

MY VIRTUAL MENTOR



THE SEVENTH TROUBLE

How to Get Through What You're Going Through

DAVID ROBERTSON



IN THE SAME BOAT

If ever there was a common denominator that an author and a reader share, it would be this one: we've both got troubles! I wrote that line with absolute confidence that I would not leave out a single man on the planet. From the first man Adam to you and me, every man in every generation has faced an infinite variety of troubles.

Jesus predicted this would be the case in John 16:33: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble...." Naturally, trouble takes on many forms, from inconvenient to fatal. Today, you likely find yourself somewhere in between those extremes. In this short eBook, I want to write about what I'm going to call "The Seventh Trouble." I discovered this in a book about a man well acquainted with trouble, the Old Testament book of Job. Job 5:19 reveals a particularly intriguing passage around which this eBook is written:

"He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you." (NKJV)



THE SEVENTH TROUBLE

It's that "seventh trouble" that was the catalyst for this eBook. This is that trouble that isn't resolved quickly. Its nagging persistence has wearied you, intimidated you, rattled you, and may have caused you to question your faith.

How you got here is not the point. Whose fault it is isn't either. You're here in The Seventh trouble and I want to try to help you get through what you may be going through.

Here's my take of what I think is going on here. Six out of seven times God is going to step into the trial, tribulation, or turmoil when we cry out for His divine intervention and rescue.

However, (here's where you may need to buckle up and put a helmet on) one out of seven times – in The Seventh Trouble – God is going to let us go through it, and it most likely won't make sense to us why this is happening.

To me, The Seventh Trouble is that one pesky, lingering, stubborn thing that doesn't seem to go away easily or quickly. I've got troubles that have hounded me for years. So have you and your loved ones. For me, it's my battle against going blind by inheriting a degenerative eye disease. I'm six decades into this trouble. What you may be going through is no less important to you.

The **Seventh Trouble** is the one thing that you've been praying for deliverance about, your family prays about it, your pastor prays about it, godly men & women in the prayer line pray over you – and yet month after month, sometimes year after year – The Seventh Trouble persists.

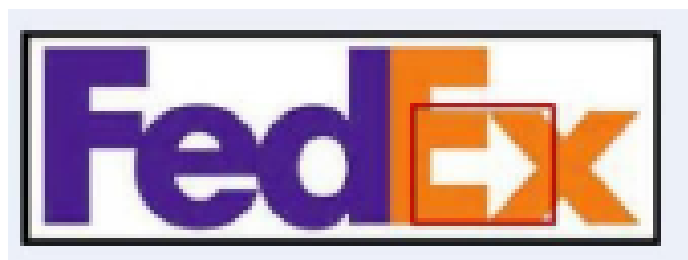
This morning I want to do my best to help you see this issue, this situation, this sickness, this trouble - in a different perspective. You see, your perception is your reality.

IT'S A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

Let me illustrate this for you. I want to help you see something perhaps you may never have seen before. Take a good look at the well-known Federal Express logo below



Now, let me ask you a question. Do you see the white arrow in the logo above? It's right there plain as day! Can you see it? Some readers will and some won't. Here, let me help some of you out.





Do you see it now? That arrow was there all the time, but in looking at the bigger picture you might have overlooked this smaller detail. Why? Because you weren't focused on the arrow.

In the same way, God willing, I hope to encourage you to change the way you think about the tough spot that you may be in and offer some suggestions on how to get through it.

BAD THINGS, GOOD PEOPLE

You may be like me in that over the years I've struggled with the age-old question: "why do bad things happen to good people?" Have you ever thought about that paradox?

Greater minds than mine have wrestled with that complicated question and we won't answer it in these few pages. Here's what I do know: through my own personal journey in a life riddled with trouble, I feel like God gave me some insight that helped bring me some relief and a sense of peace. Perhaps it will for you too.



1. IT MAY BE A TEST

Now hold on there, David. Doesn't the Bible say that God will never test anybody?" No sir, it does not say that. It says that God will never tempt anybody. That's James 1:13.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."

My friend, God will test you and me on a regular basis and won't even apologize for it! Let me show you a few examples - one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament

"But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him [King Hezekiah] about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart" (2 Chronicles 32:31).

Next, we're in the Gospel of John and it's where Jesus has in mind to feed five thousand men plus women & children:



"When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do" (John 6:5-6).

Friend, tests are common to all men. It doesn't matter if the government takes prayer out of school; there will always be prayer in school because there will always be tests!

Every appliance in your house has gone through rigorous safety testing. Every part on the car you drive to work or to your kid's karate class was tested. Tests are totally part of our lives. We get eye tests, blood tests, urine tests, driver's test...you get the point!

Why would it surprise us that God would also have a series of tests for us as His children to go through to cultivate, nurture and grow our maturity? My friend, there's a big payoff for passing the tests that God sets up for you. Notice James 1:12:

"Happy is the one who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love Him."

Here's the deal...the devil wants to turn the test into a temptation but it's a trick! When we're going through something hard, the enemy wants us to...

- **blame ourselves**
- **blame it on somebody else**
- **blame it on God**

When we get stressed out he wants us to...

- **get so discouraged we give up and battle depression**
- **do something stupid that will force God to chastise and discipline us**

We need to see our present situation for what it is: It may be a test, or it might possibly be something else: The second thing I want you to think about as you may be going through the 7th Trouble is to consider that this not only could be a test but...





2. IT MAY BE A SEASON

Let me read you one of my favorite Bible verses of all time. It's in the King James Version: "And it came to pass...."

I know there's more to that verse but I'm stopping right there because God already has spoken to us through this verse! You'll find that phrase 396 times in the King James Version of the Bible. What came to pass? Everything! Nothing comes to stay, it all comes to pass!

The good news for us who may be going through a hard time is that we're going through a hard time! It's a season! All we've got to do is outlast the season! It turns out that King Solomon was right when he wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:1 "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"

Years ago I went through a particularly difficult situation as a member of staff at another church. After days of struggle I reached out to a pastor friend to help me make sense of it all.

He told me that just like God has created the natural seasons – spring, summer, fall, and winter – similarly, God has prepared spiritual seasons in our lives that we cycle through. He mentioned four: The Season of Preparation, The Season of Separation, The Season of Confrontation, and The Season of Affirmation. Let's explore them together.



A. THE SEASON OF PREPARATION

The Bible records how two very well-known Biblical characters, Joseph and David, were both put through seasons of preparation. In the case of Joseph, his brothers threw him in a pit because they hated him; then he became a slave to an Egyptian man named Potiphar. After that he is sent to prison...for years. Finally God elevated him to the palace of Pharaoh! Notice the sequence:

PIT → POTIPHAR → PRISON → PALACE.

The order of these events was important, because each event formed part of Joseph's needed preparation. Now consider David. As a little boy he killed a lion and a bear that were threatening the safety of the sheep that he was entrusted by his father to watch. God used these menacing animals as preparation of David: God was setting David up with some wins to gain confidence in the Lord his God. And the preparation worked: just as David relied on the Lord to help him kill the lion and the bear, David would later rely on the Lord when facing the giant Goliath. Do you see it? For David, it was a season of preparation!



B. THE SEASON OF SEPARATION

Moses spent forty years on the back side of a desert watching his father-in-law's livestock. Moses, the prince of Egypt, had a lot of time to get quiet and think out there on the back forty. One fateful day Moses noticed a bush on fire and wandered over to investigate. This incident changed Moses' life forever. The rest, as they say, is history. This season of separation led to a divine revelation!

When I think about the season of separation I think about Saul of Tarsus. After Saul's sensational conversion on the Damascus road he spent three years in Arabia where he gave himself to studying, praying, meditating on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You can read about this in Galatians chapter 1. Many scholars believe that Paul was being discipled by the Master Teacher Jesus Himself during this period of time. The point I'm making is that this was Saul/Paul's season of separation.


Let me give you another example: the best of all. Jesus was led by the Spirit to spend forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. He was separated from community and family. During this time he fasted, prayed, and was tempted by Satan personally. This season of separation was the precursor to Jesus' launch into public ministry.



C. THE SEASON OF CONFRONTATION

The story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness illustrates an important principle: Whenever we resolve to do anything for the Lord or consecrate anything to God, that action will be tested. The test that will come may be subtle, but it will always involve the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This triplet of temptations is the same that brought the downfall of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Jesus was also subjected to these temptations as well, but He passed the test! We are enabled by His Spirit to pass these tests as well.

It is vitally important that you do not underestimate how important it is that you overcome whatever temptation that comes your way during your season of confrontation. If you do not do well, you need more time being faithful in the small things (preparation) and more time in being quiet and still before your Lord (separation).



YOU
GOT
THIS

D. THE SEASON OF AFFIRMATION

Let me take you to the scene of Jesus' water baptism (Matthew 3:16-17). Jesus' cousin John baptizes the Lord, and when Jesus comes up out of the water, not only does the Holy Spirit descend upon Him in the form of a dove, but Jesus and those present hear the audible voice of Abba Father: "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.

"God knew that Jesus needed this affirmation and God knows that you and I need affirmation as well from time to time. If you are a man who accepts Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you can be fully assured that you are also, because of Jesus, the beloved son in whom God is well pleased. Receive the affirmation!



PREPARATION PRINCIPLE

If we are faithful with a little...
God will give us responsibility
over much more.

SEPARATION PRINCIPLE

When you get still and quiet
you can hear the voice of God.

CONFRONTATION PRINCIPLE

What you consecrate to the
Lord in private will inevitably be
tested in public.

AFFIRMATION PRINCIPLE

It matters most what God says
about us.



3. IT MAY BE AN OPPORTUNITY

“...making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

Someone once observed that “the opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of the opportunity.” In other words, you better take the shot while you can. It’s not original but nevertheless true: we miss every shot we never take.

Sometimes, opportunity is knocking on our door and we’re too busy wallowing in The Seventh Trouble to get up and answer it. I see four opportunities that may help you get through what you’re going through.

1. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR NEGATIVE THINGS TO BE BURNED OUT OF OUR LIVES!

Experienced farmers have been known to perform a controlled burn of all or part of their fields. As counterintuitive as this may sound, the farmer knows that this technique can make the ground more fertile in the long run.



The Bible frequently uses metaphors about fire, like separating the wheat from the chaff, and then burning the inedible portion of the kernel. Fire also is effective in purifying some metals like silver and gold. "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold; but the Lord [here it is again] tests the heart" (Proverbs 17:3). John the Baptist nailed it when he said in Matthew 3:11:

"I baptize you with water for repentance but he who is coming is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not fit to untie, he will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." What a great analogy for our lives! Burn baby burn!

2. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR POSITIVE THINGS TO BE BURNED INTO OUR LIVES!

Most men are familiar with the concept of burning songs onto a CD or burning a movie onto a blank DVD. It's a bit old school nowadays with most everything available for download online, but work with me, it's a good analogy!

Did you know these CD-Writers on your computer use laser technology to burn images, words, movies, music to a disc? The light energy of the laser actually alters the surface of the disc.



That's a good description of what can happen to us as we go through The Seventh Trouble.

The image of our God and His character, His strength, His tenacity, His enduring faithfulness can be transferred from His Holy Spirit and burned on the tablet of our hearts and we become forever altered. Our lives can be permanently changed as a result of getting through stuff by the grace of God.

It's like the Lord can use what you are going through to brand positive character traits in you just like a rancher brands his name into the hide of a steer.

When a cowboy brands a cow, from that point forward, nobody ever has to wonder who that animal belongs to because the mark of the owner is burned into its body. In the same way, the image of our Maker can be branded into our lives as we are going through the fire of hard tough times. Does that make sense to you?

Here's the third opportunity that may be knocking...

3. AN OPPORTUNITY TO FACE OUR GIANT.

I want to go back to our key verse for this eBook Job 5:19. Let's take another look at it. He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.

What's God saying here to you and me as men?



I still come back to The Seventh Trouble when I read this verse. I'm thinking God is going to – I'm choosing my words carefully here – God is going to allow, permit, and yes sometimes even orchestrate you and me to go through The Seventh Trouble to test us, for a season – to give Him an opportunity to burn negative things off us, and burn positive things into our lives, and to give us the courage to stand up to that thing that has robbed us of consistent victory and take that giant of an issue to God, take it public, and take it down!

We mentioned earlier about the shepherd boy David facing the giant Goliath – here's a verse in 1 Samuel that I think excites the heart of God when you and I have courage to face our giants in the power of the Spirit: "As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, [watch this my friend] David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him" (1 Samuel 17:48).

C'mon brother – don't you know God was all over that? The armies of Israel were hiding behind rocks saying Goliath's too big to hit. But David had a different perspective. He's thinking the giant is too big to miss! The fourth and last opportunity I see is that I believe what you're going through just may be...



4. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROMOTION!

I firmly believe that God wants to elevate men who put their trust in Him. I think He desires to position you and posture you and place you for His purpose and by His power to make a difference right on the battlefield he has assigned you to. I think He wants you and me to get healed and whole and filled and full of the Holy Ghost so that we can go out and rescue somebody else like He's rescued us!

As I bring this eBook to a close, let me leave you with a few thoughts of some things that you can absolutely know to be true. If you ever start believing these truths, it will change the way you think about what you're going through.

As a side note – when you find yourself in The Seventh Trouble, I would encourage you to refrain from dwelling on all the unknown variables, “what if’s”, and “if only’s.” Wrong questions include: Why? Why me? Why this? Why now? Why them? There are no easy answers to those questions.

NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE, GOD IS WITH YOU.



Better questions during The Seventh Trouble include: what does this make possible? How can God get glory out of this? How can I grow from this? You should do better to focus on the things that you do know. Discipline yourself to think on things that you know to be absolutely true, non-negotiable, in other words, a core belief you firmly hold to. Here are three powerful truths which have helped me over the years navigate through The Seventh Trouble:



1. GOD IS WITH YOU.

One of God's covenant names is Emmanuel (Mathew 1:23), which means God with us. Let His presence bring you joy, and His joy bring you strength. Here is a great verse to memorize. Let me show you this in the Amplified Bible: "For He, God Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down or relax My hold on you! [Assuredly not!]" (Hebrews 13:5 AMP).



2. GOD IS FOR YOU.

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us who can be against us” (Romans 8:31)?



3. GOD IS IN YOU.

This is great theology to build your life on. God dwells inside your spirit man! Colossians 1:27 affirms this third truth:

“To them god has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

My friend, here is what I have come to believe: If God being with me, for me, and in me isn't enough to get me through The Seventh Trouble, then I need to check myself to see whether or not I'm actually in the faith at all. I mean, there is no Plan B. For the man of God, Jesus is God's decisive and final answer to The Seventh Trouble.

As I conclude, allow me to leave you with three practical next steps that I know from personal experience will help you get through what you're going through.



GET YOU A VERSE.

The Bible offers words that are transformational. Here are a few ng thousands to choose from:

- Psalm 119:50 - “this is my comfort in my affliction, that Your Word has revived me.”
- Romans 8:28 - And we know that God causes all things to work together for good...”
- Proverbs 3:5-6 - “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.”
- Philippians 4:13 - “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

The big idea is to get you a word from the Word as an anchor verse to lash your life to when the storm surge threatens to drown you in your troubles. Next, I would suggest that you...



GET YOU A SONG.

Worship is a weapon! Whether it is an old hymn like “Amazing Grace” or Jesus Culture singing “Your Love Never Fails” – just get you a song and keep singing and worship your way out of this thing. Follow the lead of wise King Jehoshaphat when facing down a vast army that had come out to destroy his people: 21 “After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: “Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!” 22 At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22). Get you a song. It is powerful warfare. Lastly...



GET YOU A FRIEND.

To get through The Seventh Trouble, I highly recommend getting you a close friend or two to talk it out, walk it out, and pray it through. “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

Let me ask you a question:

Did you ever stop to think that you may be going through what you are going through so that you can one day help someone else get through what you got through?

Let me end with one final verse.

“He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us” (2 Corinthians 1:4).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Robertson is the founder of My Virtual Mentor, an online platform leading men to go further faster in their faith. David has over thirty years of Christian ministry experience and is a triathlete. He and his wife Monica live in Middle Tennessee, and together they have one adult daughter, Abigail Grace. To explore a map to your best spiritual growth year ever, visit www.myvirtualmentor.org.