

What to Do When You're Lost and Lonely in Life's Mess

When my 6-year-old brother died on the operating table our family was confronted with horrendous grief. When I stuck my hand into the moving blades of a lawnmower, disaster could have happened. When National Guard troops were stationed at the end of our street because flood waters threatened to devastate our home, I got pretty scared.

But I never lost hope.

In each situation, I relied on a trusted relationship. It was a relationship that I had been mentored in as a child but had grown to cherish as an adult in my private time with God: the solitude of hope.

Have you ever been there?

In each of these situations, prayer and God's promises secured me in uncanny-miraculous peace. It's the kind of calm that can be found in the eye of every storm. It's the security Jesus brought to Peter on a dark stormy night in the middle of the Sea of Galilee in Matthew 14: 22-33. It was the assurance Abraham felt as he left his family and set out for lands unknown in Genesis 12: 1-4. It was the sustaining power that Moses knew as he gripped his staff and led thousands of people through a parted Red Sea in Exodus 14, and it was the sweet tenderness and healing a bleeding woman felt when she touched the hem of Jesus' clothing in Luke 8:43-48.

Each of these biblical stories, and so many more, are examples of God's unfailing love and faithfulness. They're uncommon, miraculous stories about a God whose power and assurance can be accessed by you even today. Each of these biblical examples were ordinary people who also at one point felt forgotten and alone. Peter spend many long hours at sea, Abraham with

flocks, Moses in exile and the woman with blood issues was shunned by her community.

What were their thoughts during those isolated times of solitude?

When disasters, health issues and life's messes strike, one of our first reactions is often hopelessness and the loneliness of isolation. I'm sure most of these biblical men and women wanted to dig a hole or run away and hide—and Moses actually tried. But when disasters strike, they come with physical realities that must be dealt with, so most of us leap forward. We roll up our sleeves and do the practical things: Get a broom and start sweeping out the water, find the right doctor and just start digging out of the mess we're in as best we can.

As believers, one of the first things we can do is pray. In fact, the Center for Bible's Engagement's study revealed that 68 percent of us pray each day. Prayer is an amazing gift allowing us to trust that God is there, and we're not alone. It's the go-to action step we rely on, but often, we never take the next important step after praying: We fail to focus on God's Word. The Bible was given to us for guidance, and it's there so we can find a way out. When we've built a vibrant alive relationship with God, hearing from Him and getting His direction through scripture then isn't neglected it's a must do. It our place of refuge and strength. Many people reaching for the Bible today because they don't know where to begin. The Bible has become foreign to them. It's why I wrote my new devotional, *Hope 4 Today: Stay Connected to God in a Distracted Culture*. It gives you a starting place to engage with God.

When we're in the midst of disaster, God doesn't want us to feel that were in a hopeless chaotic world. He wants us to instead embrace the solitude of hope where we're alone but never abandoned or forgotten.

The solitude of hope builds courage and strength through standing on the promises written in God's Word. It's a place of peace established through a binding relationship built over time and in truths relied on through an personal history with God.

Prayer is our hot link to God, but it's the fortification of His Word that gets us through life's messes.

Each of these biblical examples had to act, step out, go and grab the hem of Jesus' clothing. That action came as a direct response to a promise from God. Each had developed strength through their isolation that allowed them to take the needed steps of faith and trust God. Jesus was overwhelmed with the crowds of people and took off for the hills to retreat in solitude to renew His strength. He even separated Himself from His disciples in the Garden before His arrest to spend time with His Father gaining courage and comfort before He was crucified.

Are you too busy to read your Bible? Are you struggling to establish a relationship with God that could bring a positive new change to your life?

It's easy to get distracted with practical things when trying to fix life's messes. But forgetting to gain needed strength from God's Word can be the biggest mistake we make. Prayer is important, but it's Bible reading, relationship-building time with God, that brings clarity. Recent research by the Center For Bible Engagement has proven that if we read our Bible four or more times a week, the challenges and disastrous situations that strike our lives will be infinitely easier. We handle stress, confusion and difficult choices better and move forward with uncanny-miraculous confidence. There's a peace that transcends life's messes, and it's beyond our understanding as promised in Philippians 4:7.

God's desire is to have His joy with us at *all* times even in

disasters or death. So when faced with life's feelings of hopeless isolation, take a breath and find strength in the solitude of hope. Your heavenly Father is right beside you and encouraging you to be strong and courageous as promised in Deuteronomy 31:6. They say it's lonely at the top, but the truth is, it's not. God is there waiting with peace and comfort.

Read Psalm 66, and feel strength and companionship in the solitude of hope. {eoa}

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