

A Single Mom of 5 Kids Finds God's Help

I've been feeling all twisted up in knots. If I could attach a video (which I probably can but honestly the thought of trying to figure out how and trying to look good enough in it kinda twists me up in more knots) you'd see me waving my hands all over the place to symbolize how my chest feels inside – all frenetic.

There've been many things in the last four years that I've felt more acutely than I thought possible – physical reactions to emotional things. A broken heart really does feel broken. A lump in my throat really does make it difficult to swallow. And stress really can feel crushing on the chest.

Lately, I've felt a heavy chest burden pressing down on me. I've felt on the edge of tears often...and have even hidden in my closet and jumped over that edge a few times. I was trying to explain it to a friend. I just couldn't say exactly why...all I could say was that the last four years have made me very tired and I feel like I just want to hide – preferably in a nice house on the ocean.

I began listing a few of the things that are doing me in – individually a fair number of them seemed absurd while others seemed ridiculously overwhelming. My friend struggled to understand...asked questions I had no answers for. I just couldn't figure out what to say. I was beginning to feel like I was losing my ever-loving mind. My poor dear friend.

When I got off the phone I decided that it might help to take the time to write everything out...to make a list of everything that causes me stress. Definitely not the list I wanted to make. It was a lot longer than I thought it would be. And I'd left off lots of things that drive me bonkers...wet towels on

the floor, never-ending laundry, things opened and not closed, those potential science experiments developing in the cup holders in the backseat of the car, the food left out on the counter, the rust stain streaking down and the green stuff growing up the side of my house, the giant crack in my front steps, the river that occasionally runs through my backyard, contacts that rip, crockpots that crack...oh and taxes. Golly, I just made another list!

The list that I made was a bit unusual as lists go, but it really helped to see it all in front of me and I realized that I'm not crazy. I actually do have a lot on my plate...and there are a lot of issues in my life.

At a Bible study in college, we did an exercise that impacted me greatly. We wrote some of the things we struggled with or regrets we had on little slips of paper. We then put all the slips of paper in a flowerpot, put the flowerpot in a towel, and smashed it to smithereens. It was cathartic. In a very visual way, it demonstrated that when we give things to God they are dealt with...our sins are forgiven and our issues resolved.

I believe that idea works well with things that cause stress in our lives. In a sense, I had to write mine down so that I could recognize that I wasn't being irrational and overemotional. It also helped me to understand that I'm at a point where I really and truly can't handle all that God has allowed in my life. I just can't.

So if I can't handle things, what do I do? It's easy to SAY just let God handle it...beware of any sentence that includes the word "just"...it's always a doozy. I'm trying to let God handle things, but I'd really like to know what His plan is...you know, where we are headed, when we are going to get there, who is going to be involved, and our mode of transportation. He does not often share those insights with me. I believe I'm supposed to move forward with a small flashlight and trust

that He's guiding the beam.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.
Psalm 119:105

Oh that I was better at that trust thing.

Mentally I get it...I KNOW I can trust God with the big and little things, but I still FEEL like I should be doing something to make things better, to make things work out properly. I guess the point is that I don't know how to fix most things and I don't know what "fixed" really looks like anyway. Even as I write this I can't seem to let go of my desire to get things where I think they should be. Let me give you an example:

I've got children who are struggling with things. Things I feel like I should have been able to help them avoid. There are things I can't seem to be consistent on. Boundaries I can't seem to keep hard and fast...I'm sorta soft and slow on things. I'm fearful I will lose my most important battles if I don't get tougher. That stresses me out. Why can't I trust that God loves my children more than me...that He will completely take care of things? I carry a burden I shouldn't – I need to carry His not mine. His is easy and light...mine is suffocating me.

And yet, I have a responsibility to raise my children well. I can't just throw my hands up and do a "Jesus take the wheel" thing. I actually have to do something! It's the something that's getting me. I know that God is teaching me to not base my self-worth on what I accomplish or how well I do what He has called me to do. He wants me to love Him and love others. I believe if I could just stop trying to change everything and everyone, I might actually end up loving God and others much better.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love

covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

I wish I had some final words of wisdom...some grand revelation I could share that would untie my knots and yet tie this post up with a lovely little bow. I don't have one right now. I've been trying to figure one out and I think I'm realizing that this is part of the process of healing and growing and learning. And it's okay not to have the answer or the pretty bow right now. But I promise as soon as I do, I'll share!

What I do know...God is faithful and He will provide all that I need to accomplish all He has called me to do.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13

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