

## MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, May 23, 2017

# It Is What It Is

**Definition:** 'It Is What It Is' is an idiomatic phrase commonly used in American culture as a response of acceptance to something that makes little sense or has little to no validity, as in, this circumstance is simply a fact and must be accepted or dealt with as it exists. It was the USA Today Sports Quote of the Year 2004: "used by many athletes and coaches to sum up troubles of all sorts and send an instant message that it's time to move on." Bad things happen because of the world we live in. How do we respond with faith when we're having a hard time, and how do we help others?

### Segment Questions:

- What are some things in your life that you respond to with, "**it is what it is**"?
- Think of a crisis you or someone you love has faced. Share what happened and what you felt in the moment of pain. What was your perspective at the time?
- What were some of the well-intentioned mistakes people made when trying to encourage you?
- Knowing what you know now, how would you have reached out to someone in a situation like yours? What do you think would've helped you?
- Similarly... what *did* help you? What were some of the ways others helped strengthen your faith in that time?
- When you or your loved ones are faced with something hard, what are some ways you've found to respond in faith without shutting others down?

### Action Questions:

- Think of someone in your life who's having a hard season in life. How can you be 'present' with them?
- In that situation, how can you put aside any perceived results and show love?

**Closing:** *Take what you gained from others' life stories today and use their words of wisdom to help the next hurting person you talk with.*

## It Is What It Is

In my characteristically male way, I don't like to look back with regret and I like to be practical and take action, so I've found the phrase '**It Is What It Is**' popping up in my vernacular. I had thought of it as being an encouragement not to waste energy on something that can't be undone; accepting reality and then figuring out what to do about it. **It is what it is**, but what could it be? What caused it, what do we do next? And, how does faith fit into it all?

However, the phrase has a lot of bad press... for good reason... because it can be used to give up in defeatist/fatalistic sense, as if the situation is too hard, shutting down creative problem solving and empathy for others. In other words... it shuts down conversation and it's not helpful.

My day-to-day life has limitations because of my wife's long-term health problems and the autism-spectrum issues of a few of my kids. **It is what it is**, and it can be really frustrating. It's something that forces the direction of my life and I definitely feel it mid-way through life.

There are perhaps two approaches when someone hits a crisis. One is to look at a situation and say, "**it is what it is**," in the sense of "buck up, it's not as bad as you think" and quote "all things work together for good."

Another approach is perhaps more useful by lending a listening ear, a compassionate "I can't imagine" or "I can see why that's hard", asking if there's anything you can do, and promising to pray for them. In this sense, "**it is what it is**" is sitting with them, giving them a hand and an affirming word to help them give their pain to God and set their heart on the truth.

It's interesting that in the story of Lazarus, Jesus knew how it would work out in the end, but he took time to be 'present' where they were. Here are some excerpts from John 11 (ESV):

3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4 But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" 38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."