**Built to Last**

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

A car has shock absorbers to help the frame of the car survive the constant pounding of the road. They protect the frame from potholes and uneven places on the road and enable the car to deliver a smooth ride. In the same way, if you have the ability to flex and give a little when the potholes and uneven places come, you’ll be able to ride a little more smoothly through life.

**Let me be very clear:** You can’t be successful in life the biblical way if you cannot flex, give, and bend during the tumult, turmoil, and uproar of life.

If you feel mastered by your circumstances or victimized by things you can’t control, you will not enjoy life, be successful in life, or enjoy God as much as you should. And you will probably make everyone around you unhappy as well. We’ve all known people who become fearful, angry, depressed, bitter, and withdrawn when life doesn’t meet their expectations. I’ve watched people leave a church or withdraw from a relationship because they were hurt in some way. Life doesn’t behave like we want it to most of the time. Sometimes it just won’t cooperate. Someday we will finally live in a perfect world where there is no pain, no suffering, and no crying (Revelation 21:4). But until then *how do we survive? We have to develop “shocks.”*
• Have you experienced bumpy roads in your life? What were the most difficult ones?

• When you experience misfortune, what is your initial response? Do you minimize your pain, and pretend it didn’t exist? Do you blame yourself and become immobilized by self-condemnation? Or do you process the loss and receive comfort from God and a trusted friend?

**BIBLICAL “SHOCK ABSORBERS” THAT WILL ENABLE YOU TO FLEX AND REBOUND**

**SHOCK #1: BELIEVE IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.**

“The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.” (Psalm 121:7–8)

We need to believe—rationally, emotionally, and spiritually—that He is our Chief Ruler, our Father in Heaven, and our King of Kings. He will be with us always. In the words of the psalmist, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” (Psalm 139:7)

What does sovereignty mean? It means that you can be a Joseph who receives a promise early in life but whose brothers sell you into slavery. Then you’re falsely accused and thrown into jail where you stay for at least two years. In all, for thirteen years that promise seems to mock you. But God always keeps His promises, exalting you to the highest position in the land and giving you the opportunity to reunite with your family. God is sovereign.

Sovereignty means that you can be a little shepherd boy when a priest named Samuel anoints you, saying that you’re going to be the king of Israel. But years later you find yourself in a cave hiding from the current King who wants to kill you. And yet, God is always in control, finally raising you up to become King of all Israel.

Sovereignty means you can be a Christian, know that you’re living in Christ with no condemnation, believing that all things work out together for good, and still you can be hurt and suffer. But believing in God’s sovereignty means that you choose to keep trusting Him. He will provide. He is in control. And He will care for you.

God is always working out His purpose and will for our lives. Sometimes He works through hardship, teaching us things that we need to learn. So the first shock that will help you survive the difficulties of life is belief in the sovereignty of God and trust that He is purposeful in what He does.

• When you face difficulties in your life, do you ever feel that God is absent, that He doesn’t hear your prayers? Can you remember a time that God’s presence was very near when you were suffering? How did that feel?

• Engage in a meditation on Psalm 121:7-8. Picture God the Father holding you in His arms so that nothing can harm you. When you are in the midst of a difficult challenge in your life today, try thanking God for His sovereign will rather than begging God for relief. Write your prayer of thanks in the space below.
SHOCK #2: HOPE IN GOD’S GLORY.

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18)

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” (2 Corinthians 4:17)

The end of our Christian lives will be the ultimate glory! Paul said in Philippians 1:23, “But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better” (NASB). That is true glory! The world we live in is not the best of all worlds, because beyond the veil of this life is the glory of God.

Revelation 7:16–17 tells us that in heaven, in the light of God’s glory, there will be no more hunger or thirst, the sun will not beat down on us, and we will no longer suffer, because the Lamb of God will guide us to springs of the water of life and God will wipe every tear from our eyes. *His glory is one of the greatest promises we can look forward to—we will experience all that life was originally meant to be.*

- Have you ever lost a loved one? Have you pictured heaven when you faced the death of someone dear to you? How did you imagine heaven to be?

- Read Revelation chapter 21 aloud. As you read the description of heaven’s glory, consider what you will do once Jesus ushers you into God’s throne room. How does seeing Jesus for the first time make you feel? Are you excited, afraid, or a little of both?

SHOCK #3: ENJOY GOD’S GIFTS.

“That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all toil—this is the gift of God.” (Ecclesiastes 3:13)

*Carpe Diem!* Seize the Day! Don’t let the elusiveness of what might be take you away from the happiness of what you’ve been given now. You have to enjoy the blessings God has given to you. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon tells us seven times to enjoy the wife of our youth and the works of our hands, for God has approved of them. So enjoy every moment. I have talked with many older folks and asked them, “What would you do over in your life?” Almost all the time I hear, “I wish I hadn’t worried about things I couldn’t control. I wish I would have enjoyed the things I did have.”

Enjoy your wife, your kids, sunshine, flowers, food, family, friends, and so on. *Get a double dip of ice cream every once in a while!*

- What are some treasures from God that you often take for granted? List them here. Spend some time thanking God for these blessings.

- Think of some relationships that have encouraged and energized your life. Who are these special friends? Write a note or make a call to one of them to tell them how much they mean to you.
SHOCK #4: TRUST IN GOD’S PRESENCE

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains slip into the heart of the sea.” (Psalm 46:1–2)

Trust in God is the belief that He is closer and stronger than my dilemma and my problems. He is our Helper. He promised that He’ll take care of us and that He’ll be with us. “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Psalm 18:2).

In our storm-tossed boat, He knows where we are and He’ll come to us. He calls us, “Just step out here with Me and I’ll take you through it. And when I say so, the storm will go away and I’ll get you to the other side. He will not be roused by the winds and waves, but He instantly responds when I cry “Master!” Then He is up on His feet! Even in my flawed faith, He will rise to take care of me. We need to have a strong belief in the presence of God!

Sit with your Father and love Him, trust Him, enjoy Him, walk with Him. And if anything happens that you can’t figure out, just grab onto Him and hang on. Let Him take you through it.

You cannot be happy or successful in life the biblical way when you let life’s circumstances determine how you respond. You’ve got to have “shocks” to last!

- How does God make His presence known to you? Do you sense His nearness when you study God’s Word? Do you have a quiet peace that you experience when you pray? Do you sense His nearness when you fellowship with others at church?

- Have you ever felt like God had abandoned you? What were the circumstances that made you feel that way? Can you image some lessons that God may have been teaching you through that test of faith? Ask God to bring mature, comforting brothers and sisters into your life to help you when you are struggling with doubt and discouragement.

- Hebrews 13:5b reads: “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.” Write this promise on an index card and place it in your wallet or purse. Visualize Jesus, standing behind you, His strong arms surrounding you as you meditate on this verse.

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURE

Choose a verse from these passages to memorize today.

Deuteronomy 7:9  
Revelation 21  
Psalm 121:7-8  
Psalm 139:7  
Romans 8:18  
Proverbs 22:29  
Philippians 1:23  
Ecclesiastes 3:13  
Psalm 46:1-2  
Hebrews 13:5b