

Is It Time to Give Up?

I was talking with a friend lately about how it feels like for the past five-plus years God has asked me to give up a lot.

Sometimes it feels like all I'm doing is giving up people, things, hopes and dreams.

Sometimes it has felt unbearable, and sometimes it has been relatively easy.

Sometimes the outcome has been good right from the start, and other times—well, I'm still waiting to see the good.

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation" (Ps. 42:5, ESV).

I don't doubt it will come ... eventually. I understand that sometimes the good isn't something I'll be able to see, feel, touch or even understand. The good is going to have to be something I trust will happen because I trust God.

But I have to be honest and say that on one hand I'm tired of giving up things and on the other hand I kinda just wanna give up.

Even as I write that, I don't think I really mean it. I definitely have those moments of "Good grief! I give up!" or "Lord, I just can't take this anymore, please please make it better—I feel like giving up" or "God, I trust you; I'm giving this up to you." The last one would be the best one to utter, most definitely.

So when I feel like giving up, how do I give my stuff up to God?

How do I actively trust God enough to not only give up

something, but give up the resulting pain and sorrow and disappointment?

Do you know what I mean? What does giving up my stuff to God look like? I tend to give my things to God and then ask for them back.

God, I trust You with my kids, but ...

God, You can have my finances, but ...

God, I understand Your commands, but ...

God, I know You're there to listen, but ...

God, I need Your grace, but ...

God, I believe You have a plan, but ...

Does anyone else struggle with this? Am I the only one who takes everything back and heaps it onto my own back again and again and again?

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30, NIV).

Honest to goodness, I have no idea why I take stuff back. It doesn't make sense, really. I know that God's plan is best. I know that His way is best. I know that His timing is best. I know that His care is best.

I know that He is the best at carrying my burden—and yet I take it back. As if ...

As if I have all the answers.

As if I have all the power and strength.

As if I have all the energy.

As if I can do all things.

As if I know what the heck I'm doing.

It really is a matter of trust. Do I trust God to handle my life? My emotions? My future? My children?

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6, NASB).

Has God called me to do the impossible? To continue to give up and give up when not much makes sense? To continue to trust Him when I can't see the good yet?

No, He has not.

God says I can do all things—all the things He has called me to do (and not to do).

So if God has called me to give up some things and to give some things up, then He is going to enable me to do it.

"I can do all things through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13, NIV).

Reading that verse made me ask, "Why does Christ give me strength?" That's one of those questions that seems easy at first and then, as I consider it, definitely not.

Maybe it is a simple answer: Because we need it. Because He knows we need it. Because we are weak. Because we are burdened. Because we carry grief and sorrow and pain. Because He understands the giving up and the giving up. Because He gave up an awful lot for me ... for us.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form Of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself,

by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:5-8, ESV).

In comparison, I have not given up much. It feels like very much—very, very much—but I cannot forget that I have also been given very, very much.

God might ask for things, but He is exceedingly generous in things too. And some of that generosity is that He is willing to show us His love and care by taking things—things we more than willingly would give Him. All this sorrow, grief, pain, suffering, frustration, fear and just plain aggravation—all that yuck, God says He'll take it. He'll handle it. I don't have to.

I don't exactly know how to get rid of it. I mean, really. I keep giving it to God, but grief has a funny way of coming back into my life uninvited.

God, how do I make grief go away?

Can I?

Is this grief, this sorrow, my cross to bear? And if so, how do I do it without letting it define me? How do I carry it without it becoming unbearable? How do I even begin to have new adventures when the pain of the past and even the present lay so heavily on me?

I don't exactly have the answer. I mean I know the answer, but it isn't an easy 10-step plan.

I believe it is in Christ's strength. I believe it is in a constant recognition that I need Him. Desperately.

He is everything. He will help me. He says He will. He says He will carry the burden with me. I don't have to do this alone.

"This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life" (Ps. 119:50).

The yoke He speaks of in Matthew 11—His yoke—how does that work? How is it easier and lighter? And how do I give up my stuff and take His yoke? I can barely lift my stuff off my shoulders.

God brought me to these verses—I just know it—to remind me of the gospel. I believe those verses are about the gospel. Honestly, I'm seeing that all of God's Word is about the gospel.

The rest Christ promises is from all the things we do to make things better to make us better.

John MacArthur says it like this: "Rest speaks of a permanent respite in the grace of God completely apart from works."

I think what I'm seeing is God's answer is the gospel.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:8-10, NIV).

God has done it all, and He is doing it all. I'm just blessed to be part of the plan.

The gospel is all about what Christ has done, not what I've done or do or will do. Thank goodness!

I can't fix things here. I've tried. No luck.

I can't even fix me. And I certainly can't fix anyone else.

So what can I do? I can rest in God's grace.

I can know without a doubt that I'm saved, that I'm loved, that I'm cherished, precious, chosen, beloved, strengthened,

protected, secure, never alone and never forsaken by the One who knows me best.

Whatever the sorrow or pain you bear, He will bear it with you.

“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation” (Ps. 91:14-16, ESV).

When you just feel like giving up, remember the great love God has for you. Immerse yourself in His Word.

“My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!” (Ps. 119:28).

When you just can't bear the thought of giving up anything or anyone else, know that He is enough to fill the void. He will take the empty place and make it full again. He will. It might not look like you thought or even like you want it to, but He knows best. Trust.

“I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8).

Can I be brave and give you an example from my life? I would love to get married again—to be a helpmate to a godly man. I would love to have the opportunity to love again within the covenant of marriage—deeply, richly, passionately.

And it seems like God keeps asking me to give that hope up to Him. Lately, it has been painful to think about, and I want to “fix” my situation.

And at the same time, I'm afraid of feeling all the pain of betrayal again. I can't bear the thought of it.

But I'm willing to be brave if God opens the door. If God allows it. I trust Him.

So one night I decided that I would do what I used to—spend my time with Jesus. Instead being poor, pitiful Sue, I'm putting my face in His Word as often as I need to in order to adjust my attitude, comfort my heart, bring peace to my thoughts, or remind myself of His love for me. (And He's even blessing me with the groundwork for a second book that I'm prayerfully starting!)

And it's working! It is helping me so very much. I'm remembering how God got me through five years ago—how He comforted and quieted my heart with His Word.

“O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore” (Ps. 131).

He's doing that again. He's reminding me that He is worthy of my praise. He is worthy of my trust. I can have hope because God is my hope.

“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope” (Ps. 130:5).

God has indeed asked me to give up much. He has asked me to trust Him with the giving up. And He has asked me to give up some things to Him—to entrust Him with some things I hold very dear.

It isn't easy, but I'm willing. I'm willing because I know that His ways are always best.

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).

God allows difficult things to happen in our lives because He knows that through those things, we will know and we will show that He is trustworthy. He knows beforehand that He is going to equip us to walk through whatever path He lays before us. He knows beforehand that He is going to give us the strength we need to do what He has called me to do—to fulfill His purpose for us.

His purpose for me right now is to walk a path that is a bit rocky, but He hasn't asked me to do something that He hasn't prepared me to do. He's prepared me and is equipping me to live where He has me.

And He has done the same for you.

And we can certainly thank God that no matter how sad and sorrowful, no matter how angry and frustrated, no matter how disappointed and grumpy we are, He will never give up on us.

Sue Birdseye *is an author and single mom of five kids that range from 4 years old to 17 years old. This article is adapted from her blog, .*