

The Day I Didn't Feel Like Laughing

I WAS SPIRITUALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINED FROM THE CHRONIC PAIN THAT TORE AT MY BODY. BUT THE GREATER ONE ON THE INSIDE STILL GAVE ME VICTORY OVER MY ENEMY.

My eyes fluttered open, and I was jolted awake. My heart seemed as if it were pounding out of my chest. Where was I? Nothing looked familiar. Was I in a motel room?

Then suddenly it dawned on me that I had bought new bedroom furniture, the first in over 18 years of marriage. I was in my own room.

Glancing at the clock, I could see that it was 6:03 a.m. Slowly I made my way to the kitchen. The constant gnawing pain in my side was growing with each step I took.

I had just had my fifth surgical procedure in as many months, but nothing helped alleviate the pain. It returned after each operation.

As I flipped on the kitchen light, I immediately noticed a device sitting on the counter that I knew just had to be the answer to this and every pain I had ever experienced. It was the Juice Boy 2000!

I promised myself that I would juice for lunch, or maybe dinner. Instead, I opened the refrigerator and made my selection. What could be better for me than a banana Popsicle?

I paused at the scale nearby, then stepped on it, only to find that I had dropped another five pounds. Not good. You're probably saying, "Cathy, you're crazy. Losing weight is great!"

Not for me. You see, I had already shed 140 pounds in the previous two years, and now I was beneath my ideal weight and continuing to drop too low for my health.

I had no appetite, and everything tasted the same. After three bites, I wasn't interested anymore.

For 20 years my goal had been to go into a store where regular, misses and junior sizes were sold and not have the salesperson ask me if I was buying clothes for my daughter. I had desperately wanted to buy a pair of Calvin Klein jeans and have them actually fit.

Now I have three pairs: a size 10, a size 8 and finally a size 6. A few years and 12 sizes ago, I would have surrendered a major appendage for a size 6 anything. But now I was so sick I didn't feel like getting dressed.

HOW DID I GET HERE? Over and over I replayed in my mind the events that had led me to this place. I had ministered to hundreds of hurting people, seen miracles that would blow you away and traveled the world to teach and preach the gospel. Now I lay on my bed, unable to help myself, frustrated because I had done everything I knew to do.

One night was particularly bad. I slept with my tape player plugged into my ears playing praise music and my Bible on my head. Frankly, I looked like an idiot, but I was a sincere idiot!

The more ill I became, the more I turned to doctors. Even though my doctors were wonderful people who truly tried to help me, I often wondered if they were secretly sick and tired of me.

The problem was, I was really hurting. It was not in my head. People who battle chronic pain or sickness can become severely depressed. Pain wears a person down spiritually, emotionally and physically.

So there I was, lying in my bed after my last surgery, feeling horribly sorry for myself. I felt that I had literally come to the brink of hell.

My intercessors, those loving individuals who support me and my ministry in prayer, simply did not know how to pray for me anymore. It occurred to me that they might wonder if I was in some secret sin, but I didn't have enough energy to sin outwardly, much less the desire to sin secretly.

Although the prayer group never said so, I wondered if they ever thought, Cathy, will you please get healed so we can pray for those who are lost and dying and going to hell?

The worst experience I had happened about midnight one week after the fifth surgery. By this time my doctor had told me not to expect a quick recovery because my body had been through so much.

My husband was away ministering at the time. I lay alone in our big bed with the wooden canopy over my head, unable to sleep. Suddenly, I felt an evil, ungodly presence in my room.

I wish I could tell you that I did what Smith Wigglesworth did when confronted by Satan. He simply raised his lantern and said, "Oh, it's just you," then blew out the flame and went back to sleep. I wasn't that spiritual.

SATAN GIVES US A TRUTH, THEN TELLS US A LIE As I lay there in the dark, painful quiet of my bedroom with that ungodly presence, a thought came to me. It sounded logical and even expressed how I was feeling: Aren't you tired of being sick?

Yes, I was tired of being sick, tired of being tired and tired of not being the wife and mother I wanted to be. Throughout this long season of suffering, I was to endure seven major surgeries. With each one, the pain would relent, only to return with greater vengeance than before.

That was the fact Satan fed me. Next came a lie: Don't you think your family deserves better? You aren't fun anymore. Your bathrobe has taken on a life of its own.

Meekly and with increasing guilt I answered, "Yes, they do deserve better. At least they should have a mother who bothers to wear underwear under her robe."

With intensity, the thoughts continued to flood my mind, and the enemy moved in for the destruction—first of my self-worth and then of my value—using guilt as his weapon. Your husband would probably be better off with another wife, and your children deserve a better mother.

Then came the lie: God would understand if you just gave up. You have fought a good fight. Go ahead; kill yourself.

Some of you may be appalled at this revelation. I can hear you saying, "You're supposed to be a mighty woman of God!"

Perhaps the greater danger you are to the kingdom of darkness, the more vicious the attacks you will encounter as God's servant. But you might not realize it at the time because you don't feel like much of a threat.

That is precisely the enemy's plan. I know that what happened to me that night was not drug-induced, because I had already finished off the bottle of pain pills.

From somewhere within me, strength and determination arose from a storehouse of God's Word deep in my spirit, and I shouted out in that darkness, "No!" It wasn't really that loud, but in my weakness I thought it shook the house.

I literally had the thought, Devil, if you think I'm going to die and leave my jewelry to some 18-year-old girl my husband will marry six weeks after I'm gone, you're crazy. And this carpet I believed God for, and my new copper pots and my garden can forget it. Out loud I said, "In Jesus' name, I'm

not going!”

When I uttered the precious name of Jesus, that evil presence, which I believe was a demon of suicide, vanished. In its place came a sweet, fragrant presence.

Although sleep did not come immediately, the intoxicating aroma of the sweet Holy One filled the room.

As I lay on my side in a fetal position, there, barely visible in the shadows, was a tall man waving his arm back and forth over my body. As his arm approached my face, I distinctly felt the brush of feathers against my cheek.

NEXT THING I KNEW, IT WAS MORNING Up until that night I had been unable to walk from my bed to the bathroom without assistance. But by the next evening, the gnawing, relentless pain in my side had mysteriously stopped.

My season of physical suffering was not yet ended, but one major battle in an ongoing war had been won. Praise God!

When my husband called me the following evening after his church service, he asked how I was feeling. Because of my inability to share simple highlights, I began a long discourse detailing the previous night’s suffering.

Expecting him to immediately hop on a plane and come home to me, I was understandably surprised when my wonderful, loving husband very patiently laid out, not only the plan of the enemy, but also our victorious outcome.

“Cathy, would you say that this attack last night was the worst you have ever been through?”

“Yes, Honey.”

“And Cathy, would you say that you were at the very lowest point you have ever been in your life?”

"Yes, Honey." (I felt as if I were being cross-examined by Perry Mason.)

"So, Cathy, in other words, the devil, who was at his best, was no match for you at your worst."

At that, I swung my legs out on the other side of the bed and started shouting, "I've got it, I've got it, I've got it." Over and over I shouted it as I danced around the room.

Truth had come and set me free! The reality had sunk in that greater is He who is in me at my lowest than he who is in the world at his best!

Did I ever have doubts or setbacks? Of course I did. I would not be truthful if I didn't tell you that every once in a while, a sudden, stabbing pain would come out of nowhere and the enemy would say, "See, you're not healed. It was all in your head. You are not a good enough Christian to get healed. You don't pray, fast or read your Bible enough."

During those times, I would literally put my hands on my head and scream, "No, Satan! I refuse to argue my commitment to my Lord with you. The blood of Jesus and His Word testify against you. Besides that, you are a liar!"

You may feel so alone right now. You may believe you cannot possibly make it through your own trial. You may feel that what you are currently experiencing is more than you can bear.

Rejoice, child of God! There is hope. The Lord who is in you at your lowest is greater than Satan is at his greatest.

I thought I wanted to die. In addition to being physically ill, I also went through a horrible time of missing my father after he passed away.

I knew that only death could bring us together again. But that's the big lie. If I had killed myself, I would never have achieved the goal of being with my daddy.

Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10, NKJV). I had to reach out and lay hold of that abundant life, and you must do the same. Push through the hard places, and cling to God, who is your Rock. I promise you that things will turn around.

Cathy Lechner ministers with humor and prophetic anointing in churches and conferences around the world. She is the author of books including *I Hope God's Promises Come to Pass Before My Body Parts Go South* and the recent release, *You've Got to Be Kidding, I Thought This Was the Great Tribulation!* from Creation House Publishers.