

Finding God in Your Darkest Hour

by Moses Catan

When I saw the X-ray plate on the lighted panels of the ER, my strength left me. I had been strong and “in control” the whole day of the freak accident. But when I finally saw with my own eyes that my one-month-old son’s thighbone was completely fractured, it was like a 10-ton wrecking ball had rammed my spirit. I felt crushed and angry at the same time. Why my innocent baby? screamed my insides. How could Satan be so unfair?! Other questions hurtled through my mind like, Didn’t I pray for protection today? Do I have some unrepented sin? Why now when my wife and I are going through a spiritual high?

Just when my mind was beginning to calm down, one resident orthopedist said, “Your son could be confined in the hospital from three to four weeks.” Michael’s tiny legs would be wrapped in a semi-cast and would be suspended in the air from his waist down with a traction. Kawawa naman was an understatement.

What should one do in a tragic situation like this?

By a divine stroke of grace, I looked at my wife and said with inexplicable certainty, “Don’t worry, this will end in God’s glory.” How, I had absolutely no idea.

Straining to See in the Dark

One thing common to all tough trials and worst moments is the element of uncertainty. It’s the feeling that things are beyond your control. It’s a sense of helplessness. What’s going to happen now? What will I do? How will I ever cope with this?

That’s powerlessness. For people accustomed to being in control over many things all their lives, this is where the struggle begins. Just think of the workaholic who suddenly finds himself jobless. Or the health buff who gets bedridden. Or even the organizer who finds his event cancelled by a typhoon. When the controls of life suddenly get out of your reach, that’s when the red panic button flashes brightly.

But there’s no need to panic. Worry, fear, depression and self-pity will never get anyone anywhere. Remember, God has a purpose for moments like these. If you strain your eyes to see beyond the darkness, there will be light.

St Paul said these mighty words, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (*2 Corinthians 12:10b*). He meant that weakness made him rely more on the power of Christ. He meant that his lack was actually a good thing because it made him open for more of God’s power. If a person possesses this kind of heavenly power, what more should you need? Just like the bumper sticker that says, “The Lord is my shepherd, no problem!”

So, if you think about it, weakness could be a precursor to an experience of God. Yes, let it sink in: your tough trial could be used to usher in the saving presence of the Lord. It's like an appetizer to a sumptuous meal. Or, more appropriately, like a grape that has to be crushed (ouch!) to later bring out the best wine. Your current crushing experience could become fine wine later!

Fine Examples

Let me share with you some examples of how difficult times could serve as magnets to God's presence.

There was Jacob who, all alone on a long journey, made a stopover at Bethel. "Taking one of the stones at the shrine, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep on the spot" (*Genesis 28:11b*). The most curious thing here is why Jacob used a stone, of all things, for a pillow. Was it because he was "hard-headed"? (Sorry, I couldn't resist the joke.) Well, you'd have to be really tired and desperate to use a stone for a pillow. Exhausted from the journey, alone in the desert and uncertain about his fate, Jacob must have been in dire straits for him to use a stone pillow. But take a look at what happened next.

Then he had a dream: a stairway rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's messengers were going up and down on it. And there was the Lord standing beside him and saying: "I, the Lord, am the God of your forefather Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants" ...When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he exclaimed, "Truly, the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it!" In solemn wonder he cried out: "How awesome is this shrine! This is nothing else but an abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven!" (*Genesis 28:12-13, 16-17*)

Imagine, Jacob's stone pillow became a stairway to heaven! We, too, have many stone pillows in our lives. Moments of discomfort, pain, dejection, loneliness, confusion. These are all stone pillows. It is hard to sleep with these peace-stealers as pillows. But if we just trust in Jesus, these very stone pillows could offer rest in the Lord that not even the softest, silkiest bed in the world could offer.

Jacob said, "Truly, the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it!" How many times have we been "in this spot" where God seems far away? This spot could be your home, office, school or wherever you are right now. Like Jacob, we do not realize that God is nearby. He was and is there all the time, just waiting for us to call upon Him.

So from now on, why don't you try seeing your trials not as stumbling blocks but as stepping stones? Like Jacob, it may just be your stepping stone to heavenly realms.

More God Finders

Aside from Jacob, there are more God finders who saw God in their worst moments. There was the prince-turned-shepherd Moses who, after 40 lonely years grazing sheep in the desert, found God in the burning bush. There was Daniel who found God's angel inside the lion's den. There were the

three young men—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who found God inside the fiery furnace. Their worst moments actually became their finest moments.

Are you in an excruciating trek through a lonely desert these days? Then look out for the burning bush. Are you in trouble or are you in the midst of the fierce lions of life? Then wait for His angels to shut those lions' mouths. Are you in a scorching, hot situation? Then open your eyes and see God come with winds of comfort. Let this current torment, by a touch of God, become your finest moment.

God is always true to His promises. His Word says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (*Romans 10:13*). If you or someone close to you is sick, don't resign your fate to a teeny-weeny virus or bacteria. Call on the Healer who is absolutely bigger than any sickness or disease. If you're financially down and out, don't be a crybaby because there's more to life than money. Be rich in God and call upon Jesus who became poor so we might become rich (*2 Corinthians 8:9*)!

If, however, you feel too crushed or too tired to call on Him, remember this description of Jesus in *Isaiah 42:1* — "A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench." Don't worry, God will not break you to the point of no repair. St Paul said, "No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it" (*1 Corinthians 10:13*).

The Power of Praise

So what should one do at a difficult moment? Here's the secret of the saints: practice thanksgiving. No, I don't say, "Thank You, Lord, for my sickness and misfortune. Send more!" That's crazy. Thank God that He is there in the midst of your trial, ready to help and save you. Thank Him for His promises that are true and fire-tried. And thank Him because your situation could've been worse.

Also, practice praise. There is power in praising God. When you praise God in the midst of your hard circumstances, you unlock the blessings of heaven. Why? Because you chose to trust in God first! Praising God tears down evil strongholds, too. It banishes depression, fear, hopelessness and other evils that try to cripple us. Praise lifts our spirits because it helps us focus on our Big God rather than on our puny circumstances.

Now back to my son Michael. His tiny leg's fracture, to me, was a stone pillow, lonely desert, lion's den and fiery furnace rolled in one. But my wife and I chose to praise and thank the Lord—everyday. On Michael's first night in the hospital, the Lord spoke to me through this verse in Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones,

I prophesied as I had been told, and even as I was prophesying I heard a noise; it was a rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone. (*Ezekiel 37:7*, emphasis added)

We claimed this promise every time we joined hands in prayer. True enough, God intervened with a speedy recovery. Michael was out of the hospital in 12 days. His cast was removed a week later, and the X-ray showed that the broken bones had indeed joined together! Even the orthopedic surgeon—who gave her services for free (another miracle!) —was happily surprised that the healing process

was both quick and beautiful. Today, Michael, whose name means “Who is like the Lord,” kicks his leg in the air as if nothing happened. Our worst moment turned out to be a fine moment of God’s healing after all.

So, my friend, you can be sure that the Lord not only heals broken bones but all kinds of brokenness as well. *Psalm 51:19* says that God will not spurn a broken heart. Come to Him in your brokenness and be healed. Let Him turn your darkest hours into seasons of blessing and refreshment. Yes, let Jesus turn your mourning into dancing...again.

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