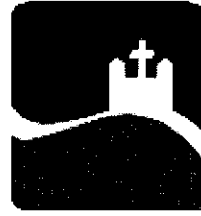


# Myth: Life is hard - God is punishing me



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## 1. Life IS hard

**Christian faith does not “cushion” us from hard times**

**John 17:15-18**

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

## 2. The life of a Christian disciple is hard -

**we follow a CRUCIFIED Lord**

**Jesus warns his disciples and us**

**John 15:18-21**

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.”

**Jesus says “Count the cost” and “Take up your cross”**

**Luke 14:25 - 34**

**=> Difficulties in life are NOT a sign of lack of faith -**

**they are often a sign of faithfulness**

**The Big Question: Will we trust God in the hard times?**

### 3. Is God punishing me ?

#### For the not-yet Christian

No relationship with God as Father

Hard times MAY prefigure judgement to come

AIM: undermining self reliance

Ultimate AIM: Repentance

#### For the Christian

Relationship with God as Father

Discipline NOT punishment  
Hebrews 12:4-13

Evidence of God's love

Evidence of our sonship

AIM: godly character  
Hope in God not ourselves  
Romans 5:3-5

..... we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Romans 5:3-5, NIV.

### 4. The punishment (Judgment) of God

Jesus dies in our place - goes through hell, takes our punishment  
2Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

No condemnation - the gospel promise

John 5:24

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

To refuse the promise is to accept punishment

### 5. Responding to hard times

TRUST God who did not spare even his own Son !!!

Grow in godliness - persevere, character hope

Remember those who have gone before

Set an example for your brothers and sisters 2Thessalonians 1:4

.... among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Pray for wisdom James 1:2-8