

Optimism Doesn't Make Everything Better

Written by Steve Marr
Friday, 01 March 2019 15:04

A rock climber lost his grip and started a 600-foot fall to the bottom of the canyon. In the first several seconds as he found himself in a mid-air free fall, he thought everything was going well. However, his optimism didn't give him a safe landing. In business, as in life, we need to balance idealistic optimism against unrealistic pessimism.

When facing a serious business crisis, total optimism that says: the situation will resolve shortly; isn't our best tool. Neither is extreme pessimism that makes us want to fold up our tent and go home.

The words of Paul provide insight into difficult circumstances. He said, "Now we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this surpassingly great power is from God and not from us. We are pressed on all sides, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:7-9, NIV)

Sometimes when I work with clients in very difficult situations, I counsel them to pray and work for the best. However, at the same time; I instruct them to develop a contingency plan that prepares for the worst.

I asked "Connor" what the worst thing was that could happen in his current circumstance. After talking about it, Connor agreed that in a worst-case scenario he would be forced to close his business, a significant disappointment, and find a job with another company. The good news was that even if he had to work for someone else, he would still be able to feed, clothe and house the family; something a billion or more people in the world struggle with daily.

Becoming overly optimistic keeps us from making effective and specific plans to overcome business obstacles. However, complete pessimism will paralyze us. We see a sad example in scripture where the people cried out against God and Moses about the danger of taking the promised land. This is the Lord's response to Moses:

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So tell them: As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you exactly as I heard you say. Your bodies will fall in this wilderness—all who were numbered in the census, everyone twenty years of age or older—because you have grumbled against Me. (Numbers 14:28-29, NIV)

Scripture also states, "Jesus answered him, 'It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (Matthew 4:7, NIV)

When we encounter life's crises, we need to take each circumstance to the Lord, determine God's will for each and move forward with faith. That means that God will never leave us, but it doesn't mean that we will get the outcome that we want. Avoid the pessimism of the people in the desert, as well as unrealistic optimism which prevents us from preparing for difficult circumstances. Then, you will discover the Lord's blessings in and through each experience.

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