willing to help, but they cannot help if you do not let them know you need it,” Suzanne advised. Most of the women acknowledged that people were a blessing in times of need. The timely help and companionship, even if people just listened, were appreciated when their resources ran low and they felt alone in their trouble. As disorientation is normal during difficult times, it helps to talk to people who can help us gain perspective. Bella and Emma understood the benefit of listening to someone with their heart—listen to understand instead of attempting to solve that person’s problem. Indeed, we can bring God’s presence to people in distress by being present.

It helped Carmen, Roslyn, Clare and Zoey to realise that there are things they don’t know and cannot control, but God has never lost control. By giving up control to God, they invited God into the situation and gave in to his leadership. This is significant for Roslyn because she stopped blaming others for her circumstances, and is more empowered. Clare was confident that her identity as God’s precious child does not change with her circumstances, and that helped her to seek God’s

5 *What Helped?*

grace to pull her through every difficult episode. This is not merely positive thinking; it is faith that stands on God's promises. In difficult times, God's word brings hope, healing and strength, inspiring faith and courage.

Studying the Bible carefully with other Christians certainly helped Emma and Bella to surf the waves of confusion. Joshua 1:9 and Jeremiah 17:5-10 are verses that Carmen hangs on to, and Zoey held on to God's word daily to lead her out of depression. When the awful side effects of chemotherapy raged against Suzanne's weakened body, she remembered Jesus on the cross and said to herself, "If Jesus could endure the scourging and pain, I can surely endure this." Meanwhile, her friends rallied to pray for her recovery, which gave her emotional and spiritual strength. It helped to acknowledge pain, without letting it paralyse her.

Vicky admits that she cannot avoid depressive feelings whenever her condition worsens, but she can take responsibility to manage it. For example, it helps to look for things she can eat and do instead of being preoccupied with what she cannot eat and do. She has already attended courses on 3D printing, sewing, and graphic design using her SkillsFuture credits. "Don't be too quick to say 'I cannot'. Give yourself a chance to try, and don't be afraid of making mistakes," Maggie emphasised. Being grateful of what they have instead of complaining about what they do not have also helps Maggie and Elise to persevere and wait patiently for God's intervention.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Psalm 46:1-3

6

Final Thoughts

It should not surprise us to encounter difficult times in life; neither should it surprise us to encounter God in difficult times. A pain-free life does not exist in this fallen world, but God does. The women's stories show us that God was as real as their struggles. The Bible contains many stories of outstanding characters who went through difficult times, some of which were a result of their poor choices. Those stories are not merely about the characters' pain; they are about a faithful God who walked with them through difficult times to shape their faith so that his covenantal blessing continues to generations. We may feel crushed in difficult times, and our well-being undermined, or even our faith tested; but I believe that God will not allow them to destroy us⁷—perhaps only to destroy our self-sufficiency, ungodly character, and false beliefs.

Difficult times can be times of waiting. We wait for the dust to settle before we can make sense of the situation, we wait for help to come, for God's deliverance and the situation to improve. Who knows, God may be waiting too—waiting for us to turn to him with lament⁸ and trust, to surrender our control, and to become wiser, humbler, and more forgiving. In difficult times, we see the depth or shallowness of our relationship with God when we ask ourselves: To what extent do I trust God? Do I love God more than his gifts? Is Scripture for real today or is it history? For some of the women, Scripture took on new significance and their faith deepened during difficult times.

⁷ See 1 Corinthians 10:13, Romans 8:31-39.

⁸ See Psalm 13, 130; Lamentations 3:19-24

6 *Final Thoughts*

Whatever or whoever was the reason we enter difficult times, God can use it for a redemptive purpose. With God in the picture, we can ask him to shape our faith and birth something new from our pain. Therefore, do not be discouraged when you encounter difficult times. Let others walk with you, seek out a trusted Christian leader or a counsellor to help you see God and experience him in difficult times.

He's the Lord of the sunshine,
and Lord of the rain
He's the Lord of the good times,
and Lord of the pain
He's the Lord of the mountains,
and Lord of the seas
He's the Lord of the music,
the Lord of the children
The Lord of you and me.

Judy Ward



7

Reflection Questions

Contributed by Rev. Nathanael Tan

CHAPTER 1 Difficult Times

...we see that one's response to God rather than the presence or absence of difficulties plays a big part in the direction of one's faith. In other words, if Christians think that God should ward off all bad things from happening to them so that they will never have to suffer, they will likely become disillusioned when they encounter difficult times. However, if they believe that God is their refuge and strength even in the midst of suffering, they will likely draw closer to God.

(page 6)

1. In what way do you agree or disagree with the above statements?
2. What Christian hymns or songs have encouraged you in difficult times?

CHAPTER 2 Emotional Reactions

Clare's experience demonstrates the complexity of emotions, the importance of acknowledging them, and the benefit of working with them.

(page 10)

1. Which of the three underlined phrases do you struggle with and why?
2. Ask God to help you in that area.

Where was God?

Vicky's symptoms range from muscle stiffness to aches and pains. Getting out of bed, hanging her clothes, and reading require effort; yet she has told me repeatedly that God is good. "How is God good?" I queried. With a twinkle in her eye, she revealed that there were days she woke up without any pain, as if she did not have PD at all. Although few, those days were God-given relief and a foretaste of how her body will feel when she gets to heaven. She also recounted the way God timed it perfectly for her Malaysian nephew to move in after her children got married so that she can host him. "I know God is with me," Vicky said in quiet confidence. When difficult times drag on, and the situation remains unresolved in spite of our efforts, we may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us or that he is not interested in us. The truth is: God has never left.

(page 11)

1. **How does the hope of heaven strengthen you in your time of difficulty?**
2. **When were you convinced that God was with you even though you were in a difficult time?**



4 What was God Doing?

Every morning, Maggie prays for God's guidance and strength to carry out each new task that she needed to complete that day. In a short time but with great effort, she overcame her shyness to ask for help, and is less afraid to take on new challenges. Difficult times pushed her out of her comfort zone to hold on to God more tightly. When we find ourselves in unfamiliar and fierce storms, God invites us to himself.

(page 15)

1. **How has God used a difficult time to draw you closer to himself?**
2. ***"...faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you cannot understand at that time"* (Oswald Chambers). What aspect of God's character encourages you in your difficult time?**

7 Reflection Questions

CHAP
TER

5 What Helped?

Depending on their personality, some people like to keep to themselves during difficult times. They hesitate to ask for help because they are afraid it will inconvenience and burden others. Some may also feel ashamed to acknowledge that they need help. Some people believe that others will not or cannot help, and some believe they do not deserve help. Perhaps they were told in their growing up years not to bother others but to resolve issues themselves; or that to ask for help is a sign of failure. Such beliefs must be challenged.

(page 19)

1. **Which statement above do you struggle with the most? Why?**
2. **What has Jesus said or done in the Bible that can help you overcome the struggle?**

CHAP
TER

6 Final Thoughts

We may feel crushed in difficult times, and our well-being undermined, or even our faith tested; but I believe that God will not allow it to destroy us— perhaps only to destroy our self-sufficiency, ungodly character, and false beliefs

(page 21)

1. **How has God used a difficult time to destroy your self-sufficiency, ungodly character, and false beliefs (choose 1)?**
2. **Read Psalm 13, 130 and Lamentations 3:19-24. Choose one of the passages to meditate upon this week as you express a lament to God in faith.**



Ministry to Women

Just as there is a variety of flora in our parks and gardens, our congregation is made up of people with different personalities, life experiences, strengths and needs. We believe that everyone of us has a place in Hebron to grow and to support others in their growth. Ministry to Women activities and small groups are co-created, where God uses our differences and commonalities to humble and challenge us towards spiritual growth.

Stay updated on our activities via Hebron's digital notice board. To join or find out more about our small groups, please write to pohyeen@hebronbp.org.sg.

We would love to know how this book has been useful to you. Also, if you want to encourage any of the women in the book, or would like someone to pray with you, drop us a line at <https://hebronbp.org/info/ministry-to-women/>. You will find other resources there too.