

When You've Got Nothing Left to Give

About three months ago, I began a program to get my teaching license and eventually my master's in education. At the time, it seemed like a really good thing ... even though I don't have the money to pay for the program, nor is the time to do it clearly evident. In fact, when I was interviewing with the head of the program, he questioned whether it was possible for a single mother of five to do the program, much less teach full time. I assured him it was possible—I had actually already done it. (Totally a miracle, by the way.)

And I need another miracle. I need help!

"O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me" (Ps. 71:12).

In every form available.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2).

I have to be honest. I'm having one of those days when it just seems like nothing is going to be doable. And getting my children to seriously put some effort into helping is more than frustrating. And the house seems to be crashing around me at the same time everything I have to do is crashing as well.

And today I have a fever, a wicked bad sore throat and body aches, and I just want to lie down and sleep. Well, actually, at the moment, I want to lie down and cry.

I didn't used to be prone to tears, but lately I feel like I'm on the verge at all times. It just seems like I can't possibly handle everything God has given me. And the future just looks

harder and harder.

Today my Bible study was on Philippians 4:6-7. I've been studying Philippians for months, so I knew these verses were going to show up sooner or later. They used to be my mantra, but then I decided to put my big girl pants on and actually live by them, not just chant them to myself.

Apparently I've forgotten how to do that of late. I'm just an absolute mess of fear, worry, anxiety, sorrow and frustration. I don't want to be this girl.

Just now, I was downstairs trying to get my children to do something, anything, to help. I was tripping over dogs, cars, toys and clothes (which is hazardous with a broken foot). There are dishes in the sink and more laundry than you can comprehend. Even though today my little girls are outside without jackets, in two days we are expecting more snow and sleet, so I can't put all those blasted coats, scarves, boots and gloves away. And they are all over the place.

I finally just designated a room for them to be everywhere—the foyer was embarrassing. I know taxes are going to be due about the same time as tuition—that is another God-sized task. Huge. (There is actually a part of me that is excited to see how God provides for them! The other part of me is terrified.)

The other day I met with a school official about one of my children and the learning issues she has. I drove home in tears. (Shocking—tears.) In the next few weeks, I have to fit in practicum hours, and I can't even figure out where they are going to magically appear. What is going to drop so I can do that? Something's gotta give.

I kinda feel like I'm just the one giving lately. I don't think I have much more to give.

Unfortunately, at this moment, I feel like giving up. I feel like just crawling under the covers and forgetting about

deadlines, appointments, assignments, finances, houses, issues, illnesses, learning issues and everything else.

I hate being like this. I don't like using that word *hate*, but it fits. I really don't want to be this way. I want to live in victory. How can I feel so defeated when I have God? It is so hard to keep my focus on Him.

I started today with Him, and tonight I will end with time with Him. But somewhere in between, I keep getting sidetracked by all the minutia of the day. Who am I kidding—it isn't just the day. It's everything all the time.

It's so much. I can't keep up mentally, physically or emotionally I just can't.

I'm crying "Uncle!"

So now what?

I don't know. I can't really call "Uncle." just because I give up doesn't mean things stop or go away. I'm still a single momma. I still have five children. I still need to take care of them and our home and our finances and our future. I still need to get up and live this life.

Lord, how?

How do I move forward when I feel so overwhelmed?

You say that I can trade burdens with You—that Yours is easy and light. I want that. I want easy and light. Lord, what does that look like—I mean, practically? When there is just so much to do and so many emotions and thoughts rolling around inside of me, how do I untangle the mess of me?

Lord, I think I can't just give You a burden. I think I need to give You me. I want to jump in Your arms and rest. *Sleep*. I want You to handle everything for me. I can't hide though,

Lord. I have to do something—what do I do?

“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. ... Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours, but God’s. ... You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the Lord will be with you” (2 Chr. 20:12, 15, 17).

I’m really praying about this.

I think what I do is just do this day—just take this day and its mess and do it, and rest in the fact that God has my tomorrows.

Do what I can. Honestly, right now, there just seems to be too much to do, too much for one person with limited resources.

I think the thing I need most is time. Time to do all the things that need to be done so there isn’t so much to do. Do you know what I mean?

If I could just get rid of some things, declutter, organize and take care of all the house projects that stare at me daily, maybe that would help me get past some of the stress. Maybe. I hate to use the “If I could just” phrase, because part of me thinks that I just have to learn to let go and let God. Just not sure what that means, you know? What does that look like?

I have a basement that should be dealt using a shovel and dumpster, a car that needs to be power-washed on the inside, an office that has way too many papers all over the place and children’s rooms that have been taken over by clothing and damp towels. Honestly, it’s enough to drive me bonkers. I think I’m pretty close to bonkers. And that’s just annoying little stuff. Why does that stuff make me so nuts?

The other day there was a tornado warning and I thought for a moment, "Hmm ... " Like that's a viable option! I could just take my kids, the dogs and a very few precious things, and the wind could have the rest.

We'll cram into a little apartment and just be us and a few things. That sounds lovely. (It'd probably only be lovely for about two hours and then I'd regret it.)

I know from emails and messages that many of us are feeling overwhelmed by our circumstances, and those circumstances include all the pain and sadness of divorce and single parenting.

That pain and sadness get better. I don't think I'll ever not have sadness at what my children have lost, but God is healing me, and He is showing me His love and faithfulness in amazing and beautiful ways.

I know that it's so difficult to see past the situation now. I'm struggling with that very thing. I'm overwhelmed by my circumstances and my fears. And honestly, it baffles me. I know better. I know the God who I love and who loves me. Why in the world am I struggling? Why can I not just rest in His presence? Why do I get all wound up?

"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 and my God" (Ps. 42:5).

I will tell you that as I have been writing, God has brought to mind so many Scripture passages. The one I shared earlier, 2 Chronicles 20—do you know what happens after God answers the people by saying, "Do not be afraid"? People are appointed to sing to the Lord and praise Him!

"Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever. And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set

an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so they were routed" (v. 21).

Oh my goodness! I'm so excited how God has used His Word to show me His love again! So as I'm typing that verse out, I'm remembering that this morning I was studying Philippians 4:6-7:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and yours minds in Christ Jesus."

Thankfulness

Could that be the answer to our current states of distress? Could it be that simple—and difficult?

Could I choose thankfulness? If I cannot find anything to be thankful for in this world, could I focus on the next? Could I focus on Christ? Could I focus on my new identity in Christ—not this discouraged divorced, single mama, but that beautiful child of the King, loved, cherished, precious, chosen, forgiven and redeemed? I think if I truly grasped how amazing that is, I wouldn't be able to become discouraged by this world. I could live within a different paradigm. I could find my strength—emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually—in the Lord.

Oh, friends, the answer is there. It's Him. Find Him in His Word.

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

Say His words back to Him. Say those promises out loud. Pray and find Him in the chaos and the quiet.

I cannot begin to tell you how just in this time of writing

God has calmed and quieted my heart through His Word. There are so many more verses I want to share, but I've already gone way past the word limit I set for myself.

But here's two more to encourage you:

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon the rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord" (Ps. 40:1-3).

He is faithful. He is good. He is kind. He loves you. Rest assured He will walk you through this:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; *I have called you by name, you are mine*. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. ... *Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you*" (Is. 43:1-4).

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