

Stressed to the Breaking Point

The church was electric with the power and presence of the Lord. Revival gatherings were taking place morning, noon and night. It was exhilarating as well as physically exhausting going at such a pace.

But God was obviously meeting deep needs among the children as well as the adults. Visitors were coming and going, and our home, like the church building, was the center of activity and wonderful fellowship.

I was just clearing the breakfast table and laughing with some of our guests when I heard a thump and a weak cry for help. Heading in the direction of the cry, I discovered 88-year-old Nana, who had been living with us for a number of years, on the floor. It was obvious that she had experienced a stroke.

Ambulances and much emotion filled the rest of the morning. My mom and I waited at the hospital while Nana underwent numerous tests.

Sunday morning dawned brightly, and I began to look forward to our revival celebration of worship and praise. But now my mom was concerning me. She had been experiencing intermittent periods of pain and seemed worse this morning. As I helped her into the car to go to the morning service, she screamed in agony, and I knew she needed immediate medical attention.

The next 12 hours were spent at the hospital—in the emergency room with my mom, and on the fourth floor with my mother-in-law. My tired body was loudly reminding me that it had not yet been resurrected.

While I was grappling with the serious illnesses of these two loved ones, my 87-year-old aunt, for whom I also had

responsibility, told me she wasn't feeling well either. "Lord," I prayed, "in the midst of these wonderful days of revival and refreshing, I'm feeling overwhelmed! Help, Lord!"

The pressure and stress of hospital visits, medical bills, medical diagnoses and the numerous decisions that had to be made increased in the ensuing weeks. During those weeks, I could feel the results of the turbulence of my circumstances on the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of my life.

One morning I sank into my "devotional" chair, and a floodgate of emotion gushed out. I poured out all my confusing feelings before the Lord—feelings of anger, frustration, faith, unbelief, trust, doubt, resentment, self-pity and just plain exhaustion. "O Lord, how does revival work in the nitty-gritty of everyday pressure?" I wailed.

While I was sobbing my way through the Psalms, my eyes fixed on David's plea in Psalm 61:1-2: "Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (NKJV).

I asked, "Lord, what does it mean to be led to the Rock that is higher than I, higher than my circumstances?" Finding an answer to this question became the quest of my very weary soul.

The Lord was faithful to guide me in this quest. Under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit, I learned how to rise above my circumstances by drawing closer to the Rock.

First, I learned to depend more on the power of sustaining grace. Again and again the Spirit of God gently encouraged me to ask for more grace, to receive it with thankfulness and to yield my will more completely to His.

Second, I learned to accept—rather than fight—the changes that accompany entering a new season of life, while at the same

time acknowledging the intensity of stress and pressure they produce. These changes in relationships, roles and routines, though natural, can be overwhelming.

In my new season, I no longer function as daughter, daughter-in-law and niece; now my role is to provide care, direction and nurture for those who once provided them for me. My schedule, plans and daily routines are frequently disrupted and totally unpredictable because of the needs of those around me. But God knows all this! And He has ordained “a time for every purpose under heaven” (Eccl. 3:1).

Third, I learned more about myself and my continual need for God. What I saw coming out of me in the midst of all of these changes was disturbing. Attitudes of the heart that I thought were long ago dealt with again surfaced in the midst of this storm. I saw that, without Jesus, I could not maintain my witness—or my peace.

As I continued to seek the Lord and pour over His Word, I could sense Him leading me higher to stand upon the Rock of my salvation—Jesus, my beloved Friend.

Soon worry led to worship, fear led to faith, turmoil led to trust, complaining led to confession, resentment led to repentance and whining led to waiting. I discovered through it all that a revival experience meant a deeper revelation of God as “my refuge and my strong tower” in the midst of all the turbulence of change, stress and pressure. Along with the psalmist, in every circumstance of life, we too can learn to sing: “He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken” (Ps. 62:2, NIV).

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