

It's Our Choice

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The story goes that there was once an old mule that fell into an abandoned well. The farmer could not find a way to pull it out, so he decided to fill in the well and bury the mule where he was. The mule soon felt a load of dirt landing on his back. Now he was faced with a choice. He could bray and holler all he wanted and be buried alive, or he could decide to do the best he could with the hand he had been dealt.

With great struggle he lifted one foot after another out of the fresh dirt in the bottom of the well. Soon the farmer returned with another load of dirt. As the dirt reached the bottom of the well the mule once again struggled until he was standing on top of the dirt.

With each load of the dirt the mule inched his way a little closer to the top. As the farmer dumped the last load, he was startled to see the old mule jump out of the well and walk away.

What is true for the old mule is also true for us. There will likely be times in our lives when we think we have hit the bottom of the well and it seems like we can go no lower. In those moments the world may dump another load upon us. Then we must decide whether we will be buried under it all, or whether we will use our adversity to become a stronger person.

James the Apostle wrote, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything"* (James 1:2-4).

Someone has noted that if we change just one letter in the word "disappointment" it becomes "His appointment." Instead of complaining when things seem to be going wrong, we would do better to ask ourselves how our testing times could make us a better person.

A young lady once told me that when she was first married her husband accepted a job far from her hometown of Piqua. She did not want to go and wondered why God was doing this to her. But during her years in her new location she worked in the office of a wonderful church. There she found a new and deeper faith in God. Looking back, she also realized that she had been so wrapped up with friends and activities that she may have never taken time for God if she had not moved away.

Now she attends the church I pastor, has a fine Christian family, and is an encouragement to us all. God turned her disappointment of leaving her hometown into His appointment for spiritual growth.

It has been said that we are to bloom wherever God plants us. Too many persons waste years lamenting their situation in life when God wants to use them to grow and be productive just where they are.

But it's our choice. God does not require us to be happy. People who have a negative outlook on life can always find something to be unhappy about. Their real problem is not their circumstances, but how they are reacting to their circumstances.

St. Paul wrote, *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all." And concerning his own happiness he said, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation"* (Philippians 4:4-5; 12).

We can choose to rejoice and to learn how to be happy. Or we can have a pity party. It's our choice.