



Empowering People to Change the World

Bring it On!
The Three Reasons for Trials, Troubles, and
Tribulations

Steve Holt

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Last Sunday night we were packed to capacity as we worshipped and prayed in the New Year.

- This series, *Bring it On!* is to prepare your mind for action! To have a new mindset, new attitude, and new mental and spiritual preparation for the “**Black Wave dream**” Liz shared last Sunday night.
- Let’s get our minds right for difficulties, trials, and tribulations that are coming our way.

Master your Thoughts, Mold your Character, Make your Destiny!

If you *master* your thinking, you will mold your character and make your destiny!

Michael Phelps is the most decorated athlete in history:

- Five-time Olympian.
- Twenty-seven Olympic medals, twenty-two of them gold.
- Thirty-nine career world records.
- Seven-time World Swimmer of the Year.

Michael Phelps training regimen was amazing:

- He swam over eight miles a day, six or seven times a week. Almost fifty miles per week, no breaks. When asked about Christmas Day or birthdays: “Nope” was the answer. Phelps and his coach, Bob Bowman, didn’t take a day off for five years.
- Phelps usually split his training into two sessions, spending five to six hours in the pool every day. Phelps also did functional training with weights at least three times a week.
- Recovery played an important role in Michael Phelps daily routine. He recovered by taking ice baths.

For most of us a pool is for pleasure. For a champion swimmer, a pool is a training place for perfection to win.

- Life is like that. We either view life as a refuge for our pleasures or a training ground for perfection.
- Life is hard and God has wired you for hard!
- Paul seems to have a mindset about life and hardships that was more like a training ground than leisure vacation.
- The new mindset we are encouraging is *Bring it On*.

***BRING it ON* to the pain, strain, and reframe of your daily life.**

- What if you start saying *Bring it On* instead of *oh no, here we go again, or I can't believe this is happening*.
- How about replacing frustration with fortitude!
- Stop blaming others, your bad luck, or even God. How about replacing blame with taking responsibility!

Cowards blame others for their problems, the courageous say *Bring it On!*

- A lot of people have big struggles dealing with hardships and the blame game is their natural go to when times are hard. That's what cowards do.

The “Bring it On” Mindset: This Life is Not a Relaxing Spa but a Training Center.

James got it. With all the hardships he had endured he sees life as a training center.

Turn in your Bibles to James 1:2-7. Everyone stand as we read God's Word.

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience/endurance. But let endurance have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Do you see it? Do you understand what James is saying? He is saying this: *Bring it On*.

- We can have joy in trials, tribulations, and trouble, because God is perfecting us, making us complete, lacking in nothing.
- Life is not a spa but a training center to make us complete, lacking in nothing.

A *Bring it On* mindset can produce joy if we understand the three reasons God allows trials, troubles, and tribulations.

“Bring it On” Three Reasons God Allows Trials, Troubles, and Tribulations

Verses 2-3

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”

Reason #1: Trials, Troubles, and Tribulations Build Endurance

- Are we joyful about our hard circumstances? No.
- Are we joyful about trials? No.
- Are we joyful about losing our marriage? No.
- Are we joyful about being rejected? No.
- Are we joyful about losing our job? No.
-

It is seeing **past** the current battle to the perseverance, patience, and endurance being trained into you. We rejoice that we are becoming more and more like our Savior and friend, Jesus Christ.

I like what Vince D’Acchioli illustrated at The Road with his hands...

- It’s seeing past the immediate to the unshakeable! God is building an unshakeable endurance in you.
- The power of the Holy Spirit within you is greater than any earthly power. The power of the universe is alive in your heart; the Kingdom of God is within you.

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

- God has made you for the battle. You are hardwired for conflict. The Bible admonishes you to “Run with endurance the race that is set before [you]” (Hebrews 12:1).
- You have what it takes to overcome pain, hardship, and loss. Created in the image of God for the Kingdom of God, it’s in your genes to be a fighter.

Those who learn the art of endurance are people who have had tremendous difficulties in their lives. It even seems that the greater the obstacles, the stronger the individual. Angela Lee Duckworth, a leading speaker, while a math teacher in San Francisco, discovered through her extensive research on what makes inner city students successful,

“One characteristic emerged as the best predictor of success. It wasn’t social intelligence; it wasn’t good looks, physical health, and it wasn’t IQ. It was grit. Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future day in and day out, not just for the week and not just for the month, but for years. And working hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living your life like a marathon and not a sprint.” (Angela Lee Duckworth)

Life is hard. We are constantly confronted with:

- bad news, difficult choices, and serious circumstances.
- every day being just another day to face something hard.
- Malevolent people. Friends will betray you. Getting ripped off is part of the demonic world we live in.
- Satan and his demonic power at work in our world. Don’t be shocked that it impacts you.

Instead of *oh no...* or *I can’t believe this...* or *are you kidding me*. No, those don’t help at all; they only intensify my anxiety and worry. Rather I say to myself *Bring it On*, and confidence comes.

***Bring it On* means I’m confident in God to navigate me through this hardship. He is building endurance into me.**

“Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but turn it into glory.” (William Barclay)

When things are going bad, say **Bring it On**.

- *You didn't get the promotion...Bring it on.*
- *Nobody called you back...Bring it on.*
- *You've got cancer...Bring it on.*
- *Choosing to work on a hard marriage...Bring it on.*
- *You just got another rejection letter...Bring it on.*
- *He/she broke up with you...Bring it on.*
- *You've been rejected...Bring it on.*

It's a stand you take in the surf of life. It's about resiliency. It's getting back into the arena after getting knocked down.

If we really believe that "all things work together for good," (Romans 8:28) then saying *Bring it On* is a faith statement of belief in the goodness of God. *Bring it On* means to me:

- *I have what it takes to handle any situation.*
- *I'm fully confident that God will give me wisdom.*
- *I can decide to make joy out of this.*
- *I'm powerful and strong in Christ.*
- *I'm looking forward to what I will learn through this circumstance.*
- *I'm being made into a better person through the pain.*
- *Something good is going to happen.*

Verse 4

"But let patience have *its perfect work*, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."

Reason #2: Trials, Troubles, and Tribulations Build Character.

Paul said it this way...

"We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character..." (Romans 5:3-4)

- Do you want to be a man or woman of high character? Then God will put you through trials, troubles, and tribulations.

- Character, we know it when we see it. Maybe more importantly, we know it when it is missing.
- Headlines show us the individuals lacking character. Politicians and business leaders make the front page with many counts of bad character. Bad character knows no boundaries.
- The good news is good character knows no boundaries, too. Good character is exemplified every day and too often goes unnoticed.

Godly character can be defined as:

Godly Character is the ability to discern God's right way from the wrong, and to voluntarily surrender one's own will to do what is right in God's sight and, with the promised supernatural help, to resist the wrong even under pressure and temptation.

- But character is more than visual. Character is engraved within us. The engraving isn't always planned and clean.

The word “character” comes from the Greek *kharakter* that means “engraved mark.”

- God is using trials in our life to *engrave* His mark upon us.
- What kind of mark are you allowing to be engraved on your heart?
- It's our choice. The arrows to our heart are either making a mark of bitterness and unforgiveness or with a *Bring it On* mentality, are building endurance and character in our life.
- Men and women of character have a lot of scars!
- Choices we make determine our character. To say *Bring it On* and come to the conviction that your struggles are building character is where joy comes forth. Make the wrong choice, instead of joy, you will have bitterness!

Harry Fosdick, a 20th Century Protestant pastor, stated:

“He who knows no hardships will know no hardihood. He who faces no calamity will need no courage. Mysterious though it is, the characteristics in human nature which we love best grow in a soil with a strong mixture of troubles.” (Harry Fosdick)

- We are joyful in saying *Bring it On*, because we know we are getting tested to build our character.

- We are joyful in saying *Bring it On*, because we know God is developing patience and endurance.
- We are joyful in saying *Bring it On*, because we know we are being made complete.
- We are joyful because we know we are being developed into a man or woman who lacks nothing.

Bring it On. Say it, mean it, and let the joy come because God is building character!!

Trials, troubles, and tribulations build endurance.

Trials, troubles, and tribulations build character.

Verse 5

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

Verse 6

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

Reason #3: Trials, Troubles, and Tribulations Build Wisdom.

It’s in trials and hard times that we cry out for wisdom.

We just don’t know what to do. It’s hard man. We are overwhelmed and maybe even ignorant of how to navigate the problem. If we’re smart, we have a *Bring it On* mentality, we will ask for wisdom.

- God gives us wisdom if we ask for it.
- Most of us won’t ask for God’s wisdom if we feel like we have our own wisdom.

It’s knowing that our hardest times are building single-minded, focused wisdom:

- We learn our deepest lessons through hardship.
- We gain our best knowledge through life experience.
- Wisdom is applying knowledge to situations.

- Wisdom is applying discernment.

Good people are good because they learned wisdom through difficulties.

Strong leaders are strong because they learned strength through the wisdom gained in shame and failures.

Wisdom begins with the fear of God.

“Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment” (Proverbs 9:10).

**“My son, if you receive my words,
And treasure my commands within you,
that you incline your ear to wisdom,
And apply your heart to understanding;
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift up your voice for understanding,
If you seek her as silver,
And search for her as *for* hidden treasures;
Then you will understand the fear of the Lord,
And find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom” (Proverbs 2:1-6).**

The Lord gives Wisdom only to those who Seek it, and we usually only Seek it because we Need it.

Most of us won't seek it until we need it, and most often we need it during difficult times.

During a difficult time in my life, I learned this poem by Rudyard Kipling...it's really about gaining wisdom in adversity.

**If
by Rudyard Kipling**

“If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,

Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!"

Let's stand...let's repeat our theme together: *Bring it on.*

- **When you are worn out and frustrated, say...**
- **When you everyone around you is complaining, say...**
- **When you failed again, say...**
- **When you get knocked down again, say...**