**Tough Times, Together**

*We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. ROMANS 15:1*

Life in a fallen world can be tough. But what makes suffering and hardship worse is that they often turn us against each other rather than toward each other.

Here are a few ways to keep that from happening as you negotiate the common speed bumps and detours of life:

Give your spouse time and freedom to process trials differently. Fight the urge to discount each other's emotions or grow impatient with the time it's taking your spouse to deal with something. Some of us are quick to move on. Some process slowly and are more introspective. Give your spouse freedom to not be like you.

Recognize the temptation to withdraw from each other during periods of intense challenges. As a result, you end up thinking your spouse doesn't understand you or isn't taking the tough time seriously enough, which makes you want to pull back even more.

Respond to trials by embracing God's perspective of suffering. Search the Scriptures for God's counsel and point of view. Verses like "In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18) help to strengthen you through seasons of suffering by reminding you that God is good and He is in control.

Remember that your mate is never your enemy. As my friend Dr. Dan Allender says, your spouse is your "intimate ally," a fellow burden bearer for a difficult time.

If the burden or suffering persists, seek outside help. If you feel as if you're slipping off into a deep ditch as a couple, don't wait until you have all four wheels stuck before you seek help. Find godly counsel by calling a mature mentoring couple, your pastor or a biblical counselor to gain some traction.

**DISCUSS**

Talk about the way each of you responds to periods of suffering, stress or a major challenge—and why. What do you need the other to understand about how you process difficulty?

**PRAY**

Take some time to pray for one another around an issue you are facing. Express your trust in God to guide, strengthen and see you through . . . together.