

A Wounded Woman's Radical Encouragement to Help You Heal From Overwhelming Loss

I looked up the definition of “hemorrhage” today. Can’t say I’ve ever done that before, but there’s a first Google for everything, isn’t there?

It’s a noun and a verb.

It’s a thing and an action.

But if you’ve ever felt it—in your body or your heart or your life—you know that already, don’t you? Whether it has literally been a pouring out of blood from your body or a massive loss of money, joy, passion, tears or people—you know, deep in your guts, that it’s not just a noun, it is a verb. A hemorrhage is a real thing and to hemorrhage is a real thing.

The definition uses words like “profuse,” “damaging loss” and “uncontrollable.” And while I’m not currently bleeding in any way, that language makes me tear up.

Because I have stories of hemorrhage.

Last fall, my life began to hemorrhage people. Important people, North-Star kinds of relationships. Our kind God had given me a little heads-up in my time with Him, whispering things about change to come, but I could never have been fully prepared.

Six people left my life in a span of as many weeks.

My best friend and roommate moved back to her hometown.

My pastor and mentor left our church.

A man I was dating ended the relationship.

Two very important coworkers left my company for two very different (and painful) reasons.

My godfather passed away.

Each time I began to recover from the previous loss, another one came. Like high-tide waves and undertow in the ocean, I couldn't get my head above water long enough to breathe before I was being ripped under again.

It was profuse.

It was damaging.

It was uncontrollable.

When it's two relationships that are severed, you mourn. When it's six? You're stunned. You're weakened. You're crippled. You're shocked almost to paralysis. (At least I was.)

I went into absolute defense mode, powered by fear. Who would be next? Who should I grip tightly to make sure they didn't slip out of my life? What could I do to slow the hemorrhaging? How could I fix this? (Sigh.)

Mark 5 speaks of a woman who was hemorrhaging in the truest physical way. For 12 years! Scripture not only talks of her suffering, but also of her repeated attempts to go to doctors and the way she spent all of her money seeking healing, to no avail. In fact, she was worse off. She had tried everything.

Yet she hears of Jesus and pushes through a crowd, thinking that if she can just touch His robe, things would change.

What it must have been like to be her. I can barely know. I think of the fatigue. I think of the doubts that surely riddled her mind. I think of the shame in that time and culture. I think of the unbearable loss—to her body but also to her social life and her hopes for her future.

She had to silence all of that—the voices of profuse, damaging, uncontrollable, incurable loss—to reach out to Jesus. And she touched His robe, just the hem, just with a fingertip or two, in the most desperate stretch of her life.

And the incurable was cured.

The unstoppable stopped.

The profuse profoundly stilled.

Jesus knew it too. That's the part that moves me to tears. The healing is incredible, but the fact that our Savior felt the faith of a desperately outreached hand and asked around until He found her is as incredible. Why did He do that?

Personally, I think He wanted to see her. I think He wanted to be face to face with the woman who had suffered so long and yet, in her weakest moment, found Him to be her strength. I think He wanted her to know He saw her. He saw her suffering—He knew what she had been through. It was not just an exchange of power or a healing transaction; she meant something more to Jesus. And I do too. So do you.

When my life began to hemorrhage, she was my example. *Crawl to Him*, I would whisper to myself, *reach out if you can*. And in my heart, I would picture myself right there on a dusty road, pushing through a crowd of neighbors, trying to get one hand out to Him.

I grabbed hold of Him and didn't let go. "I don't know that my heart can handle much more of this, Jesus," I wrote to Him in my journal. In my mind's eye, my body knelt on the ground and my hand stretched to the corner of His cloak. And the hemorrhaging stopped. I can't explain it except to say that suddenly the losses quit happening in such a profound and massive succession. (Humans are always going to leave. It's not that. It was the intensity and the proximity to me that felt so hemorrhagic.)

And like the bleeding woman, I knew it was over. In my guts, I knew it. I knew there was a purpose I couldn't see, and I knew it was done.

But mostly? I knew He saw my suffering. I know He still does. That is the kind of healer I will serve all my days—the one who heals and the one who sees.

You can run to that healer, too, or crawl or cry out. He heals you. He sees you. He turns to you, to your faith, and speaks straight to your heart.

Reflection Questions

Are there places in your life that you feel are hemorrhaging?

What steps of faith might God be asking you to take in this difficult season?

How have you seen God heal or redeem your past? {eo}

Excerpted from The CSB (in)Courage Devotional Bible, © 2018 Holman Bibles, Denise J. Hughes, Editor. incouragebible.com.

Annie F. Downs is a best-selling author, nationally known speaker and podcast host based in Nashville, Tennessee. Flawed but funny, she uses her writing to highlight the everyday goodness of a real and present God. She is a contributor to the CSB (in)Courage Devotional Bible, where this article first appears.