

THE WORD OF GOD IS MY LIFELINE

The Obstacle of Despair

One of the greatest obstacles I've ever faced is when we had to place my mother in a nursing home in Texas. She was the personification of a godly mother. Saturated with Jesus, Mom constantly turned my eyes toward Him. Whether it was a skinned knee or a broken heart, she pointed me to the One who would never forsake me. She had been my prayer warrior through every phase of my life. Now old age was stealing her from me, and life as I knew it would never be the same.

As she approached her 90th birthday, she became needy of 24-hour care. She had been living with my sister in Texas where I visited as often as possible. Her physical body and mental faculties were deteriorating. On one of my visits, I remember staring in disbelief at the frail frame that only slightly resembled the Mom I knew. I couldn't get used to her calling me *ma'am* and staring at me as if I were a stranger in the room. It was ironic that the one who gave me my name no longer knew my name. That in itself was heart wrenching, but the guilt over not being able to care for her ourselves was at times overwhelming. We wondered if we were honoring our mother by putting her in a stranger's care. But we realized we had no other choice.

The agony of our mother's slow death consumed our world for three years. My visits were filled with anguish as her confusion heightened. Her constant questions and need for reassurance were unbearable at times. On one of my visits, I was on the edge of losing it. Nothing I could say or do would alleviate her fears, and I vividly remember crying out to the Lord in desperation for some relief. It was at that moment God gave me a picture of a huge, fat rope being slung down from heaven for me to grasp. I realized God was throwing me the lifeline of His Word. I felt prompted to begin quoting every scripture verse I could remember. It was then I sensed Him rescuing me. A calming peace overcame my mother. What made the difference? It was the lifeline of His Word that calmed her. It was the lifeline of His Word that kept me from drowning in waves of despair. I will never forget the image of that rope rescuing me. I had to cling to what He was offering. There are times we need to hold on to the life-giving words of the Bible. Sometimes it's all we have...but it's always more than enough!

DAY ONE

1. What natural object did God give as an example to teach a spiritual truth in Jeremiah 13:11? What did it represent?

We've all heard the phrase describing someone weak and spineless as a "clinging vine." In a spiritual sense, Jesus is pleased when we hold on to Him. Clinging actually means to adhere to, be joined together or stuck. Are you stuck to Jesus? Are you hanging on every word He says? I find that if I stick His Word in my mind, it's there when I need it. The Word of God is my lifeline!

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2. What is described in Ephesians 6:14?

3. Isaiah 11 is a prophecy about Jesus, the Messiah. How does verse 5 describe his belt?

4. What does Isaiah 40:31 suggest we do when we are weary?

The Hebrew word for *wait* or *hope* in this passage actually means “joined or bound by twisting together.” To braid long flowing hair is a wonderful way to keep it in place while running or swimming. Three strands bound together hold everything intact. When I join my heart and mind with the Word of God, I bind myself to Him, twisting or braiding His truth into the core of my being so I am kept in place, rooted and secure and not flying in the wind! Wrap His truths around you to endure the obstacles of life. Hang on to every word He says. Braid it up, pull it in, and wrap it around you! That’s how you’ll be held together!

5. What does Deuteronomy 11:18 say about clinging or binding?

6. What was the response of the people in Luke 19:48 to the words of Jesus?

Are we hanging on to every word Jesus spoke? Are we clinging, following closely, pursuing, joining and twisting His Word into our life experiences? When we do, our foundation will be strong. Someone once told me to ***never doubt in the dark what God told me in the light.*** Seek Him now... in the light...so when an unsuspecting obstacle tries to block your path, you will stand strong on what you know is true.

7. What truth does Psalm 119:92-93 bring out about God’s Word being our lifeline?

8. What does Jeremiah 15:16 say we should do with God’s Word when it comes?

Devour the Word! Physical food appears inviting to our eyes, but it's the aroma that fills our senses. Yet, we still have to taste it to judge its worth. God says to taste and see that the Lord is good. Just as we chew food, we must chew on God's truth and swallow it for ourselves. When it's applied or digested into our being, we benefit from the process and our lives are transformed. We have an arsenal available to sustain us through the trials of life but we must do our part to eat God's Word for ourselves.

DAY TWO

1. Overcoming an obstacle is described in Psalm 18:28-29. What does the psalmist say he can do with God's help?
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There was a time in my life I was consumed with wanting a baby. The obstacles of infertility and miscarriage blocked that desire for years, but God comforted me through His Word. I found strength in Proverbs 13:12, "**Hope deferred makes the heart sick but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.**" This scripture made me realize God understood my heartache. During those years of treatment with no diagnosis, God's Word was my lifeline over and over again. I lived on the side of the equation that read **hope deferred**, but looked forward to the other side, a **longing fulfilled**. In the meantime, I had to cling to other promises in God's Word, finding comfort and strength to bear the heartache, and trusting that someday He would give me the desire of my heart.

While I was agonizing over the unknown causes, God impressed this on my heart. In my confusion over what I didn't know I felt Him asking me, "**What do you know?**" A light bulb went on in my head as I began to list truths I could stand on in the days of dark uncertainty.

I KNOW that my Redeemer lives!

I KNOW in whom I have believed and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him!

I KNOW that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose!

I KNOW that if God is for me, who can be against me?

I KNOW that nothing can separate me from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, no trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword!

I KNOW we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us!

I KNOW that God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you!"

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I KNOW that weeping may remain for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning!

I KNOW that Jesus lives to intercede for me!

I KNOW that the One who is in me is greater than the one who is in the world!

I KNOW that the Lord is the Blessed Controller of all things!

2. What do you know in the face of what you don't know? Add some of your own personal "I KNOWS" to this list above.
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Do you ever wonder why we have to suffer trials or come up against obstacles in life? 2 Corinthians 1:4-11 gives us three clues to this mystery. See if you can discover some of the reasons God allows trials to come our way.

3. What does verse 4 reveal about why we suffer?
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4. What does verse 9 disclose about suffering?
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5. What does verse 11 tell us will happen as a result of suffering?
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God did give me the desire of my heart, and this obstacle to motherhood was overcome. Our second son was born. Oh, the joy of that fulfilled desire! I was living on the other side of the equation at last! A longing fulfilled...a tree of life! I was euphoric after his birth and literally floated on wings of joy. It wasn't long after his first birthday that God gave me a dream that his first word was "assuage." It made me laugh thinking of such a big word from a little guy, but when I looked up its meaning, I began to wonder. It's defined as "*to calm or soothe, to make less intense, to soften.*" It made me wonder if our son would be a minister some day, used of God to help relieve the suffering of hurting people. Was God telling me something or had I just eaten too much salsa the night before!

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DAY THREE

1. Has the Lord ever given you a dream or a specific scripture verse to prepare you for an obstacle that lie ahead? If so, share some of the details below.
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It wasn't until two weeks after the dream that I realized God was truly speaking to me. I was reading in the book of Job when these words leaped off the page, "***But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.***" (*Job 16:5 KJV*). There was the word, "***assuage***," all lit up like neon lights! I didn't know what it meant, so I just pondered it in my heart. Then a month later, my world was turned upside down.

2. Describe a time when your world was turned upside down. How did you cope?
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I've included an article below to give you further insight to how God was working in my life through a huge obstacle that blocked my path.

The words, "BAD NEWS CANCER" caused the room to spin and my world to turn upside down. "Get her husband," was the next command from the distraught surgeon who had just completed a biopsy on the lump that had invaded my body. As he walked into the surgery center with the unbelievable report in hand, his anger and frustration were apparent. He had been assuring me for months that this lump was nothing more than fibroid tissue and had persuaded me to wait it out. His anguish was genuine. The report couldn't be real. Maybe they made a mistake. It was just a dream, a bad one, and I would awake to resume the happy life I loved. But, I wasn't asleep nor imagining the worst thing that could ever happen to me. It was breast cancer! The reality was that this issue of life was hitting me smack dab in the face, right between my eyes, and causing a revolting urge to vomit up everything inside me, including the blackness that had just entered my world. I was dizzy and reeling from those dreaded words I never expected to hear. Oh, where was my husband?

The Lord had given me the desire of my heart after years of waiting...another child. He was 20 months old. The wait hadn't been as long as Sarah and Abraham's, but it had been endless to me. I hung on to the verse from Proverbs that says, "***Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.***" This pregnancy hadn't ended without hope, and our second son became that longing fulfilled. I was euphoric! I literally floated on wings of wonder as I gazed at this newborn child. The joy was beyond my anticipation, and the answered prayer caused my faith to soar to unlimited expectations. I was the mother of two sons at last, after years of anguish over infertility and miscarriage. Nothing could destroy the joy of motherhood, my highest calling in life.

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Our firstborn son had been the joy of our lives for over nine years, probably the reason my desire for more children was so strong. I was now living the dream God had for me. His purpose, His plan for me was motherhood! It was why I was created. It gave me reason to flourish and fight, to be complete and competent within the passions He'd birthed inside of me. Everything I ever desired and determined to become was within the realm of nourishing another life. It gave me reason to get up in the morning and set me back on my pillow at night with the greatest peace and contentment I had ever known. Patrick Morley writes, "When you awaken in the morning, you want to pulsate with anticipation for the new day. You want to get back to that thing you love to do, that thing you are uniquely gifted to do, that thing that completely expresses who you are. You want to scream at the top of your voice, 'This is the real me!' Motherhood made me do just that. It was who I was...who God created me to be.

So, how dare there be an interruption in this call of God that I had so patiently awaited! Who caused it? What did I do wrong? Was I being punished? What was my sin? Where was God? It wasn't fair! All these emotions and questions whirled around inside my head. I could only reach out to grab the hand of the one who looked down at me now with tear-filled eyes, his anguish as apparent as mine. My beloved husband was distraught and speechless, devoid of encouragement and energy. He looked as hopeless and harassed as I felt. God had given me this man to represent the pillar of strength and foundation of hope that was true of Jesus Christ. Why did I feel him crumbling under the pressure? I couldn't bear to see him collapse at the news of cancer. Weakened by the blow, we both reached out to our God, our very present help in time of trouble. He had to become all that we had been taught He was and had shared with others to be true. It was all or nothing now. Believe and trust or wallow in self-pity and depression. It was our choice!

Flanked on all sides by the Body of Christ, we walked through the valley of the shadow of death and this bewildering bout with cancer. The word itself is equated with death. But we found it brought life to our relationship with God and His people. We were forced to trust or topple under the weight of its monumental impact on our lives. We wanted the trial to make us "better," not "bitter." Again, the choice was ours.

So we tried to trust, not without tears and occasional attacks of depression, but with the faith of a tiny mustard seed, holding on to everything we knew to be true of this One who had given His life that we might live.

3. What scripture verses do you remember holding on to when you faced a severe trial?

And God gave me life! After a mastectomy to remove the cancer, there were good reports—no lymph nodes had been infected and there was no need for chemotherapy! The Lord truly brought me over and through this obstacle. His strength took over for my weakness. He helped me remember past victories. I had to believe the truth of the plaque in my home that read, “***God is the Blessed Controller of All Things.***” Jesus revealed Himself to me as Jehovah Rapha, my Healer!

DAY FOUR

1. What does Isaiah 38:16-17 say about healing?
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I knew God had restored me to health and let me live and that the cancer experience would truly be for my benefit. But it was still one of the most difficult battles of my life.

With a good prognosis, you would have thought I would have bounced back to normalcy, but I battled fear and depression. Everything I picked up reminded me that breast cancer was the leading cause of death in women, and I became fearful and depressed over it returning.

I could have easily resorted to resentment and self-pity had the Lord not used my toddler to ease my sorrow. He was 20 months old and full of love and affection for his mommy. He kept me going every day. When I felt like feeling sorry for myself, he wouldn't let me. He needed me, and he would put his little arms around me and hug me tight. He'd comfort me when he didn't understand why mommy was crying. He'd even make me laugh. He was indeed my “***assuager,***” a tool the Lord used to help comfort me and lessen my pain. Here's a story from my blog that tells the story a little better.

It was a big word for a little guy: ***assuage***. I'd never heard it before and didn't realize God was preparing me for one of the greatest battles of my life. One little word to help carry me through a cancer diagnosis and mastectomy. Never given to dreams of significance, I awoke one morning with profound wonder having dreamed our baby's first word was ***assuage***. Now most children follow the "*mama or dada*" stage with words like "*ball or plane*," but in my dream the word was ***assuage***. Because he hadn't yet verbalized the simplest of words, something inside made me pay attention.

After a little investigation, I discovered that ***assuage*** meant to alleviate grief. That gave me something to ponder and write in my journal, and it even provided a good laugh imagining one so young blurting out something so impressive. But seeing it in the Bible a few weeks later stopped me in my tracks, ***the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.*** (Job 16:5 KJV). The word literally jumped off the page and caused me to

wonder at what it all meant. I didn't understand until I was sent home to recuperate from surgery a few months later.

Extremely thankful that God had restored me to health and let me live, I believed the cancer experience would somehow be for my benefit. But I admit it was one of the most difficult battles of my life. With a good prognosis, I should have quickly bounced back to normal but I battled fear and depression. Everything I saw reminded me that breast cancer was the leading cause of death in women and I feared its return. I could have easily resorted to resentment and self-pity had the Lord not used my toddler to ease my sorrow. Did this have anything to do with my dream?

Full of love and affection for his mommy, he kept me going when my flesh wanted to wallow in self-pity. In the darkest moments of discouragement, when tears would flow down my cheeks, he'd wrap his little arms around me and wipe away my tears with his tiny little hands. Though he didn't understand why his mommy was crying, he'd comfort me with little hugs and soft kisses from his lips on my face. His cheery disposition changed my outlook on life. How could it not when his little hands would cup my face and pull it close to his just to see him make a funny face. It was then I realized he was the tool God used to **assuage** my grief and keep me going.

A child long awaited...a dream of significance. A dreaded diagnosis...a good prognosis. A battle with fear and depression...a little **assuaging**. My child spoke volumes of healing to my soul without ever uttering a word. The kisses of his lips and the motions they made for his funny faces **assuaged** my grief and restored joy to my soul. How wonderful God is to **provide everything we need in life**. What do you need right now? Look around you...God might be using a tiny smile to meet your need.

2. Have you had an “assuager” in your life that helped to lessen the pain and soothe your sorrow. Who was it and what did they do? It’s good to remember and to thank God for them.
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As that battle with cancer loomed before me, God's Word became the lifeline that kept me from sinking in despair and depression. His Word not only sustained me, but it enriched my life with great treasures of thanksgiving and hope. I learned to stop and smell the roses...to appreciate life...to be thankful for every birthday and not bemoan aging...to understand the importance of the Body of Christ...to minister to others with compassion...and to cherish Scripture like never before.

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3. What five promises does God give in Isaiah 45:2-3 when we face mountains of obstacles?

4. In the above verse in the NIV, what “treasures of darkness or riches stored in secret places” have you discovered through trials?

5. Read Isaiah 46:3-4 and list the ways God is involved in our lives.

6. What does Isaiah 46:10-11 confirm about God’s purposes?

Don’t you love the truths Isaiah brings out in these verses! God has upheld you since you were conceived and carried you since your birth. Even through aging and gray hairs, He says ***“I am He who will sustain you.”*** How comforting it is to know that God not only made you but He will also carry, sustain and rescue you. This relates to the action verbs you listed from Psalm 139. What God wrote down in His book before you were born will stand because God does what He pleases. Nothing can stop Him. He will bring about all that He has planned for your life. Nothing could destroy God’s plan. Motherhood was my highest calling and God’s sovereignty overruled the enemy’s plans.
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DAY FIVE

1. To reinforce the truth of Zechariah 4:6, which words contrast human effort versus God's divine power?
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2. What happens to mountains of human obstacles in Zechariah 4:7?
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3. What encouragement is shouted to the captives at the end of Zechariah 4:7?
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Just imagine these words being spoken over you as God's spiritual temple while you are being built up, "**God bless it, God bless it.**" or "**Grace, Grace to it!**" The Lord is leaning way over you declaring His grace and blessings in this building process. He believes in you and your abilities because He made you before the world began. He is cheering you on to complete the race set before you. He is bringing others into your life to cheer you on as well. Be encouraged, child of God, and keep clinging to the lifeline of His Word. There is a huge rope ready to lasso you from despair. Reach up and grasp biblical truths. Hang on to the words of Jesus. You can overcome your obstacles through the lifeline of God's Word. It's just up to you to hang on.

Father, thank You for indwelling me and causing me to become Your habitation where You dwell by Your Spirit. I am the Temple of the living God because You live in me! Thank You for making Your Word my lifeline. Help me to braid it into the core of my being, to hang on to every word that You speak. Thank you for the journey I am on in this building process and for causing any obstacles to become a level plain. Thank you for those who cry out Your blessings and grace over me. As Christ is formed in me, may I show others who You are by the way I live my life. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

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