



The storm is perhaps the hardest event to link with God, and we shouldn't make light of any adversity. Yet it is very true that it is struggle and crisis that teach us, deepen us, strengthen us, and make us more aware. For many, it brings God more personally to them. Living indulgently does not do these things for us. Pleasures are definitely not wrong but they can distract us from feeling and understanding the depths of human life - think empathy - and of the infinite love and wisdom of God.

So now let's go back to our "four part diagram". Take another look at it. Hopefully, things will come up for you which maybe weren't there before. We'll give one example for each of the four and you can come up with any others as you notice them in your mind.

Finding a positive positive: I'd say that the idea of ourself as an intended person with a rightful place and usefulness in life is always a very positive view to have and keep there. Each of us is completely valid. In God's terms (and God brought us into being), we are meant to be who we are in the whole scheme, here and for ever after. God carries the whole creation out in all its complexity. God fully knows our place in this and God loves us individually as if he only had each one of us to love. That is a great positive-positive for us!

Finding a negative negative: For this one I'd pick what I will call " 'nothing-but' ism" and I'll explain what I mean. If you say about anything or anyone that it is nothing but this or that then you are reducing it or writing it off. For example, you might say that your neighbour is nothing but trouble because you've had two run-ins with them. Think about that... You have no idea what other things your neighbour may do. You've given your neighbour a final label. You haven't considered whether your neighbour might have issues about you. And golly, if you start telling others that your neighbour is nothing but.... then take care for your own soul.

There are many other ways of summing things up nothing-butingly. Life, kindness, purpose, meaning, marriage, trust, you name it... and it's a weary black hole to nowhere which feeds on itself.

Tip... never agree with anyone who uses the phrase!

Preconceived notions are the
locks on the door of wisdom -
Merry Browne

Now we come to the mixtures...

Finding a positive negative: The idea about this one is that there are many things which look tough, wrong, hard, bad, but they can bring up or bring about something that would otherwise have never happened. A blessing in disguise, a hindsight that we can see led us where we are now. Or we can look at some difficult issue we're involved in and find a possible benefit from its present stresses.

The common idea about temptations or spiritual trials is that "they come to test us". I don't agree with that at all, because I don't think either God or Life is out to see if we are up to survive things. I would much rather see any problem as something which will equip us and make us wiser and stronger, and importantly, more aware.

Finding a negative positive: For this one, which may be the hardest to get our head around, I will choose the idea of the 'quick fix'. This is the idea that one thing will put everything right, and all you have