

When You Feel Too Weak to Give Any More

Perhaps one of these scenarios feels familiar:

It is 3 a.m., and one of the kids wakes you up—again. Every cell in your body wants to rebel or retaliate, yet you pull yourself out of bed to return the toddler to her slumber, only to find that she's soaked the sheets through and her footy pajamas are waterlogged.

Or you've spent all day counseling people with really hard situations. Currently, you are making dinner with one hand while trying to encourage yet another friend on the phone. Then your husband walks through the door. Just by his gait and the way the door closes, you realize now he needs your support.

Or you are up to your eyeballs in life, just barely making it from day to day, when a crisis hits. After the first wave of adrenaline passes, you realize you are going to need a long-term response.

You aren't alone! Every one of us reaches the end of our rope on a regular basis.

In Matthew 14, Jesus and the disciples faced a crisis. It was a pivotal moment in history—John the Baptist was beheaded. For the first time, the disciples were faced with the possible dire outcome of following Jesus. Moreover, Jesus had lost someone He loved. They needed to get away and recharge.

It seems people need us the most when we are at our worst.

As Jesus and the disciples landed for their retreat, they discovered a whole crowd of people waiting to be ministered to. Let's lean in and see what we can learn about ministering

under stress.

1. When we are stressed, we often lean on what we see instead of what we believe.

“As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food’” (Matt. 14:15, NIV).

The disciples realized a problem: Everyone was hungry and hadn’t brought food. Yet like us, they looked at logical solutions before asking Jesus if He had an answer for the problem.

How would it change your life if you took time to hear God’s solution before you told Him how to fix it?

2. God often uses what we already have.

When we are up against the wall of provision, we tend to look for miracles out of the sky—and on occasion, they come. More often, though, we see Jesus providing through means we already have. It is our tendency to reach out to those around us and hope they will provide, yet often before Jesus provides through others, He first miraculously multiplies what we have. To quote a song from the 80s, “Little becomes much when we place it in the Master’s hand.” What do you have that you can give to Jesus?

3. Chaos in our emotions doesn’t need to mean chaos in life.

The 12 disciples fed 5,000 men and their families. This wasn’t accomplished by shooting the food into the crowd with a potato gun. They brought order to the crowd, distributed the food and even had enough clarity to clean up afterwards.

4. Jesus doesn’t negate rest.

“After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by

himself to pray" (v. 23).

Jesus' goal was to get away, and as soon as the crowd was taken care of, He made sure it happened. Just because a crisis takes away your opportunity to rest, this doesn't mean that rest shouldn't come soon. It is important to keep our focus on replenishment even when we are in the midst of giving our all.

5. Jesus provides what we need.

Jesus provided food, but He also infused the disciples with strength. They rowed across the lake after taking a hard hit emotionally. Then they ministered to the crowd and immediately jumped in a boat to row some more. Yet nowhere does it indicate that one of the disciples slumped over from sheer exhaustion. When you focus on doing what Jesus calls you to, you will have the strength to do it.

6. When we don't know what to do, Jesus has the answer.

There are times when we are seriously in over our heads. But we can walk in confidence that while we are mired in gunk, Jesus already has a clear path. He sees things differently than we do, He works on people from the inside out, and He has the answer.

It is now 4 a.m. Child #1 is safely tucked back in bed. You crawl back into bed, collapsing into a deep sleep—and then Child #2 starts up. Jesus isn't surprised, and He knows your to-do list for tomorrow. His answer will come. He will provide.

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