
THE
BUMPS
ARE
WHAT YOU
CLIMB ON

Encouragement for Difficult Days

Warren W. Wiersbe



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To the memory of
Bill and Dottie Kam
Bill Smith
Ed and Helen Wiersbe

and for the encouragement of
Doris Smith
C. D. and Charlotte Wiersbe
Bob Warren

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Preface

“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle.”

Many years ago, I read this bit of practical counsel written by a godly Scottish preacher, and it has helped me immensely in my ministry. I have also amended the statement a bit: “Be kind *and encouraging*, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle.”

A man named Joses joined with the believers in the Jerusalem church and was so helpful that they gave him a new name: Barnabas—“son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). The Lord never changed my name, but I have sought to have a ministry of encouragement.

While I was serving as senior minister of the Moody Church in Chicago, one such ministry was the *Songs in the Night* radio program, emanating from the sanctuary of that historic church. With the Lord’s help, each week I endeavored to share something encouraging from the Scriptures, and this book contains a selection of those broadcast meditations.

Preface

Except for a few minor changes, these messages stand just as I delivered them.

I believe there is more tension and discouragement in our world today than there was when these meditations were first broadcast, but the promises of God's Word have not changed. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). Our needy world is experiencing wars, famines, plagues, political upheavals, and economic predicaments, and only Jesus Christ can bring peace and confidence to troubled hearts. I trust these messages will encourage you and help you encourage others.

Warren W. Wiersbe

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The Bumps Are What You Climb On

A little boy was leading his sister up a mountain path and the way was not too easy. “Why, this isn’t a path at all,” the little girl complained. “It’s all rocky and bumpy.” And her brother replied, “Sure, the bumps are what you climb on.” That’s a remarkable piece of philosophy. What do you do with the bumps on the path of life?

I have been a reader of biographies for many years, and I have yet to find a successful person whose life was free from problems and difficulties. Looking at these people from a distance, you might think they had it made and that life was easy for them. But when you get closer, you discover that their climb to the top of the mountain was not an easy one. The road was rocky and bumpy, but the bumps were what they climbed on to get to the top.

We don't have to read too far in the Bible before we discover the truth. Abraham certainly didn't become a great man of faith overnight. He had to go through some difficult tests on the road of life before he reached the top of the mountain. No sooner did Abraham arrive in Canaan than a famine came to the land. Imagine facing a famine in the land God has promised you! Then Abraham had problems with his nephew, Lot; and then war came to the land, and Abraham had to go out and fight. His wife led him astray with bad counsel and the result was the birth of Ishmael, a boy who brought sorrow to Abraham's heart. Finally, Isaac, the promised son, was born, bringing great joy to Abraham and Sarah. Then God asked Abraham to put Isaac on the altar, a sacrifice that would be difficult for any father or mother. Yes, there were many bumps on that road, but Abraham used the bumps to climb higher.

If anybody walked a rocky road, Joseph did. He was pampered by his father, hated by his brothers, sold for a slave, falsely accused, put into prison, forgotten, and apparently forsaken. But the bumps on the road helped him to climb higher, and one day Joseph became the second in command of all Egypt. Moses had a similar experience, and so did David, Daniel, and Paul. Here were people who did not complain about the road; they accepted the difficulties of life and used them as stepping-stones to the top of the mountain.

I don't know what difficulties you are going through just now, but I know some of the feelings you have, because I have been on this bumpy road myself. You feel like quitting, like giving up. You can't understand why the road doesn't get easier, why God doesn't remove the stones and straighten the path. If God did that, you might never get to the top, because the bumps are what you can climb on.

Psalms 91 says, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” It is a psalm that magnifies the care that God exercises over His children. Eleven different kinds of dangers are named in this psalm—war, snares, sickness, terrors by night, arrows by day, and others—yet God says that He can protect us from them all. This doesn’t mean that we will never experience accidents or injuries; but it does mean that no matter what happens in the will of God, all things will work together for good.

One of the greatest promises found in Psalm 91 has to do with the stones on the path. “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” God doesn’t promise to remove the stones from the path, but He does promise to make them stepping-stones and not stumbling blocks. He promises to help us climb higher because of the difficulties of life.

Most of us respond in a predictable way to the rocks in the path. We complain about them; we kick against them and only hurt ourselves. We try to pick them up and get rid of them, only to discover they are too heavy for us. We can’t always get around them, and we wonder if we can get over them. Some people just stop and go no further. Others give up and turn back. But the child of God does not have to stop or go back; he can use the rocky places in life as stepping-stones to climb higher.

The trouble with most of us is that we are accustomed to paved roads and level sidewalks. But life is not made that way. Sometimes the road is level and easy, and the birds are singing and the way is wonderful. But sometimes the road is rocky and bumpy, and we hear no music and feel no helping

hand. Then what? Complain? Give up? No, that's the time to remember God's promise: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." God's invisible army is at your service, and God can see you through.

Charlie Brown in the "Peanuts" comic strip is one of my favorite characters. In one particular strip, he is complaining because his team always loses their games. Lucy tries to console him by saying, "Remember, Charlie Brown, you learn more from your defeats than you do from your victories." And Charlie Brown replies, "That makes me the smartest man in the world!"

If life were nothing but a series of defeats, all of us would get discouraged. God knows how to balance our lives so that we have sunshine and rain, calm and storm, laughter and tears. On the road of life there are level places that delight us, and there are difficult places that challenge us. If we get off the path of God's will and go on a detour, the way will be rough from start to finish. The detour is always rougher than the main road. But there are rocks and bumps even on the paths of God's choosing, and we have to learn to accept them and benefit from them. The bumps are what you climb on.

But this takes faith. It is much easier to kick the rock and turn around and go back. The secret to climbing higher is to look away from yourself and your difficulties, and look by faith to Jesus Christ. He knows where you are, how you feel, and what you can do. Turn it all over to Him and start walking by faith. The very rocks that seem like barriers to human eyes will, to the eyes of faith, become blessings. Listen to the promises of Psalm 91:15: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him."

If anybody faced obstacles on the road of life, it was our Lord Jesus Christ. He was born into a poor family, a member of a rejected minority race. He grew up in obscurity in a little town that was mentioned only in scorn—“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” He gathered about Him a small group of nondescript men, and one of them became a traitor and sold Him for the price of a slave. He was called a liar, a glutton, a drunkard, a man in league with the devil. Men twisted His words and questioned His motives, yet Jesus Christ continued to do the will of God. Finally, He came to that greatest stone of all—being crucified like a common thief. But He continued to climb that mountain, and God gave Him the victory.

This is why the writer of the Book of Hebrews urges us to look to Jesus Christ and keep on trusting. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2). We are to look not at ourselves, our circumstances, our troubles, or the bumps in the road, but unto Jesus.

Yes, the bumps are what you climb on!