

**“GOD WON’T GIVE ME MORE THAN I CAN HANDLE...REALLY?”**

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**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:11,7, 12-13**

Have you ever had a bad day? All of us have! Have you ever had that bad day turn into a bad week? Many of us have! Have you ever had that bad week turn into a bad month? Some of us have! Have you ever had that bad month turn into a bad year? A few of us have! Do you see where we’re headed here? An honest assessment of life shows us that there are times that, life as we know it, reaches a point where we’re so beat down and discouraged that we don’t know what direction to go!

Now when times get tough, our friends and family come along side and try to comfort and encourage us, and inevitably, some person will utter the infamous words “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” Though they are meant to be encouraging, more often than not, what is heard are not words of encouragement, but something along the lines of ...”Cowboy up, you wimp!”

Now it’s easy to spout off bumper sticker based theology that’s designed to make people feel better, but such things do very little good in face of the actual brokenness of our world. In fact, when people buy into them, it creates a whole host of spiritual landmines that can do intense damage to our spiritual lives.

Where did we get this crazy idea? The idea that God won’t give us more than we can handle, though not original with her, is most often attributed to that great humanitarian and Catholic nun, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. “I know God won’t give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish he didn’t trust me so much.”

This sounds believable. It sounds like the actions of an “all-knowing,” and more importantly, “all-loving” God. And on those really hard days, we eagerly embrace it. So we buy the line, and then we scour the pages of Scripture, looking for proof that this is indeed the way God works. Then we breathe a sigh of relief when we find it!

*No temptation has seized you that isn’t written as a warning for us to whom the end of time has come.” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:13)*

The only problem is that this verse isn’t about what we think it’s about, and it doesn’t say what we think it says! This verse is one of the most helpful verses in the whole Bible for those who wish to confront temptation. Did you catch that? Paul is talking about temptation, not suffering. In this passage, Paul is encouraging those Christians who are being tempted to return to an “idolatrous” lifestyle—and that God provides a way of resisting those temptations. Often when we read the text...”provide a way of escape, that we may endure,” what we hear is...”when we’re suffering, God won’t let us suffer more than we can handle.”

God gives us more than we can handle. If you don't think that God will give you more than you can handle, just tell that to a "survivor of Auschwitz," a "husband who just lost his wife in an accident," the "girl who was just robbed of her innocence," the person who is "crushed under the weight of depression and anxiety."

A point of clarification...to say that God "gives" us more than we can handle means that He "allows" us to face more than we can handle! As much as we'd like to believe that God won't give us more than we can handle, it's actually critical for our spiritual life that we learn the exact opposite!

All throughout Scripture, people were handed impossible tasks. Moses freeing thousands of Israelites, David slaying a giant, Joseph sold into slavery and becoming the most powerful man in Egypt, Daniel in the lion's den, Mary becoming a pregnant virgin, etc. Do you think any of these "heroes" of the Bible were in the middle of such extremely stressful circumstances and thought, "Well, God won't give me more than I can handle, so I'll just keep hanging on?" We wouldn't have much of a Bible if God was in the habit of only giving what we can handle! No, they relied on God to get them through, and in the process showed that a possible God is in charge of impossible situations. *"With God, all things are possible."* (Philippians 4:13) All things God wants and blesses!

In Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, he writes these words...

*"Brothers and sisters, we don't want you to be unaware of the troubles that we went through in Asia. We were weighed down with a load of suffering that was so far beyond our strength that we were afraid we might not survive. It certainly seemed to us as if we had gotten the death penalty. This was so that we would have confidence in God, who raises the dead, instead of ourselves. God rescued us from a terrible death, and he will rescue us. We have set our hope on him that he will rescue us again..."* (2 Corinthians 1:8-10)

If God is only giving us what we can handle, then we'll never be dependent on Him for anything. If God is only giving us what we can handle, then we'll never step outside our comfort zone. If God is only giving us what we can handle, then we'll never grow spiritually. If we ever want God to use us to accomplish something great, it's going to require things to be "more than we can handle." God won't give you more than HE can handle!

God's plans are "huge" and if those plans were reliant on human limitations, then He'd never get anything done! Facing more than we can handle strengthens us and honors and glorifies God!

God doesn't give anyone pain, illness or death. He allows suffering but never wills it; He permits it, but never causes it. So when we use such a response, based on a miss-reading of scripture, it slanders the character of God!

Even Jesus had days when life was more than he could handle. The night before Jesus was executed, He cried out in the garden, *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”* (Matthew 26:38). Jesus told His Father, *“This is too much for me!”*

We see this kind of thing in the Psalms, too. The Psalmists ball their fists in rage, and shout at God, *“Why have you forsaken me?”* (Psalm 22). In their sadness they say, *“Darkness is my closest friend.”* (Psalm 88)

What these verses teach us is that it’s ok to feel like we can’t handle it, like we are going to give up. We can cry out, *“My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death.”* And when we do this, we find God—the one who, in the person of Jesus, suffers with us. When we become aware that life will give us more than we can handle and come to grips with this, we find a promise: *“I’ve said these things to you so that you will have peace in me. In the world you have distress. But be encouraged! I have conquered the world.”* (John 16:33) God is faithful to meet us in the mess and in the pain.

More than once in life, I’ve been driven to my knees, simply because I’ve had nowhere else to go, and when there, God met me there, and gave me the strength to move forward!

I’ve often trudged through trials that overwhelmed me. Ever since my childhood, there have been trials that have made me “grow up” pretty fast, faster than I wanted to or should have. But I know I’m not the only one to walk that path. I know for a fact that you’ve had your fair share, too. Why? Because that’s the reality of life! No matter what situation you’re in today, whether it’s a new diagnosis, financial pressure, a stressful family situation, a failed marriage, or an unknown future, you can face your fears. Why? 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:4 gives the answer... *“You are from God, little children, and you have defeated these people because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”*