

Responding to Uncertainty and Trouble Reflecting on This Past Year

Thesis: With the help of the Holy Spirit, we choose to respond to uncertainty and trouble by courageously living into the overcoming reality of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Text: John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NIV).

"I've told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I've conquered the world" (John 16:33 MSG).

"And everything I've taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!" (John 16:33 TPT).

This year has been a hard year, a trying year, a challenging year, and a different year.

It has been a year that hit us with wave after wave of opportunities, challenges, and adversities. And it was a year for developing new muscles and capacities in us and among us, both individually and corporately.

There are six words that help me to process and to express what this year has been like as we have dealt with a year of uncertainty and trouble.

1. **Reduction:** experiencing loss
2. **Expansion:** dealing with increase
3. **Innovation:** pivoting and creating to do ministry, business, medicine, and other things in new ways
4. **Adaptation:** making adjustments for workability
5. **Learning:** gaining new understanding and awareness of what works and doesn't work
6. **Flexibility:** dealing with constant change, experiments, and revision

With all that is going on, is changing, and is so uncertain, what can we hold onto? How do we stay grounded without losing our moorings in a time of uncertainty and trouble?

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we choose to respond to uncertainty and trouble by courageously living into the overcoming reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. We choose the way of Jesus, who said: *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33 NIV).

Responding to uncertainty and trouble:

1. **We choose to hold onto God:**
 - a. Because no one can snatch us out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-30).
 - b. We say "yes" to the instruction of the Lord by taking hold of the eternal life for which we were taken hold of (1 Timothy 6:12).
 - c. We testify that God has led us, is leading us, and will not forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).
2. **We choose to hold onto Jesus:**
 - a. Because Jesus told us that in this world, we will have trouble, but we overcome because Jesus overcame (John 16:33).
 - b. Because Jesus is God with us, Immanuel (Matthew 1:18-23).
3. **We choose to hold onto the Holy Spirit** (Galatians 3:1-5; 5:25; Zechariah 4:6):
 - a. We started in the Spirit. Let's not walk in the flesh or self-reliance (Galatians 3:1-5). Rather, let's walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).
 - b. *You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. 2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? 4 Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? 5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? Galatians 3:1–5 NIV).*
 - c. *So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6 NIV).*
4. **We choose to hold onto Christian virtues like faith, hope, and love:**
 - a. *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13 NIV).*
 - b. *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the*

love you have for all the saints— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth (Colossians 1:3–6 NIV).

- c. We seek to express **faith** in God, to express **hope** in the Lord and his purposes, promises, and prophetic words, and to express the **love** of God to the Lord and for others.
5. **We choose to hold onto connection with God and one another:**
 - a. We need to work at connecting with God and with others (1 John 1:7).
 - b. We need support, encouragement, and prodding to love and to do good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25).
6. **We choose to hold onto spiritual formation and transformation** (Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:5):
 - a. What skills and practices do I need to show up as my best self?
 - b. What do I need to do in order to I align with the ways of Jesus?
 - c. If Jesus were living my life, what would that look like? What new capacities would I need to develop? (By the way, Jesus lives in you and wants to help you live according to his will and ways.)
 - d. I want to cooperate with God as he works to conform me to the image of his Son, into the character and capacities of Jesus (Romans 8:28-29).
7. **We choose to hold onto deep intimacy and full partnership with Jesus on his mission** (Song of Songs 1:4; John 20:21).
 - a. God is with us, even in this season of uncertainty and trouble. He calls us to deep intimacy and full partnership with himself. He is Immanuel.
 - b. God is at work even in a pandemic, even in the midst of civil and racial unrest and injustice.
 - c. Let's get close to Jesus and join with Jesus on his mission alongside others in missional communities in our workplaces, neighborhoods, and other places.

Summary:

- Surely, this year has been hard and different.
- It has been a year of uncertainty and trouble.
- It has been a year that hit us with wave after wave of opportunities, challenges, and adversities.
- And it was a year that afforded us the opportunity to develop new muscles and capacities in us and among us, both individually and corporately.

- *“And everything I’ve taught you is so that the peace which is in me will be in you and will give you great confidence as you rest in me. For in this unbelieving world you will experience trouble and sorrows, but you must be courageous, for I have conquered the world!” (John 16:33 TPT).*

Closing prayer:

In spite of what you have faced and what you may encounter, may the Light of the world shine into your heart and through your life, overcoming darkness within and without. May the Hope found in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit give you strength and new vision as you face the concerns and uncertainties of this life. And, may the Love of God inspire you and empower you for every good deed and for every encounter with friends, family, and neighbors. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ministry Time: