

JOY IN PAIN THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE

Courage - readiness to face and capacity to endure danger/inherent freedom from fear or from its disturbing effects
VENTURE OUT BOLDLY.

Where are you at?

What is the heartache/pain that you are carrying?

Tell God about it.

I want you to write down how you are really feeling and the nature of your pain.

You may still even be angry at God - Angry at Him for taking your loved one home so soon.

Maybe even angry at your spouse for leaving you for another.

You may even be plagued by things that are going wrong, health wise, family wise, relationships etc.

Whatever is on your heart write it down.

Those of you who are battling with discouragement and despair - Jesus understands . . .

In Gethsemane He broke down under the tension, sweating blood and begging to be released from His mission - yet remained willing to obey His Father's wishes. Whatever is going on must not be denied. Tell God honestly how you feel. In His presence no anguish need be stifled or repressed. Thank you Jesus that I can share my negative feelings with You without being rejected.

Where is Jesus in all of this? John 11:35 - JESUS WEPT!

The Jews said, "See how He loved Him!" They were close friends.

Even though we are children of God and walking close to Him, death and suffering comes to us all and He weeps with us.

Look at what David had to say in - *Psalm 139:16*

You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe.

Every day was recorded in your Book.

The day we are born and the day we die has been decided by God before the world.

So let Him have all your worries and cares - WHY? - for He is always thinking about you and watching everything that concerns you - 1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 139:17,18

Psalm 121 tells us - *"The Lord will keep you from all harm" (NIV) . . .*

(vv3-6) - Why then are we promised divine protection when we, God's people, still suffer physical and emotional difficulties?

Nowhere in the Bible does it suggest that the life of faith exempts us from difficulties and problems. There is the promise of healing - God does heal - But we cannot assume that because we are Christians we shall never suffer illness or injury. Suffering is mentioned in scripture

Eg Job, Paul - 2 Corinthians 11:23-33

"The Lord will keep you from all harm."

The promise is not that we will be kept from hurt but from harm.

Here the Lord is described as the KEEPER - the ONE WHO WATCHES OVER US.

He may not 'stop the waves from buffeting us on the outside, but He will stop them from buffeting us on the inside.'

Though evil may come to us, it will not cause our downfall.

Let's thank Him as our TRAVELLING COMPANION

Though sometimes the envelope gets tattered and torn, the letter inside stays safe.!!!

Maybe God has given you a word, a promise, a song or a poem. Cling to it and repeat it over again?

Mine was - "My trust is in you and You never make a mistake".

And He walks with me and He talks with me

And He tells me I am His own

And the joys we share as we tarry there

None other has ever known.

Come with me to a concert.

A little boy of 7, stands on the stage and is about to recite Psalm 23.

He has rehearsed this over and over again and he knows it word perfect.

He is dressed to perfection - a beautiful black suede waistcoat, black bowtie and pants, a squeaky white, clean shirt and he is ready

"Psalm 23 - The lord is my Shepherd. . . .The Lord is my Shepherd. . . . The Lord is my Shepherd And that's all I want and he ran off the stage and sat down.

1. YOUR PAIN

*** 1. Does God heal and free us from our physical suffering?

Yes he does. But sometimes He does not for reasons known only to Him. When Jesus hung on the cross the crowd cried 'He trusted God; let HIM deliver Him.' God did not deliver Him. He did something better.

Francis: lost both daughters in car accidents a few years apart.

How are you coping? No one knows how I am feeling. Not even my husband. Only God knows. I need wisdom to carry on.

I need courage to know where to go from here. God is sovereign and He knows what He is doing.

Time does not heal anything - It just teaches us to live with THE PAIN . . .

Henny: My husband died with dignity - I was saved a lot - I had the will to want to live -

Friends - Family - My Quiet Time - Remembering the good times

Gay: I'll never know what God has saved her from. . . by taking her now!!! -(mugged, Daughter of 52)

Francine Rivers: in her book: THE ATONEMENT CHILD - To all those who live with the anguish of abortion, and to their families who suffer with them in secret and in silence. *Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28-30*

It's a loss . . . whatever it is . . .

Loss of husband, a family member, a child, a domestic crisis, divorce, suicide, kids immigrating, broken relationship, rejection, cancer, health problems, financial struggles, retirement, job retrenchment, a hijacking, armed robbery, accident, alcohol, drugs, child abuse. . .

***** 2. Is your situation a mistake? No . . . because God is sovereign.**

Nowhere in scripture are we told that we will be exempt from difficulties and problems.

He may not stop the waves from buffeting us on the outside

But He will stop them from buffeting us on the inside.

He did not do that to you **but** He allowed it to take place. God permits only what he can use.

"All things work together for good to them that love God."

"In His time He will make all things beautiful."

You may not even be ready to accept that at first. I wasn't.

Eg. Mike couldn't go to Boys' High, but instead to the Glen.

When Arnold quoted that to me, I said I don't want to hear it!!!

I was in pain. I had to go through the grieving process before anything made sense to me.

I wrote down all the negatives/then the positives/Thank You God

Behind every shattered DREAM is a reason known only to God - A DIVINE PLAN . . .

2. GRIEVING

There must be a time of grieving, whatever your situation,

because the more you have loved the more you will grieve.

Burnout and Brokenness - It took me 4 years - But I am STRONGER

No one can tell you enough is enough! Each one does it differently.

Psalm 23 says "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life . . ."

It can be so hard to agree with these words when dealing with tragic circumstances.

Many go through a stage where they realise that they can never go back to what was.

Things will never be normal again.

But you can find a 'NEW NORMAL'. And in this 'NEW NORMAL' things are not as they were but you can experience God's goodness and love in NEW WAYS.

Decide to enjoy those NEW WAYS with His help!

What events or moments have taken you to the depths of yourself? **SUFFERING**

God is not so much interested in our happiness as He is in our growth - (Rick Warren - Purpose Driven Life)

It is through suffering that you grow - **CHARACTER GROWTH** -

Look at **Mandela**. When he came out of prison after 27 years of suffering,

He was not the same man that he was when he went into jail!!!

Spurgeon: "*I bear willing witness that I owe more to the fire and the hammer than to anything else in my Lord's workshop - When my schoolroom is darkened, I see most.*"

Some find themselves angry at God.

Some are angry with their partner who has gone and left them for another , or others have lost a Dad/Mom

Some ask why?

Why didn't God prevent that car accident, the marriage that failed, the child that was abused?

Why did God take my husband and not hers?

One young lady who went blind at a young age never asked **WHY ME LORD** but WHY NOT ME, LORD?

The simple answer is **WE DON'T KNOW WHY?**. . . . Eg Dave Myburgh

Sorrow and suffering will make some bitter while it makes others better. The difference is attitude.

It is how you think about it that matters.

A-Situation, B-Thought, C-Emotion, D-Behaviour

Mrs Fletcher - Lost husband/Left with son - God is unfair - Bitter - An unpleasant person

Ma Salt - Lost husband/Left with son - It is painful but God knows and I will give my son a good life - Cheerful - Loving person - Think differently

We know who God is so we can trust that whatever he allows or permits, no matter how hard it appears to us at this stage of our lives, ultimately has a good purpose.

When you cannot trace His hand, trust His heart

At 17, Joni Eareckson suffered a diving accident that left her totally paralyzed from the neck down. The story of her struggle to accept and adjust to her handicap and find meaning in life is told in her unforgettable autobiography: **JONI**

Billy Graham: "My own life and the lives of millions who know her through her books and artwork . . . have been enriched by the remarkable depth of her faith, and have been awed by her great reservoir of courage."

God ministered to her in Job 40:8 - These words hit her: "*I am not accountable to you with what I do with your life.*" Wow, God never makes a mistake. And nothing takes Him by surprise.

"Would you indeed annul my judgement? Would you condemn me that you may be justified?"(N King James

Look at David:

Where are You when I need you?

Why do you seem so far away?

Why are You so silent?

I can count my blessings from morning till night.

I can remember all the things You have done for me from the time I was a little child.

I remember and I cry out You, and You're nowhere to be found.

I have lost my joy.

The only hope I have is the salvation You've given me through Jesus.

And the only way I can be with You is to die.

Girls let us not stay here in our grief - Let us move on by God's help. . .

Be careful of BITTERNESS - It is anger that has settled in for the long term.

It births resentment, the feeling that we have been treated harshly, unfairly, or carelessly.

If we leave it, it eats its way into our mind, emotions, and even our soul.

BITTERNESS can turn us into hostile, hardened people and if left unchecked can destroy us..

It cannot forgive, which puts our relationship with God and others on hold.

Get rid of all bitterness, anger . . . (Eph. 4:31-32)

3. WALK A ROAD WITH GOD -

Read, Pray, Journal - I read 7 books of Joyce Meyer.

Having a log (a journal) of what has happened and how I have reached to where I am has proved invaluable.

Let me share one of my logs: Mary Stevenson - My Tribute for funeral - 2 Timothy 4:5-8

HAVE YOU A JOURNAL?

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Rom. 15:4 (NIV)

As you read Remember - Heb. 4:12 - For whatever God says is full of living power.

When God speaks He speaks *spirit* and *life* into your situation - not just *words* - They are not merely words communicating ideas - they are living and life-changing . . .

GOD SPEAKS LIFE INTO YOUR SITUATION

Let me share my story of rejection . . . our relationship went south . . .

Ps. 4:1 *"Answer me when I call to You. Oh God who declares me innocent!" A W O W*

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to clean us from every wrong.*

Eg. Joe dreams of appearing before God . . . Did you learn to receive my love?

When it comes to praying/listening - God not only speaks to us in a still small voice, in visions or in dreams, but also by words.

*** But how do I hear the voice of God?**

God speaks in a still small voice. We can be still and listen to God speak to us.

We cannot hear Him with our human ears. But in our hearts we understand what he is saying to us.

"Whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy,

for WHEN YOUR FAITH IS TESTED, your endurance/patience/perseverance has a chance to grow.

So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete needing nothing." James 1:2-4 (NLT)

So keep writing down your feelings - write a poem/song - let me read mine . . .
. . .

If David hadn't kept a kind of a journal all those many years ago, the many Psalms he penned that bring so much comfort to so many may have been lost to the world forever.

. Sit on His lap - pretend to put your head on His lap - Why not?

Consider how very special you are to God. Isaiah 43:4 - Isaiah 49:16

You are precious, you are honoured and He loves you.

You have been engraved/tattooed in the palm of His hand.

(Something taken from my journal)

I'm always used to having Arnold organise our trips and handle it all. Now, I'm on my own going to Texas and then Namibia. So, mingled with my anxiety and trust, God has been so faithful to me.

There is nothing wrong with having doubts. But Doubt is best dealt with in prayer before God, not peddled in public. *"Trust in the Lord with ALL your heart and lean not unto your own understanding . . .*

Believe it . . . in your head

Receive it . . . in your heart

Experience it . . . for yourself . . . only when you actually say thank you . . . and it becomes yours!

4 July - Joshua 1:9

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; For the lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Even as I travel to Texas on my own.)

11 July - Psalm 121:8

The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

(Lord you are simply amazing. You see the anxiety but trust mingled together. And here you give me just what I need.

And that means to London, Texas and home again - even Namibia and then Zambia. And You are not even disappointed in me.)

I had written in my journal THAT I MAY KNOW HIM - and here He is showing me how He cares.

I had tears in my eyes at His love for little ole me!!! He wants us to talk to Him - To depend on Him -

4. THANKSGIVING - be thankful for/in everything

Philippians 4:6 - Don't worry - Pray - Tell God - Thank - Peace

Eg. I had to thank God that Mike wasn't going to Boy's High)

"Lord my trust is in You and You never make a mistake!"

Eg. the old man and bucket of shrimps.

Eg. lighthouses are built out of drowned sailors, maimed motorists cause others to widen roads.

On the morning of my brother's death, 23 years old, my Dad read Psalm 145:21.

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever. Four months later, as I was having my Quiet Time and I got the same promise.

God was preparing me for my Dad's death that very morning - *"but Father you can't allow two deaths so close to one another, in my life"!!! WHY LORD?*

Phil. 3:12 (My Dad and Brother's death)

"I don't mean to say I am perfect. I haven't learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be."

They were all that Christ saved them for and wanted them to be - Thank you Jesus but it is so hard.

I was missing them - I cried to the Lord and said: "If only I could just see Mike and Dad once more."

I had a dream that Mom Noreen and I were in Heaven. "Mike, what is Heaven like?" Thank You Jesus!

Jot down God's Delightful Extras in the back of your journal.

(And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own. And the joys we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known).

When I don't feel like praying that's when I need to!

Hebrews 4:16 COME - STAY - RECEIVE - FIND GRACE - GO!

God's care will come to you in many different ways eg. dove - Try music -

5. ACCEPT AND VALUE THE SUPPORT OF OTHERS

People came to console Martha and Mary at their loss.

Family and friends will want to come and care.

Some don't know how - they will just come, maybe touch you or cry with you.

Their love and support is an important source of strength.

Hesitant or embarrassed to accept it at first?

You have always been the giver and now you are on the receiving side.

Swallow your pride. Take it. It's a gift. Their gift of time.

It's a blessing of incomparable worth to you.

If you make excuses and turn folk down, they will eventually give up on you.

Eg. Katy - You only have yourself to blame

Even if you don't feel like accepting an invitation, **GO!** You will enjoy yourself!

It is only Jesus' words and our faith in Him and who He is that will really console us.

God brings people across your pathway to love you, touch you, hold you and hug you because that is what He wants to do to you through other people . . .

Sometimes I battle with my daughter overseas - Brenda emailed me "Saw your beautiful family at Zion at Trinity tonight. Billy did awesome leading worship. Colette looked beautiful and your grandkids were beyond adorable. I just wanted my sweet friend Joy to have joy today. You are on my heart."

6. BE POSITIVE AND MOVE ON

ACCEPT YOURSELF

Don't run yourself down - Isaiah 43:4

"I like me 'cause God don't make no junk!"

Be confident - Make memories for your children . . .

Don't compare yourself with others. Accept your gifts.

Thank God for who you are and for what he has given you. . . You are precious! (Is 43:4, Is 49:16)

PAMPER YOUR BODY AND SOUL

Proper nutrition - Exercise - Spa Eg. Jean

Consider asking your pastor to anoint you with oil.

Maybe you need counselling - I did -

REJECT THE 'IF ONLY'S" and "WHAT IF'S"

They steal your joy!!!

Let us not go down that road

eg. Tosca - Are you battling with guilt and pain at the loss?

If only - I should have - I could have - Stop it!

Can you at this stage thank God that your loved one is with Him?

Can you picture their joy at seeing their Saviour face to face?

Have you ever considered that they remember nothing of what happened on this earth.

No tears in Heaven! They are complete, happy and fulfilled in Him.

They don't even recall those unkind words or deeds. They are waiting for you to join them.

It is only you who remembers them - so handle it.

Write down the things that are plaguing you.

Ask God's forgiveness.

Maybe write down the 'If only's' and 'What if's' - Get them out of your mind and on paper.

Put a line through them - put them behind you by burning them when you get home.

Satan is there to condemn us in whatever situation we find ourselves and he reminds us of it all.

If he reminds you of your past, just remind him of his future!!!

Jean shared: It was God's plan long ago, even before the world was created, for little Jean, before she was a little seed, that she would be born, marry Willie, have two sons and Willie would suffer from alzheimers etc

BE CREATIVE

Do something - Don't wallow in your self pity - keep busy

Eg. Bible Study, Grammy group, lead worship at a 'Women's Koinonia' group and I did it - Thanks to Elzabe -

Wrote a 3 day seminar for women in my pain - not easy but I persevered.

Eg. Teach Sunday School, Making meals, Help with counselling, Soup kitchen.

REACH OUT TO OTHERS

Phone someone who is lonely, write a note, cup of coffee, a movie or a theatre etc

It makes you feel good about yourself - because you made someone else's day!!!

Your pain makes you more compassionate eg. Joni.

Think of someone right now that you know who is lonely and in need. Write down her name . . .
. . .

FORGIVENESS -

It may involve facing and speaking truths to that person, who brings you down, prejudiced against you

and whom you have to remove from your space. I had to do that - A PEOPLE PLEASER -

WRITE A LETTER -

I lost my Mommy when I was three and my brother, 11 months

I wrote a letter to my Mom at her graveside in Bulawayo in Rhodesia - three letters followed.

I needed closure as I was too small, 3 years, when she passed away.

"Time does not heal anything - It just teaches us how to live with the PAIN." - Frances

WRITE A TRIBUTE

I wrote a tribute to MOM GRACE and MOM NOREEN

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER - John 7:38

BE POSITIVE - MOVE ON - AND - GO MAD!

MAKE - A - DIFFERENCE in other people's lives and you will be the one who is more blessed!

YOU RAISE ME UP TO MORE THAN I CAN BE