

Two Solid Steps to Help You Stop Your Pity Party Right Now

If you've been alive longer than 15 minutes, you've probably had something horrible happen to you. I'm pretty sure we all have.

And I'm sorry. I wish bad things didn't happen, and I wish it hadn't happened to you. Part of me wants to wrap you in cotton and bubble wrap and keep you safe in a closet so nothing else can hurt you.

But really—what kind of life is that?

No, as long as you're alive on this planet, there are going to be troubles and trials and bumps and bruises. Even Jesus told us, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33b). Thankfully, He followed that statement up with "But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." That's good news!

It's easy, though, to feel sorry for ourselves in the midst of adversity and painful events, isn't it? In fact, self-pity can be our automatic reaction to trouble unless we know how to recognize and stop it. "Poor me!" can easily become our habitual thought.

But here's what I've learned: I can't have faith and self-pity at the same time. So it's time to shut down the pity party and rise up in faith! Because faith is what I need in order to come out the other side of any trouble (1 John 5:4). (Read: "When Everything Hits the Fan").

So how do we rise above self-pity and get into faith when awful circumstances come our way? Here are two steps:

1. **Recognize it.** Self-pity can be sneaky. It can pop into my

mind (and stay there) before I even know I'm feeling sorry for myself. Recognize any of these?

- Nobody cares or understands.
- It's not working (variation: How come it always works for them but not for me?).
- Why doesn't someone help me?
- Why does God require more of me than other people?
- It's so hard! (variation: No one has it as hard as I do).
- I do things for others, but no one ever does anything for me.
- It would be better if I died.
- I can't do anything right.
- I've done everything I know to do, but it hasn't worked.
- I hate my life! Everything is wrong, nothing is right.
- I'm so tired. I can't take it anymore.

Kind of painful to look at, aren't they? But I can't overcome those thoughts unless I identify them! If I leave them alone in my mind, they become strongholds.

Thankfully, God says I have weapons to pull down strongholds: "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Which leads to step 2:

2. Change focus. The truth is, self-pity is a choice. I am the one who chooses my thoughts. Feeling sorry for myself makes me completely self-absorbed, and that's a life of misery. If I'm perpetually sorry for myself, no one wants to be around me, and I'm useless to the kingdom of God.

Webster's definition of self-pity is "a self-indulgent dwelling on one's own sorrows or misfortunes." Dwelling on our troubles makes us prisoner to them. And it causes us to lose sight of our gifts and callings as well as the needs of

others.

How can we snap out of it once we recognize it? The only thing that's worked for me is to change focus. Psalm 121:1 says, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from where does my help come?" Look up! My strength comes from God! Instead of dwelling on the troubles, I've had to change my thoughts to dwell on God—His greatness and everything He's done for me in Christ (Read: "Get Encouraged and Stay Encouraged").

For me, that means daily reading His Word, meditating on His promises. Yes, that takes effort. But it's so much better than holding a daily pity party!

So when hard things happen, I go ahead and cry and mope for a short time—but I don't let it consume my life. I can't change the past, but when I refuse self-pity, I can change my future by keeping my eyes on God who has brought me the victory.

You can too! {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .