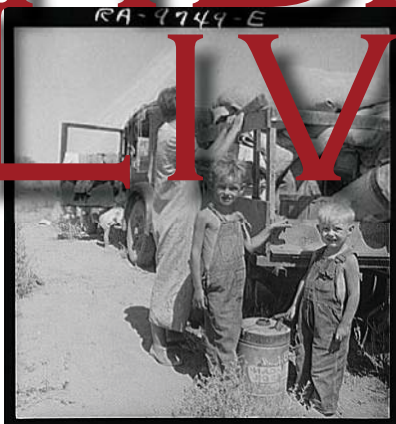


STANDARD OF LIVING



“I SAID TO THEM, I SAID, the Arctic is far away, uh, and uh, it’s *cold*, and I—that doesn’t work for me. You’re going to have to bring the Arctic to me.”

The cast and crew of one of our favorite television shows were in production of a feature-length film which would be the dramatic coda to the popular series. But the script had them shooting in the Arctic—the real thing.

One of the principal actors, in an interview included on the DVD, leans back in his chair, and with brightly polished self-importance declares, “...I said the Arctic is far away, uh, and uh, it’s cold, and I—that doesn’t work for me. You’re going to have to bring the Arctic to me.” So the studio, at great expense, had to recreate in studio many of the icy, sub-zero conditions for the scenes that included this arrogant prima donna.

Meanwhile, the rest of the cast—including the series lead, who, incidentally, was also one of its executive producers—made the uncomfortable trek to a research station in the Arctic. The dangerous conditions at the site required them to undergo a thorough pre-trip briefing, and while there they had to live in the same primitive conditions as the resident staff. They helped cook the meals, wash dishes, and haul out the trash like everyone else—along with their regular work in front of the cameras.

To the challenge of filming in the Arctic, the lead actress of the picture had a response different from her pompous, absent co-star.

Reflections
by the Pond

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**Consider it all joy,
my brethren, when
you encounter
various trials,
knowing that the
testing of your
faith produces
endurance. And let
endurance have
its perfect result,
so that you may
be perfect and
complete, lacking
in nothing.**

James 1:2-4

"For me, I thought, just open up, take it all in. I'm just a big sponge. This is going to be the adventure of a lifetime." So for the duration she lived in a drafty plywood box set atop the frozen expanse; hacked out chunks of ice for her drinking water; took her turn at K. P. duty; and, along with everyone else, used the tiny wooden outhouse when nature called.

It was, indeed, far away, uncomfortable, inconvenient—and cold. But everyone who went, came away from the experience the better for it.

CONSIDER IT ALL JOY...

Since the late 1940s, Christians in the United States have been raised in a society of spoiled brats. By the end of World War II, the generations that endured two world wars vowed to create for their children and grandchildren a better world, a world filled with greater opportunities and far less suffering. And they succeeded beyond their most fertile dreams. This "Baby Boom" generation—begun in 1946, and just now entering retirement age—was cradled and protected like no other before. It enjoyed an age of plenty, an age of relative ease, an age in which, lacking the real thing, Boomers were forced to create their own suffering, their own "stress."

The predictable result was a generation of spoiled brats, and the church was not immune to the attitudes and expectations of the "me" generation. For it swam in the same waters. Thus there arose preachers expounding doctrines of wealth and success: new gospels in which suffering and poverty—even sickness—were looked upon as either Satanic attacks or God's just retribution for sin. This new gospel proclaimed that if you were passing through hard times, it was only because you hadn't done something right. You hadn't prayed enough, or read your Bible enough, or, more to the point, placed enough in the offering plate.

But *God's* word does not support this gospel of good health, prosperity, and ease. In fact, His true doctrine states quite the opposite.

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows

its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

James 1:2-4 The Message

The Christian's goal should be to grow up, to become mature in character ("perfect") and complete, and no one accomplishes this without a measure of suffering and trials in a life.

God's word does not tell us to just hunker down and endure the hard times, but to rejoice in them, to *delight* in them, to consider them to be a manifestation of God's concern for our well-being—our *completeness* as the sons and daughters of those who paved the way.

And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He *began* to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets."

Luke 6:20-23

It is a difficult, yet worthy lesson to learn: Our hard times—times of discomfort and suffering, those times when life seems to make unfair demands upon us—are actually gifts from a loving God.

No parent sets out to raise a spoiled brat. No parent purposely wishes for his or her child to grow up to be self-absorbed, arrogant, expecting a life of unfettered ease.

God, our eternal heavenly Parent, loves us so much that He entrusts us with the hard slogs, the times of sacrifice and pain, the times of trial and testing. He does this so that we will grow up, so that we will become complete and whole.

In Him.

