

**Series:** Through It All  
**Title:** Through the Valley of Unfortunate Events  
**Text:** John 16:31-33  
**Key Word:** Attitudes  
**Proposition:** Everyone will walk through the valley of unfortunate events by adopting these biblical attitudes.

Good morning everyone. My name is Chris Farmer. I serve as one of the pastors. We are thrilled that you have chosen to come and worship God with us. God is in this place. He offers His presence and power, so that we can love him and others; grow to be like Jesus, and serve the world. He is here to reveal his ways and purposes so that we can live the life that we were created to live.

I invite to open up your mind and heart to what God would have to say this morning. Open up your Bible to John 16:31-33 where we will discover our God who promises to strengthen us as we walk through the valley of unfortunate events. Jesus had spent three years of his life with his disciples, teaching them the ways of the Kingdom of God and demonstrating the power of his love that changes lives. He washed their feet and celebrated his last Passover Meal with them. He prepared them for the world's hatred. Then He reminded them that he would be leaving them soon, but after a little a little while, they would see him again. In response to their confusion, he promises that their grief will turn to joy. He assured them of God's love knowing they had loved Him and believed that he came from God.

The disciples then said that they understood and told Jesus that they truly believed in him. Let us now read Jesus response to their confession of faith: "*Jesus asked, 'Do you finally believe?'*" *But the time is coming—indeed, it's here now—*

*when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*

Jesus promises a come back for all those who take heart in him. Bethany Hamilton grew up in a surfing family in the Hawaiian Islands. Her parents put her on a surfboard when she was a toddler. Through her parents witness she began a relationship with Jesus at the age of 5 years old. She entered amateur surfing competitions at the age of 13. In October 2003, while surfing with family and friends, Bethany was attacked by a 14’ Tiger Shark, severing her left arm. Thanks to some nearby surfers who placed a tourniquet on her shoulder her life was saved, even after losing 60% of her blood. Let’s see how she has walked through this unfortunate event. (Video)

Bethany has chosen to allow God to use her unfortunate event to be a source of encouragement to help others find their personal comeback through faith in Jesus Christ. No matter how tragic the event, like an earthquake in Haiti, a house fire, flood, bankruptcy, or an accident we all can walk through the valley of unfortunate events by adopting these attitudes.

**First, adopt an attitude of acceptance. We grow stronger for this journey by accepting that there are no answers to some questions.** During Jesus lifetime, Pilate murdered a group of Galileans. Some believed that Pilate used lethal

force to squelch a rebellion. The Pharisees who supported a nonviolent approach to dealing with the Romans said that these Galileans deserved to die. Jesus asked the Pharisees, *“Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all other people from Galilee? Is that why they suffered? Not at all.”* Jesus dismisses the idea that accidents or human cruelties were God’s judgment on especially bad sinners. A way in which a person dies does not measure of righteousness. Everyone has to die. Jesus refuses to explain why some live or some die tragically; instead he points to everyone’s need to repent, to change ones ways and heart. (Luke 13:1-5) Do we think that Haitians are worse sinners than the other people living in this world? Jesus said, “No not at all.” Then he went on to say: *“Listen, Pharisees, what had happen to them wasn't very serious. You really have some serious problems, because you need to deal with some eternal matters. All they did was die. You'd better get straight in your relationship with God, or you're going to be in a lot worse shape than they were in.”* Jesus never did answer why.

I believe the reason he never said why is that there is no answer to the why. Why did Katrina hit the coast of Louisiana and Mississippi with such severity? Why did the earthquake devastate Haiti killing potentially over 150,000 people? Scientists can tell us how it happens. They can explain all the factors that contributed to such events. But they cannot explain the whys.

The question is not why but why not? Why do things happen like that? Because they just happen. Thunderstorms, hurricanes, blizzards, floods, and

earthquakes happen. Car accidents occur on our freeways, killing the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the famous and the common. There is no explanation.

The Scripture teaches that we enjoy much of our lives. Most things that occur to us are good. However, every occasionally, we find ourselves standing safe and secure in our homes and the things of earth shakes our world. Occasionally, things happen, and when they happen, there is no explanation. Accept that there is no answer to some questions.

**Next, adopt an attitude of hope: Assume that bad things will turn out good.** In his letter to the Roman Christ followers, Paul wrote, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) Terrible things happen to people who love God. Many Christians explicitly teach—and most Christians implicitly believe—that if we love and serve God, then we will not have as many bad things happen to us. That's not true! Horrible things can happen to us, and believing in and loving and serving God will not keep them from happening. All the same, things that happen to everybody else will happen to people who love God. "All things" means all things in this text. Paul also wrote, *“What can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, poverty, danger, or sword?”* (Romans 8:35) Those are terrible things. Paul is saying all the same things that happen to everybody else will happen to us, even if we love God. He is saying that nothing can separate us from God's love.

Christians have to recognize that if our health remains intact, it is simply because God is holding it up. If people love us, if someone is there to hug us or squeeze our hand, if someone loves us in spite of all our flaws—if someone loves us at all—it's because God is bringing all things together. God is holding it up. Everything that goes well is a miracle of grace. Although bad things happen, God works them for good.

**Finally, adopt an attitude of obedience: Answer the Call to compassionate service.** Paul wrote his second letter to Christ followers in Corinth. They suffered not from a hurricane, or an earthquake. It was suffering with arrests, imprisonment, and death. Much like the Haitians, those Christians were going through the agony of losing people they loved. In the first chapter, Paul blesses the Lord for being "*the Father of compassion and the God of comfort, who comforts all of us in our trouble.*" Then Paul makes this key statement: God comforts us in all our troubles "*so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.*"

We can't stop hurricanes. We can't stop earthquakes. But what we can do is recognize that we who have been given the comfort of God have the ability to give the same kind of comfort that we ourselves have been blessed to receive. We can give tangible comfort to those in need.

There is no answer to the why. It happened because circumstances were just right. The truth is; God is there in Port-au-Prince, and the surrounding communities.

God is wherever there is hurt. He is the Father of Compassion, the God of all comfort.

What exactly is comfort? The word appears nine times in this chapter, and 29 times in this letter. Obviously, it's an important concept. We tend to think of comfort as something that makes us feel better, like our favorite food, a shoulder to cry on, or someone telling us that everything's going to be okay. Comfort is soothing; it eases our pain, relieves our distress. The hotel chain Comfort Inn, for example, promises fresh linens, fluffy pillows, cable television, and a good night's sleep after a hard day on the road. When we call something comforting, we usually mean that it makes us feel better. That's not what Paul had in mind.

The word "comfort" in the Bible has more to do with strengthening than soothing. It doesn't just relieve our pain; it stiffens our resolve. The Greek word means "to help by giving courage." The English word points us in that direction, too. "Comfort" comes from the Latin root *fortis*, which means "strength." It shows up in words like *forte*, *fortress*, and *fortitude*. Comfort, according to the Bible, isn't about feeling better; it's about feeling stronger. Comfort, according to the Bible, isn't about feeling better; it's about getting stronger.

Isn't that what we really need when bad things happen? Have you ever seen someone's knees buckle when they receive bad news? Have you ever heard someone say they're so sad they can't even get out of bed, or make a simple decision? They need strength. If you've just lost someone you love or been disappointed in a major

way, you're supposed to feel bad, sad, or mad. What you need is the strength to get through it.

The God of all comfort gives us enough to give away. Paul realizes that the hardship he has endured and the strength he has received enable him to strengthen others in their time of distress. In fact, one of the primary ways God delivers comfort is through people who come alongside us. In other words, when God gives you comfort, he doesn't just give enough to get you through; he gives you enough to give away.

God never waists his children's pain. The more we walk with suffering Christ, the more tender we become. So answer his call to compassionate service, giving courage to the banged up and knocked around. Whom is God calling you to comfort today? The Haitian people, a neighbor without a job, the co-worker whose marriage is falling apart, the man or woman whose spouse abuses drugs/alcohol, the single parent struggling to raise a family and keep a job, or the teen whose peers make fun of him. God calls the broken to strengthen the broken. Will you answer his call?

*Jesus said, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* We can overcome by accepting that we can't find answers to the whys. We can overcome by assuming that the bad will turn out good. We can overcome by answering God's call to compassionate service. Only a relationship with Jesus Christ can provide such transforming attitudes. No one can adopt any of these attitudes without knowing Jesus. If you want to be

empowered to walk through the valley of unfortunate events, then pray this prayer with me. Compassionate God of all Comfort, I come to you in my weakness and pain. Thank you for your Son Jesus who overcame the tragedy of the Cross by coming back from the dead. Help me overcome my sadness, anger, and fear. I open the door of my broken heart. Come into my life, giving me acceptance, hope, and an obedient heart. In Jesus Name, Amen.