

HALF-FULL? HALF-EMPTY?

In 1963 something shattered my friend who went to high school with Bill Knudsen. Brian Sternberg was headed into his junior year at U-dub as the world's best pole vaulter. He owned the record at 16'8" and was picked to be the first to clear 20.'

On July 2, before flying to compete in Russia, Brian was, as he put it, "goofing around" on a trampoline. Doing a double somersault with a twist, which he'd done thousands of times, he landed on his neck, yelling, "I'm paralyzed! I'm paralyzed!"

Today, 41 years later at 60, Brian is still a quadriplegic, but with increased stamina after surgery in Germany in 1996. How's he handling life? "People ask if I'm mad at the world or at God," he said, "but being mad doesn't do any good. Sometimes I feel cheated, but what can I do? It hasn't been easy. Just as with pole vaulting, I still set goals. When something like this happens, you just have to cope as best you can."

Brian, a solid follower of Christ, is living proof that *our perspective predicts our response*.

Today's BIG QUESTION: As you survey the landscape of your life at this point, do you see your glass half-full or half-empty?

(DISCUSSION)

Solomon was King David's son by Bathsheba, born about 1035 B.C. He became king of Israel in his teens, succeeding his father. He's said to be history's wealthiest, wisest man ever.

Solomon wrote three Old Testament books. In Ecclesiastes he explores the meaning of life, concluding that all of man's efforts to find true and lasting happiness apart from God are wasted.

Re our Big Question, "Do you see your life half-full or half-empty," here's Solomon's response:

“When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other” (Ecclesiastes 7:14).

Jerry White heads a global Christian organization called Navigators. When I met him, his son had just been fatally shot while driving a cab in Denver. He says,

“When life’s going well, enjoy it to the full. Bask in the sunshine of good times with your spouse, your children, your work, your health. But when life’s difficult, REFLECT on what God’s doing in your life because God IS doing it for your good (if you’ve put your life in Christ’s care).

“Success rarely builds character. Character is usually forged in the furnace of suffering. In the hard times we seek God, we experience brokenness and have opportunity to grow deep in our relationship with God. The alternative is to become bitter.

“Enjoy the good times, but out of the hard times come far deeper, more significant good times. Remember that both good and hard times are under the sovereign hand of God.”

Jerry concludes, “God knows my every circumstance and will walk with me through them all. My future’s in His hands, not mine. I cannot control my circumstances, but I can control my response. And that response will be determined largely by my life perspective as events come and go.”

After turning his life over to Christ, Paul, who formerly tormented Jesus’ followers, was himself brutalized because he took the Gospel into the religious and secular worlds. He was often jailed, whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, robbed, starved, and ultimately martyred in Rome. He writes this about his perspective on life:

2 Corinthians 4

“But this precious treasure (this gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord) –this light and power that now shine within us–is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. ... We know that the same God who raised our Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself along with you. ... For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. For the troubles we see will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.”

2 Corinthians 5

“For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down–when we die and leave these bodies–we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. ... God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. That is why we live by believing and not by seeing.”

Philippians 4

“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in

plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

Philippians 3

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

Mark 8

Jesus asked, “What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?”

John 10

Jesus told us why He came, why He went to the cross for you and me: “I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”

Os Hillman, an ad agency owner in Atlanta, says, “Sometimes God lets us experience great pain to learn the lessons of greatest importance. Knowing Christ intimately is the most important lesson we will learn.”

Half-empty? Or half-full? Or.....full.....and running over!!!

His Deal

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