

Your Weapon of Defense When Deadly Disaster Strikes

When disaster hits unexpectedly, what is our weapon of defense? How do we find peace in the midst of the storms that keep coming?

My uncle in Peru gives the answer. As is the norm in South American countries, home mortgages are rare. The way folks purchase homes is by paying cash. My uncle retired and was about to see his dream come true by building a home on the beach.

Since he had saved enough funds, his routine was to visit his local bank and withdraw cash to pay the construction crew. But, on his last visit, he arrived home with the cash safely stored in his brief case. As he drew near the front door, he noticed two men racing by on a motorcycle.

He proceeded to open the door when he heard a shot. Then a loud, "Your money."

Instantly, he put his plan into action. Rather than go into panic, he pretended to open the door, but instead, he reached in his brief case, pulled out his 48-caliber, spun and shot the assailants.

They fired three more shots, striking him on various parts of his body. But as he fired his gun, they dashed off in the motorcycle. Wounded and about to collapse, he managed to retrieve his cell and call for help. Once he was in the hospital, his son, who is a physician, took charge. My uncle is fine now and fully recovered.

No money was taken; instead, he gained a new perception and appreciation for life.

When I read the details, I sighed. Sure wish I inherited his genes and quick thinking. Oh no! Not to own guns or fire them. But to be quick to retaliate when the enemy sneaks behind me to rob my peace and confidence.

We all have been there. Adversity, a storm or bad news surprise us when we least expect it, and we shake, feeling threatened and vulnerable. And feeling alone, we find the enemy is pointing his spiritual weapon right at us, trying to rob our peace. Without hesitation, he fires fear, desperation and panic.

Like my uncle, we need to have the best weapon stored in the briefcase of our heart. The Bible says in Ephesians 6:10 we need to put on the armor of God. This armor includes the best weapon, the most effective defense, which is the sword of the Word of God. The power we have from which we draw strength, courage and boldness.

And with holy boldness, you too, can say: Spiritual assailants may come at me, "But I will sing of your power; I will sing aloud of Your lovingkindness in the morning, for You have been my refuge and escape in the day of my trouble" (Ps. 59:16).

Father, though times of trouble come at me, help me to face them with the weapon of your Word. Grant me an alert mind to remember that you and you alone are my fortress against the one who tries to rob my peace. In Jesus' name, amen.

What brings peace in the midst of your storms?

Janet Perez Eckles *is an international speaker and author of four books. She helps thousands conquer fear and bring back joy.*

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Feeling Unappreciated? Try This Soul-Soothing Solution

How demanding life can be! You know what I mean, right? We follow that same routine—trying to catch our breath as we rush through the day, meeting everyone’s needs. Where is the reward?

My answer came through my brother and his wife, Lois, who were our house guests for a few days.

One evening, I knocked at the door of our guest room.

“Come in,” Lois said.

I walked in and felt the ironing board. “What are you ironing?”

“The table runners we bought.”

“You don’t have to.” I protested, “You did more than enough: cleaned, rearranged, shopped and even painted a table for me.”

“I don’t mind,” she said.

She didn’t mind because that’s what she does. Anything she tackles is done quietly, with no expectation. She helps in a silence that screams kindness and pure love.

Why can’t I be that way? Secretly, I look for recognition or at least a faint sign of appreciation.

Can you identify? You just wiped the kitchen counter and cleaned the floor for the umpteenth time. But no applause from anyone.

You did the third load of laundry. No one noticed. Paid the bills, with stress cramping your stomach, and no appreciation there either.

And while at work, the extra load of tasks is completed, but the boss gives no recognition. You even smile at the cashier at the store, but it goes unnoticed.

Sigh! Do we just keep on giving and giving? Is there any hint of satisfaction or return for our efforts?

God has the answer:

“Be sure that you not do your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

“Therefore, when you do your charitable deeds, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do your charitable deeds, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deeds may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matt. 6:1-4).

Father, in the secret place of my heart, I want to be recognized and I look for rewards. Change my heart and grant me humility to do all in the quietness of love. May my actions be for your eyes only. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What reward can you expect from the Lord today? {eoa}

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Inspiring Ideas to Help You Grandparent With Grace

Inspiration to be a good grandparent is simple—as long as we have love, we have what it takes.

“C’mon, sweet baby,” I called to my 2-year-old granddaughter.

With quick steps, she came. And as she stood with her back toward me, I carefully pinned the bells to her blouse, which she told me was pink.

The sound of those bells helped me keep track of her. She might not have understood her Nana was blind. Or maybe she did. What’s important is she knew that we don’t need eyes to love, to guide and to teach.

Time swept by way too fast. She’s 9 years old now, and her brother, 7. They both run to me for hugs. But neither needs bells anymore, as they answer when I call.

But the call for a grandparent is different. It’s to enrich their lives no matter what we have or what we lack.

Here are 10 treasured moments that create that special bond:

1. The stories we tell about Jesus equip them to face a cruel world.
2. The embrace we offer carries the warmth of security.
3. The comfort we impart can soothe their soul when disappointment barges in.
4. The wisdom we draw from God’s Word fills their mind as they make decisions for life.
5. The example to persevere, to endure and to give teaches them to do the same.

6. The guidance we provide keeps them from the pitfalls of life.
7. The acceptance with love unconditional mends the rejection of the world.
8. The time we spend with them multiplies the love.
9. The patience we display brings security to their soul.
10. The praise we express deepens their confidence and worth.

Grandkids learn from what we do, what we say and how we love.

Appreciate that gray because “The gray-haired head is a crown of glory if it is found in the way of righteousness” (Prov. 16:31)

Even if you’re not a grandparent, there may be someone in your life who hungers for what you have to offer. {eoa}

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Seeking God’s Direction? Here’s How to Find It

Why do we let our emotions lead our path? When we do, we’re let down. So, how do we find the direction God has for us?

Sometimes I have the satisfaction of volunteering as a Spanish interpreter for events held by non-profit Christian organizations. This was what I was doing the day God taught me a lesson.

I slipped off my headphones and pulled away from the mic. "It's lunchtime," I said to my friend who worked alongside me.

She grabbed her purse from under the table. "Let's go."

I held on to her arm and we headed through the maze of corridors behind the stage, looking for our lunch room.

As we turned the corner, a delicious aroma wafted from our right. "Hmm ... smells like cheesy pasta."

"Yes," my friend said, "I think I smell steaks, rich sauces and fresh-baked pastries too."

We paused for a second. Our mouths watered. But, we had to press on. That banquet was reserved for the celebrities, singers and famous folks.

The lunch area assigned to the workers like us was located around the corner, and down another hallway.

We entered the room. On a table in the corner, we found a few cardboard boxes; each held a lonely half-frozen sandwich, chips, and a cookie.

As I unwrapped the sandwich, my taste buds protested longing for that delicious fresh gourmet food reserved for someone else.

I fought envy; I really did because a bit of covetousness waited on the plate in my heart.

But right before I took a bite, the greatest thing happened. My friend and I settled at the table. And as we greeted others, we found friends we hadn't seen since the year before. In seconds, we reconnected, shared stories, laughed and learned details about those we met for the first time. What a hoot! We teased and just talked.

We took part of a greater banquet as we delighted in the

laughter, simplicity of friendship and the love between colleagues and friends.

No doubt, when my friend and I had paused close to that banquet room, God was motioning to us, "C'mon, I have something better," He might have said.

He's saying the same to you. You might think you know what you want. But "Follow Me," He invites. "Come this way where the best is waiting for you.

You don't know. You might not recognize it, nor do you expect it. But I, in my sovereignty, have reserved what you need, prepared it and have it ready for you.

He might be speaking to you right now when He says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye on you. For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is done in truth" (Ps. 32:8 and 33:4).

And since what He does is perfect, will you trust and wait for His perfection to be revealed to you?

Father, forgive the times of my eager desires. Forgive the restlessness that fills me when I want what I think is best. Grant me peace as I wait. In Jesus' name, amen.

Are you willing to wait and receive God's direction?

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How God Created Living Streams of Hope in This Woman's Wasteland

Why do we look behind and long for what we had yesterday to come back? We wish we could roll back time and go back to days where life was easier. Have you done that? God knows we all do at times.

"Okay, here's another box full of VHS tapes," Jessica said. She's my teenage friend who comes to help out as she's earning funds for a mission trip.

"Can you read the label on some of them?" I asked.

As she read the content of those tapes, my mind went back to that time when my two younger sons were in diapers, and I was living a "normal" life. I had eyesight back then. And with not a care in the world, I'd pack all three of them in the back of the car and zip to the store or appointments, or to the park.

What a long road it had been as I transitioned from full sight, living a full life to being blind, completely blind and terrified.

But before my physical darkness turned to emotional darkness, this verse came alive in me: For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland."(Isa. 43:18, NLT).

How beautifully He had brought streams of hope in the wasteland of my blindness. When I cried to understand why, instead of an answer, He gave me peace, sweet peace.

When I grumbled with frustration after burning my finger when cooking, God soothed my pain when my boys asked for seconds.

I also brought back memories of the times when hubby and I would go out to dinner and he didn't have to lead me by the hand, but what joy when God took me by the hand and led me to the banquet He had prepared for me.

And what a privilege to be able to write these lines and remind you to look at the present and gaze at God's power that's making a way in your desert and creating streams of hope in your wasteland.

Father, help me to focus on the good of the present, on the blessing of the moment. On the new things You're still doing. On the gift of your provision as my eyes read this. In Jesus' name, amen.

How will you overcome the past to see the new beginning?

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How This Woman Found Her One True Love

Looking for love in all the wrong places. Remember that song, popular a few years back? The lyrics resonated with millions because they probably did that very thing.

The other day, I looked in hubby's direction, fist planted on my hip. "You mean you wouldn't get up in the middle of the night and, knowing that noise scared me, you wouldn't take care of it?"

“Well,” he paused, “I might have maybe when we first got married. But after 41 years of marriage, I don’t know.”

I tried to give him a hateful look. But I didn’t have a chance, because he planted a quick kiss on my cheek. “Only kidding,” he said.

Ha! Maybe not. The truth is that through our marriage, our love has changed. It resembled the seasons of the year. Some years saw the freshness of spring as we began a family—joy blended with the exciting stage of parenthood. The summer brought the warmth of affection, particularly when things went well. And even coldness in the winters when we both needed to grow, mature and learn.

Yes, hubby and I have experienced all levels, forms and intensities of love.

Our love changed because we’re only creatures in the learning mode of life. Not so with Jesus. He loved us even before we could be called His children. He loved us enough to die for us. His love didn’t diminish when we shrugged at His instructions and went our own way. And His love remained constant even when fear threatened to consume us. Could we say Jesus is the only true love, ready to defend us when noises of adversity scare us?

We can count on the fact that His love never changes, never wavers and, joy of joys—never, ever will it leave us.

And if that weren’t enough, that true love carries the promise that we’ll be filled with the fullness of God. So “that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:17-19).

Father, I praise you because I no longer have to keep looking.

Your love is mine. And for me, that's enough. In Jesus' name, amen.

What kind of love fills your life today? {eoa}

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How to Keep Deep Disappointment From Knocking at Your Door

We don't need statistics to know that millions of people live aimlessly without fulfillment, purpose or meaning. But there is an answer—simple and doable.

My brother and my sister-in-law, Lois, visited a few weeks ago. As usual, Lois and I did a little shopping. And it's always, always a super-fun adventure.

Why? Well, there's a unique thing about us: Lois is deaf. And, as you may know, I'm blind (yup, totally).

I held her arm as we walked through aisle after aisle in Hobby Lobby, looking for a specific item.

"There's a store clerk," Lois said.

Whew! Finally, the help we need, I thought.

"It's over there where that lady is turning," the clerk said.

Well, those instructions didn't help. I couldn't see where she was pointing. And Lois couldn't read her lips, as the store clerk wasn't facing her.

What disappointment!

We couldn't blame the clerk. She had no clue she was addressing two women, one deaf and the other blind.

Our mistake was to count on someone who didn't know our needs or limitations.

We all do that in life, right? Mistakenly, we count on someone to give us the answer, provide the solution, point us in the right direction or fill our needs. But because they don't know us, they simply cannot.

Here is a test. Have you made any of the mistakes below?

- You seek a job, expecting it will provide financial security.
- You look to your spouse, hoping they will bring joy.
- You look to the success of your children, expecting you'll find gratification.
- You look for relationships, hoping to fill the emptiness.
- You seek health, hoping you'll live longer.
- You take a risk, hoping you'll find success.
- You seek the perfect position, expecting to find satisfaction.
- You write the next book, hoping to change lives.
- You find good works to do, expecting to please God.
- You save and save, hoping that will make tomorrow secure.

If you made even one of these mistakes, disappointment is about to knock at your door.

That's because none of the situations above are constant;

they're not reliable, consistent or dependable. They're not as trustworthy as God's Word and promises.

They can't provide what only God can. They don't fill the void only God promise to fill. They don't bring the fulfillment or meaning found only in Him.

Are you ready for the good news?

Although things in this world are pitifully imperfect, "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. For who is God except the Lord? And who is a rock except our God?" (2 Sam. 22:31-32).

If God is our refuge, why worry about our protection? If He's our rock, why think we're weak? If His Word is flawless, why look for meaning anywhere else? If He's our shield, why fear? And if He's perfect, why doubt His fulfillment for our soul is perfectly designed?

Father, I confess that my wounds, disappointments and grief are a result of placing my trust in other things, people or circumstances. Transform my mind and heart with the truth that You and You alone can fill me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you correct the mistakes you made in seeking complete fulfillment?

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When Will God Answer My Prayer?

We pray, we ask and we beg, but still no answer. Have you ever wondered, "Is God there? If He is, why doesn't He answer my prayer? How long, Lord?"

We're not alone; the Israelites join us in that grumbling"

"When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and indeed, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they were extremely terrified, so the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, 'Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.' But Moses said to the people, 'Fear not! Stand firm! And see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see again. The Lord shall fight for you, while you hold your peace'" (Ex. 14:10-14).

Have you ever complained like that? I have. And that's because we're deep into our own struggles. We end up terrified like the Israelites. We grumble in the hot desert of frustration. And as we trudge through the dry land of conflict, of uncertainty and nervousness, we desperately look for God's answer, a clear path, a solution; we look to be rescued now.

But no one is there. And we have our own Egyptians called stress and anxiety that chase us, threatening to ruin our day.

But if Moses were alive today, he might post a message to all

of us, "Do not fret. God will fight your battles. His answer is already here. You need only to be still."

That's because it's in the still of His presence that His peace can fill our nights. In the still of our heart is when His whisper brushes through. And in the still of the moment is when we see His promises come alive.

Father, calm my heart, whisper your answer into my longing. Silence the distractions so I can see your answer to my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Can you tell me, in the midst of your hectic life, what keeps you from being still enough to hear His answer? {eoa}

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