

5 Things Your Friends Would Like You to Say in the Midst of Their Trial

I hesitate to use the phrase “Talking Me Off the Ledge” out of concern for those with suicidal loved ones or suicidal thoughts themselves. But I decided to keep it, because it is an accurate description of the emotional and spiritual role godly friends have played in my life over the last year in particular. I haven’t stood physically on the ledge, ready to end my life. But I have felt many times of late that I was emotionally and spiritually on the ledge, that if I could have figured out a way to quit a life of faith, I would have. But the words of the disciples in John 6 have been true for me.

“Where else would we go? You have the words of life” (John 6:68).

I haven’t left the faith because God hasn’t let me. I haven’t quit because God won’t accept my resignation. I have been kept in the faith by the God who promises He will not lose any of His own.

In those moments of despair, God has repeatedly sent me friends and family who have talked me off the emotional ledge. They have been God’s hands and feet, the body to Jesus’ head, that have held me and talked to me until I walked back into the safety of the room, feeling like I could face the overwhelming struggle around me. I have had enough of these conversations over the last year to notice some common elements.

1. Their faith is strong enough not to feel threatened by my fear and unbelief in the moment.

2. They are safe. They don't minimize my struggle, but listen and then talk me through it without shame or condemnation that I am in that place (or in that place yet again after talking to them about the exact same struggle last week).

3. Most have gone through their own crisis of belief in the midst of suffering and can truly empathize with me.

4. They understand the point of the angry psalms, God's gift of grace to us who struggle through pain that does not reconcile easily.

5. They believe and hope for me until I can do it again for myself. They pray for me in hope and confidence in God, and through their prayers, God ministers His grace to me.

Like the paralytic man lowered by his friends through the roof to meet Jesus, such friends point us to Christ when we feel too weak to seek Him out by ourselves. They bear our burdens with us when we feel overwhelmed carrying them alone. And they do it as Christ's hands and feet.

We all need friends who will talk us off the ledge, who aren't threatened or horrified by the depths of our deep emotions when we are in crisis. We all need people who will calmly respond to us and help us fact check when we are overcome with emotion. We need these people in our lives, and we need to BE these people in the life of our friends.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!" (Eccl. 4:9-10).

Adapted from **Wendy Alsup's** blog, . Wendy has authored three books, including *The Gospel-Centered Woman*. She is also a wife, mom and college math teacher who loves ministering to women.