

Burned Out on Religion? Catch a Different Spirit

If you've ever been weary, you are in good company. Moses grew weary of holding up his hands when the Israelites battled the Amalekites (see Ex. 17:11-13).

Job grew weary in the midst of his heart-wrenching trial (see Job 10:1). And David grew so weary with his groaning that he soaked his pillow with tears and drenched his couch with weeping (see Ps. 6:6). Now that's weary!

What is weariness? Exhausted strength. Failing endurance. Washed-out vigor. Weariness brings with it spirits of heaviness and fainting that make you feel like quitting. Weariness skews your perspective. It causes you to look at the world—and maybe even the church—through bleary eyes. Weariness has friends named Discouragement and Confusion, and the trio sings a chorus that sounds something like this:

"I'm bending over backward, and I'm not getting anything but an aching back. The only light at the end of the tunnel is a locomotive coming to mow me down. Nothing's ever going to change so I may as well stop trying so hard. I don't even know what I'm even supposed to be doing anymore!"

Have you heard that refrain, or something similar? It's easy enough to chime in and form a quartet with these voices—or even take the lead. You'll sing your weariness song to anybody and everybody who will listen. Other weary soldiers may join the chorus and even add new lyrics. Remember the old tune, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen ... Nobody knows my sorrow"? I think that goes back to Job's days, but many of us still sing that same sad song from time to time.

Look, if you are doing anything great for the Lord—whether that's heading an international ministry or a single-parent

home—then you can expect weariness to visit your dwelling place. Jesus noticed 2,000 years ago that the harvest was plenty but the laborers few (see Matt. 9:37). Unfortunately, not much has changed in that regard since His days on earth.

So what's a believer to do when weariness comes humming its tune? Well, first fold up your "Super Christian" tights nice and neat and hang up your cape in the closet. In other words, take some rest at the first sign of weariness. Remember, weariness is the first stop on the road to burnout. God commands us to keep a Sabbath day once a week. Even Jesus got tired sometimes—and He is the Son of the Living God!

Remember when Jesus and His disciples were on their way from Judea to Galilee? The apostolic gang had to travel through Samaria. Jesus arrived in a town called Sychar near the tract of land Jacob gave to Joseph. Jacob's well was there. We're told, "So Jesus, tired as He was from His journey, sat down [to rest] by the well. It was then about the sixth hour (about noon)" (John 4:6, AMP). Jesus got tired, and it was only noon! So give yourself a break. It's OK to be tired.

Jesus even encouraged His disciples to rest: "And He said to them, [As for you] come away by yourselves to a deserted place, and rest a while—for many were [continually] coming and going, and they had not even leisure enough to eat. And they went away in a boat to a solitary place by themselves" (Mark 6:31-32, AMP). I can just hear some of you right now, crying out, "Send that boat my way!"

Now, if you go off in that boat and rest for a while and you are still weary, well, my friends, we've got a different issue. The writer of Hebrews warns us not to grow weary because we could lose heart and faint in our minds (see Heb. 12:3). Of course, the enemy plans attacks against us while we are weary and weak (see 2 Sam. 17:1-3). Again, I believe weariness brings its cousins Discouragement and Confusion, and their melody is as miserable as the saddest country song you'd

ever want to hear.

You already know the answer to weariness, of course. It's in the Word of God. As I searched the Bible, I was encouraged and decisive (the very opposites of discouraged and confused) about the remedy for weariness. Indeed, the Bible is full of promises to the weary soldier. So tune up your vocal chords and get ready to sing these verses to the enemy next time you feel weary:

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Is. 40:28-31, KJV)

We have a part to play. We have to wait on the Lord. I like how the Amplified Version expounds on the word "wait" in this verse: to expect, look for and hope in Him.

When David was in a weary land where there was no water, he earnestly sought God, crying, "My soul thirsts for you, my whole body longs for you" (Ps. 63:1, NLT). He prayed to God, "Strengthen me according to your word" (Ps. 119:28, NIV).

If you are weary, Jesus is calling to you now. He is saying, "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matt. 11:28-30, MSG). *Unforced rhythms of grace* ... I like that promise.

Let me leave you with one more from Galatians 6:9 (AMP): “Let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint.”

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