

Overcoming the Spirit of Overwhelm

Sometimes life can be absolutely overwhelming. The enemy is expert at coming in like a flood with crushing circumstances and disturbing thoughts that try to drown you in feelings of helplessness and even hopelessness. "Overwhelm" is an enemy I've fought many times over the years, and defeating it starts with understanding what it really is.

Merriam Webster defines "overwhelm" as: to affect (someone) very strongly; to cause (someone) to have too many things to deal with; to defeat (someone or something) completely. Overwhelm also means: upset, overthrow; to cover over completely, submerge; to overcome by superior force or numbers; to overpower in thought or feeling.

Of course, you can be overwhelmed simply from a natural perspective with too much work or too many facts or too much opposition. But the enemy likes to work in our naturally overwhelming circumstances to apply spiritual pressure. When that spiritual pressure mounts, too often we look for a way of escape rather than trusting in the Lord for His sufficient grace to meet the situation at hand.

David Understood Overwhelm

Don't feel ashamed in your battle against overwhelm. David understood these feelings all too well. He once wrote, "My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. *Selah* I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest'" (Psalm 55:4-8).

I can't tell you how many times I've wished I could fly away and escape. Yes, this is the same David who ran to the battle line to defeat Goliath without a second (or fearful) thought. And this wasn't the only time David felt overwhelmed. Another time he wrote, "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" (Psalm 61:2). And again, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path" (Psalm 142:3).

The first step in battling overwhelm is to recognize it and acknowledge the situation you find yourself in. Denying feelings of overwhelm won't help you conquer your flesh or the devil. Once you've acknowledged the reality of an overwhelmed heart, you can work with the Holy Spirit to get to the root of these feelings.

What is causing this overwhelm, really? Is the enemy blowing it out of proportion? Is it really as bad as it looks, or is this pressure demonic? Put your circumstances—and your emotions—into perspective. Is there anything you can do right now in the natural to relieve some of the burdens you feel? Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom in the midst of this trial:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:2-8).

God Is Not Overwhelmed

While you wait for this pure wisdom that comes from above, meditate on Jesus. Get your mind off the overwhelming

circumstances and onto the Word of God. Pray for grace, strength and whatever else you feel you need from Father in the moment. Remind yourself of His promises. Here are a few I like to keep in mind when overwhelm tries to wreak havoc on my soul:

“The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him” (Psalm 28:7).

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling” (Psalm 46:1-3).

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

And remember David. When he was overwhelmed with Saul hunting him down and with Absalom trying to overtake his kingdom and with his baby son dying and with even his own sin, he always turned to God. Here is one of his prayers for help in troubling times that you may want to pray for yourself:

“I cry aloud with my voice to the Lord. I make supplication with my voice to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare my trouble before my spirit was overwhelmed within me, You knew my path. In the way where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. Look to the right and see; for there is no one who regards me; There is no escape for me; no one cares for my soul.

“I cried out to You, O Lord; I said, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low; Deliver me from my persecutors, for they

are too strong for me. Bring my soul out of prison, so that I may give thanks to Your name; The righteous will surround me, for You will deal bountifully with me'" (Psalm 142). Amen!

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