

3 Keys to Getting Out of the Pit

Life can be excruciating. Crushing, in fact. The sheer magnitude of our worries can press down on our heads until we unknowingly descend into a pit of despair one inch at a time. Something so horrible can happen that we conclude we'll never be okay again.

But if we're willing to let truth speak louder than our feelings, and long enough that our feelings finally agree, we can be far more than okay. We can be delivered. The Bible teaches that there are no lost causes. There are no permanent pit-dwellers except those who refuse to leave.

Have you wanted to get out of a pit? And out of the cycle that draws you back into it?

You can opt for God. Pitching every other plan, every other deliverer, you can opt for God. Not just for His help, but also for His entire person! The whole of God. You can opt for the Father who reigns as King over every intricate detail in the universe and can micromanage a complicated life like yours and mine. He could halt the sun in the noon sky if that's what your victory would take.

You can opt for the Son who paid your debt in full, not just to deliver you from Earth to heaven when you die, but also from pit to pavement while you live. In Him, you have the full rights of sonship or daughtership, including the right to live wildly in victory.

You can opt for the Holy Spirit who first hovered over the Genesis waters and brought order out of chaos. The One who enables a people bereft of holiness to be holy by His very presence within them.

The beautiful thing about opting for God is that you are opting for everything He brings. Because He is infinite, you will never reach the end of all He offers of Himself.

Here's the deal: God wants everything you've got. God will be your complete deliverer or nothing at all. That's the one rule of divine rescue. He may use any number of people in your life to come alongside and encourage as part of His process. But He alone must deliver you ... or you will never be free.

Every one of us who authentically calls Jesus Lord has the right and power to be victorious. But we need lasting answers that don't just target our behaviors. We need answers that tap the power of heaven and change the thoughts and feelings that drive those behaviors.

I believe the Bible proposes three steps to get out of the pit, and each one of these involves your mouth. Repeat these steps over and over. If you let them, they will be life to you.

1. Cry Out

The process begins with a very specific action described in Psalm 40:1-2: "I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and the mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand" (NIV).

In this passage, the pit-dweller's deliverance began with a cry. I'm not talking about tears. Weeping may accompany this cry; but tears alone mean little. We can cry our eyes out over the pain of our situation and still refuse to change.

If you're like me, sometimes you want Him to bend the rules for you and bless your disobedience or half-heartedness. His refusal to bend to our will may at first seem uncompassionate in light of all we've endured, but He's pushing for the best thing that will ever happen to us.

This cry from the depths aims the petition straight to the throne of God. No random ear will do for this crier. He is aiming at the One who made all things, rules all things and can change all things. The One who says nothing is impossible.

You will be hard pressed to find a more repetitive concept in Scripture than God's intervention coming as a direct response to someone crying out (see Ps. 72:12; 106:44-45; 9:9, 12; 116:1-2; 3:4). But why does the process start with our cry if God knows what we need before we ask Him?

God is sovereign and has His own reasons for responding in the ways He does. But from what I can tell about Him, I think He usually waits for us to cry out so He can remove all doubt about who came to our rescue. If we never cried out, we'd likely chalk our deliverance up to circumstantial happenstance or saccharine philosophies such as "things have a way of working out, don't they?"

Things don't just work out. God works them out.

Further, God sees great advantage in awaiting our cry because He is unequivocally driven by relationship. God will forever be more interested in you knowing your deliverer than knowing your deliverance. The King of all creation wants to reveal Himself to you.

Open your mouth, say, "God help me!" and mean it. Not as a figure of speech. With everything you've got, look up and cry out. Bring heaven to a standstill. Cry out to the one and only God who can deliver you.

2. Confess

Though it is absolutely vital, confessing sin is not the only way we practice confession. In its widest sense, confession is our means of baring our hearts and souls before God. It is a way we agree with what God says about Himself and what He says

about us.

Confession takes place every time you tell God how much you need Him. What kind of mess you're in. What's on your heart. Who's broken your heart, even if your first impulse is to think it's Him.

As long as you can feel it, spill it. Psalm 145:18 says, "The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth."

All these things are confession, but don't overlook the unparalleled benefit of confessing sin. Let the light of God shine all over your sin so the two of you can sort it out, and He can heal you. We will never get so spiritual that we can go days without anything to confess, especially considering that God places our attitudes, thoughts and motives on a level with our actions.

Don't forget the sins of pride. Pride is the number one reason why a person remains reluctant to cry out to God. Confess every sin of your own actions, words or thoughts that you believe contributed to your defeat.

Remember, God's pursuit is relationship. Confession clears the path so the King of glory can come in. In order to get out of a pit and stay out, you and I need the unhindered power of the Holy Spirit. Unconfessed sin clogs the pipeline between God's throne and your vessel. If you hold nothing back, neither will God.

Confession is incomplete until we actively accept God's certain forgiveness. Take a fresh look at 1 John 1:8-9: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

We will never stay out of that pit until we believe all the

way to the marrow of our bones that God has forgiven us. Read King Hezekiah's words in Isaiah 38:17: "In your love You kept me from the pit of destruction; You have put all my sins behind Your back."

Our tendency to return over and over to the pit is driven by our deep conviction that we'll never be anything but defeated. Almost always, those who jump back into the pit never really believed God had put their sins behind His back.

3. Consent

I love this step. Consent is the most beautiful part of the process of getting out of a pit. There is no ambiguity about this step: It is definitely God's will.

God wants you out of that pit. He wants you in victory, out of defeat. So all you have to do is consent to what He already wants.

First John 5:14-15 says: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him."

Beloved, God's will is for you to get out of that pit. If you will consent to the process, waiting upon God as He begins rearranging things for your release, you can go ahead and start getting excited, because it will happen.

When I first introduced the three steps to you—cry out, confess and consent—I told you that each of them involved your mouth. The ironic part of the process will be that you will most likely use your mouth before you use your faith.

For most of us who have failed over and over, our faith nearly disintegrated because somewhere along the way we confused faith in God with faith in ourselves. We've let ourselves down so many times that now we're nearly hopeless.

We think the strength of our personal draw into the abyss exceeds the strength of God's draw to pull us out. Hence, the process can't begin with our faith, because our faithlessness is our biggest problem. It's got to begin somewhere else—like with our mouths.

I want you to learn to cry out, confess and consent using God's Word. And to do so, when possible, out loud. Listen, beloved, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17, NASB). Your faith will be built by hearing your own voice speak the words of Christ.

I have never come up with a more powerful way to pray than using Scripture. I will teach this method in appropriate contexts as long as I live, because I've seen such results from it. When a serious situation arises, and particularly if it persists, I turn to God's Word every single time.

One reason Scripture is such a big help in prayer is because our challenges are often so overwhelming that we can't think of the right words to say. Another reason is because we can shift the burden of responsibility to God and His Word rather than ultimately crumbling under the weight of it ourselves.

God's Word carries its own supernatural power. It's His very breath on the page that, when you voice it, you release into your own circumstances (2 Tim. 3:16). Yes, faith is absolutely critical to the process, but you can't just sit in that pit until one day, out of the blue, you suddenly have the faith to get out. Let God use your mouth to build up your faith.

Don't let up when you begin to feel better. Feeling better is not what we're after. The goal is freedom from the pit for the rest of your life.

On days when you feel overwhelmed or discouraged, get to your Scripture prayers all the faster. On the days when you want to do it least, do it most.

Expect your flesh to balk. Whatever you do, don't quit. Show the enemy that if he messes with you, you'll just call out God's Word all the more.

I want so badly for you to be victorious, and I know you can be. You have the power of the entire Godhead behind you. You have the Father's will, the Son's Word and the Holy Spirit's way. What more could you need?

You've got nothing to lose except a pit. So start making some noise.

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