

4 Truths to Remember in Times of Tragedies, Trials and Tests

There are some who are facing their darkest hours of tragedy, persecution and loss right now. My family and I have recently faced a heart-shattering tragedy when my uncle was brutally murdered on Good Friday. I had already personally faced and persevered the most difficult year of my life, and this tragedy knocked me down flat.

As my family and I pick up the pieces of our shattered hearts and literally walk moment by moment through this tragic loss, I feel as though God has abandoned us. There are still many unanswered questions; we are waiting for justice; and I am angry. People have told me that my faith is weak, or I don't have enough faith because I haven't been saying or doing the right things in my time of grief and unknown future.

I started to believe them until I had a revelation on what faith in God really is. My outlook of what defined faith changed when I heard these words from my pastor:

"Faith is not really faith until it is tested."

It is easy to say we have the right amount of faith or real faith when everything is going well, comfortable and safe. It is easy to believe that we must have had big faith when our prayers were answered. It is easy to encourage others who are suffering when we haven't faced their loss, tragedies, rejection and persecution. In these last days, Satan is waging an all-out assault on Christians around the world to turn from God. He is ruthless, relentless and brutal. The persecution of God's children come in many forms, and we are tested now more than ever if we really believe in the goodness, love and eternal hope of God.

Measures of faith are not based on how many Scriptures we recite, how we appear to others or how loud our praises can be heard. Authentic faith is based on our trust and commitment to God, even when our feelings, understanding and rational thinking conflict. Faith arises through each wave of desperation, suffering, grief and pain and is just as real through a whisper or tears. Faith can come after words of anger and anguish to God when we tell Him how we really feel about what is happening yet choose to still love and trust Him despite those feelings. When we read about those with great faith throughout the Bible, it always accompanied a great need, hardship and loss.

Here are four things to remember when our faith is tested:

- 1. As we experience brokenness and devastation, faith may only appear to be small and not of any significance to others.** However, the roots of authentic faith are anchored deep in the one who will help us in our darkest hours. Our feelings, thoughts and circumstances may feel like God has abandoned and failed us, yet our decision to trust Him regardless of the tests, tragedies and trials we face is faith.
- 2. Jesus Himself had to have faith in His Father when he was betrayed, falsely accused, tempted and put to death.** He was tested in every way we were. As He hung on the cross and became sin for us, He cried, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46b). His commitment to God's plan and love for us despite his physical emotional and spiritual anguish in that moment demonstrated pure faith.
- 3. Our decision to trust in a loving God and Jesus as our Savior in this lost and broken world takes true faith.** When the enemy has come to rob, steal, kill and destroy, and all hope seems lost, it is faith that surpasses all human understanding, intellect and feelings. We can cry out for Jesus to help us keep the faith. "I called on

Your name, O Lord, from the lowest pit. You have heard my plea: 'Do not close Your ear to my cry for help!' You drew near on the day I called on You, and You said, 'Do not fear!' (Lam. 3:55-57).

4. **Our measure of faith is not based on how successful, happy and put together our lives are on this earth.** Jesus told us that we will face hard times, and that has nothing to do with our lack of faith. "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Rather, it is based on if we are still holding on to our eternal faith and hope when loss, persecution and hopelessness occur. "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

If you are facing your darkest hour, do not lose hope. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; and always carrying around in the body the death of the Lord Jesus, that also the life of Jesus might be expressed in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

Cling to Jesus in the silence, pain and rubble. He is here and understands. No matter how much my heart hurts right now, I choose to believe this. Do not let people discourage you that your faith is weak because you have not responded or are unable to handle your pain the way or on the timeline they feel you should. God knows your heart. He sees your tears. He feels your pain, and He is big enough to take what you have to say to Him. No matter how bad, difficult or impossible your circumstances appear, He has an eternal plan to heal, restore and deliver those who have been severely tested, yet choose to love, follow and trust Him by faith.

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Global in 2018, both ministries birthed into her heart from God as a result of the great revelation, redirection and restoration she experienced through Jesus. She is an ordained pastor through Global Ministries and Relief Inc. and the Full Gospel Fellowship. She holds a master's degree in organizational leadership from Regent University and is currently in her final year as a doctoral student for the Ed.D. in performance improvement leadership.

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This article originally appeared at .