

# *Following Jesus/Living with Pain*

*By Dale Weatherford*

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# *Following Jesus/Living with Pain*

## *Preface*

Pain comes in many forms. Each person perceives pain differently and each person must deal with their own response to pain. Emotional pain, relationship pain, grief, loneliness, abuse, depression, mental pain, and stress all bring their own flavors of pain. I am personally dealing with chronic physical pain and find that all the above affect all the others. For example, physical pain makes depression worse — and depression makes physical pain worse. As Mr. Rogers used to say, “Our nose goes where the rest of us goes, because we’re all one piece!”

I also believe that followers of Jesus struggle in a unique way with all the above pain, because in addition to the pain, we often feel that we should be spiritual enough to not struggle. Many people believe that God will never give them more than they can bear. I disagree. I believe that He *often* gives us more than we can bear. I believe that Scripture teaches that when we are weak, we are strong because that weakness produces a vital dependence on Him.

This work is divided into two sections. The first section deals with my findings through a survey of Scripture. The second section deals with what God has taught me through living with pain.

It is my prayer that this study will in some way help you to become strong and sturdy in Christ Jesus not in spite of your pain — but because of it.

In His service,

Dale Weatherford

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# *Following Jesus/Living with Pain*

## *Introduction to Section 1*

I was leading a Growth Group in California in 2011, when it became necessary for me to have foot reconstruction surgery. That surgery became a complicated mess due to my other conditions and my small group watched as I dealt with the incredible pain of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS) in addition to my “normal” chronic pain which has been diagnosed as Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (HEDS). They had many questions about what the Bible said about healing, pain, and suffering. As their leader, I promised that I would begin a complete survey of Scripture. That survey took 4 years to complete and revealed surprising (to me) results. My health has continued to deteriorate, and my pain level has increased. Recently, I have felt God’s call to report my findings.

As I researched from Genesis to Revelation, I found that most of the verses can be summarized into seven basic categories:

- Category #1 Pain is a Normal Part of Life**
- Category #2 Faith is Not a Requirement for Healing**
- Category #3 Some Pain is Caused by Sin**
- Category #4 Some Scripture Regarding Sin and Pain are Misinterpreted**
- Category #5 Many Scriptures Refer to National Health, not Individual Health.**
- Category #6 Some Scripture Refers to Spiritual not Physical Healing**
- Category #7 God Promises Physical Healing**

I have not listed every Scripture that deals with healing, suffering and pain. But as you read and encounter those Scriptures, I believe that they will fit into one of these 7 categories. I have simply given you a sampling of Scripture to illustrate my findings.

# *Category #1*

## *Pain is a Normal Part of Life*

My survey of Scripture indicates that sickness, pain, and even death seem to be recorded as an expected and normal reality of life. Blindness, crippling, leprosy, epilepsy, dropsy, deafness, and muteness were all simply mentioned as facts. Healing was the exception, a rarity — certainly not the “expected norm.” And healing was used more as a sign of God’s presence and not primarily for the purpose of easing sickness or pain.

Only two prophets in the Old Testament were known for their healing power — Elisha and Elijah. Both were known as forerunners of Jesus and these miraculous healings were used as proof of God’s approval of their message.

These Scriptures especially caught my attention because they exemplify the attitude that pain and sickness was an expected part of life. Both men healed others, but experienced sickness themselves.

**II Kings 13:14 (NIV)**

**“Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died....”**

**Galatians 4:13 (NIV) (Paul speaking)**

**As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you,**

Jesus healed a lot! This was predicted throughout the Old Testament as a sign or proof that Jesus was indeed the Messiah sent from God.

Often people assume that Jesus healed everyone, but that is not true. At the Pool of Bethesda, He only healed one — even though the Scripture indicates there were multitudes of sick people present.

**John 5:2-3, 8-9 (KJV)**

**Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.**

**Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked ....**

The original Apostles and the Apostle Paul healed through the power of the Holy Spirit as proof that they were sent from God. It certainly got the attention of the people around them.

People in the ancient world had to deal with a lack of antibiotics, skilled medical care, and many, many incurable diseases that today are curable.

But even with modern medicine, incurable diseases and chronic pain still exist. It is a normal part of life today for millions of followers.

I believe that suffering and pain is a part of life that affects a lot more people than we realize. Some of them sit beside you at church or work or school. Others are hidden away inside their homes or care centers. Studies have shown that 84% of people in the United States experience chronic pain at some level each day. That's a lot of pain! Yet, when we are in the midst of pain, we often feel alone or abnormal or unique — when in actuality, we are in the majority!

I'm especially concerned for those who are suffering within our churches. Many of them are treated as outcasts — or at the very least feel that way inside. Some have told me that they feel that God has forgotten them or that they are second-class Christians because He has chosen to heal others, but not heal them. That breaks my heart.

Why would people following Jesus suffer pain? Because it's universal. Everyone suffers pain at some level and following Jesus does not make you exempt. And it seems to me that God has ordained that His creation would experience hardships and pain on this earth — some more severe than others. As we explore this topic together, I hope you will open your heart to understand God's great love for you.



*Father, help me to remember that I am not exempt from this world's troubles just because I follow You. Remind me to accept what You determine is best for me — knowing that many, many others deal with worse.*

## *Category #2*

# *Faith is Not a Requirement for Healing*

Through the years, as I've talked with people experiencing pain, I've discovered that many people and many churches deliberately or inadvertently teach that if you are not well, you must not have enough faith for God to heal you. Therefore, many followers of Jesus hide their pain and feel deep shame. They hesitate to share and miss out on fellowship.

A dear friend of mine and spiritual mentor was told by her pastor that she wouldn't die from metastasized breast cancer if she just had enough faith. That created such shame in her. She loved her Lord dearly. She kept begging me to tell her how to have more faith because she didn't want to leave her husband and 2 young children.

As I surveyed the Scripture, I discovered that this erroneous belief probably has its roots in misunderstood verses. I would like to discuss a few.

### **Matthew 13:58 (NASB)**

**And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.**

I think a closer look at this verse will reveal that Matthew was referring to people who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God. It wasn't that they were followers of His who didn't have faith — they were simply not followers or believers in Jesus.

### **Matthew 8:8-10 (NIV)**

**The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."**

**When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."**

**Mark 5:34 (ESV)**

**And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”**

I believe Jesus was praising the Roman centurion and this Jewish lady for their trust and faith in Him to heal and meet their needs. That pleased Him. But I don't believe that Jesus' healing is dependent on our faith. I think that He is pleased with our faith and trust — even though it is not required.

A careful study of His healings in the New Testament reveals several healings where there was no faith at all exhibited. Jesus healed, because Jesus chose to heal. I believe He applauds and encourages our confidence in Him to heal, but I don't believe it is a prerequisite to being healed. Let's look at some examples.

**John 9:1-7 (NIV)**

**As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”**

**“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”**

**After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. “Go,” he told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.**

This man didn't ask to be healed or exhibit any faith since later verses indicate he didn't even know who Jesus was. Yet, Jesus healed him seemingly without his asking for healing or evidencing faith.

**John 5:6-9 (NIV)**

**When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”**

**“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”**

**Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.**

Jesus saw the man at the Pool of Bethesda and spoke with him. He did not ask him about his faith and the man made no indication of faith, yet Jesus healed him. Why? Because Jesus is good and compassionate and cares about people in pain. This man did nothing to deserve his healing, nor was there any record of his being grateful.

**Luke 7:11-15 (NIV)**

**Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”**

**Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.**

I promise you that this dead man did not show his faith in Jesus. He was dead! So, why did Jesus heal him? Because His heart was touched by the mother’s pain.

So, what should I do when Satan attacks and says that if I only had more faith, I would be healed? I must remember that His choice to heal me now or wait until later — is His choice and that He knows what is best for me. I must trust Him to do the right thing. I put my trust in Jesus. I surrender my life to Him. And I let Him direct my path. For me, that path has been filled with pain. For others God has chosen different paths. But He is sovereign, and He is good.

How much faith is required for God to heal me? Absolutely none. He is pleased by my faith that He *can* heal, but He heals according to His plan, and He knows what is best.

*Father, please remind me that You are my Great Physician. I do place my trust in You because You know what is best. Help me not to fall for Satan's lies that Your healing is dependent on my faith.*

# *Category #3*

## *Some Pain is Caused by Sin*

Is pain the result of personal sin in my life? In some cases, the answer is yes. But it is NOT the only cause. In fact, as we've already covered in Finding #1, being human and alive is the primary cause of pain.

Personally, when I am not in a close relationship with God, my body aches more and I don't cope well with the pain. Is that because God zaps me with pain to punish me? No! It is because when I sin, I move further away in my relationship with God and don't feel His presence and comfort. Therefore, I experience more pain.

But the Bible seems to teach that in some circumstances, God uses pain and sickness as a tool to bring a sinner to repentance. Therefore, sickness and pain have come to represent sin in many people's minds, and it is taught in some churches.

I believe the Scripture clearly teaches that not all sickness is the result of God's wrath against our sin. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. He has shown incredible mercy toward us and declared us free from ALL condemnation.

### **Romans 8:1-2 (NASB)**

**Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.**

But the Bible *does* teach that God **sometimes** uses sickness as punishment for sin and to deal with sinful people who need to change their ways.

### **Exodus 15:26 (NIV)**

**He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."**

**Numbers 12:9-12 (NASB)**

And the anger of the LORD burned against them and He departed. But when the cloud had withdrawn from above the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as *white as snow*. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous. Then Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not hold us responsible for this sin by which we have turned out to be foolish, and by which we have sinned. Oh, do not let her be like a dead person, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother’s womb!”

**Job 5:17-20 (NIV)**

Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.

**Psalms 41:4 (NIV)**

“I said, “Have mercy on me, LORD; heal me, for I have sinned against you.”

**Acts 13:10-11 (NASB)**

And said, “You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not stop making crooked the straight ways of the Lord? Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.” And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.

If you have sin in your life, it is the Holy Spirit’s job to reveal it to you. You may keep it a secret from others — but God doesn’t cover it up — He reveals it to you! Why? Because He loves you and wants you to change your ways. We have this wonderful promise to rely on.

**I John 1:9 (NASB)**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

After the Holy Spirit has warned you, if you refuse to repent (turn away from the sin and toward God — make a U-turn), then God may discipline you with pain and sickness as indicated in these verses.

**I Corinthians 11:27-32 (ESV)**

**Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.**

**Hebrews 12:5-11 (NIV)**

**....“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”**

**Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.**

Discipline is for the purpose of turning us away from sin and back to God.

But there is another aspect of this belief that sickness and sin are somehow related. That’s because all sickness is caused by sin. If Eve had not eaten the forbidden fruit, there would be no sickness or pain. But to blame or accuse a person of personal sin just because they are experiencing sickness and pain is a gross misunderstanding of Scripture.



As stated above, sometimes sickness is a direct result of personal sin and God is trying to get our attention to repent. But other times, sickness and pain is just a normal part of being human and living in this fallen world. Don't confuse original sin with personal sin.

*Father, remind me that I need to come to You and confess any sin that might be blocking my relationship with You. But also remind me to refuse to believe the lie that all my pain is the result of sin that I cannot see or understand. That is Satan's lie to make me feel second class and unloved. Help me remember that while You may use pain to guide me back to You, it is because You are good and love me dearly. Remind me that choosing to follow You removes all condemnation.*

## *Category #4*

# *Some Scripture Regarding Sin and Pain is Misinterpreted*

While God apparently uses some sickness and pain to call us away from personal sin and sinful behavior, I believe that many individuals and churches misinterpret the Scripture. They try to force it to mean things that were not intended.

I would like to look at some specific verses.

### **James 5:14-16 (ESV)**

**Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.**

I believe that this verse is often used to say that sin and sickness go together. I disagree. Note that the Scripture specifically says “And **if** he has committed sins, he will be forgiven...” Sins are a normal part of life, and we all commit them. Jesus paid for them in full and we must continually be confessing and turning from our wicked ways. But I believe that this verse actually shows that sickness is not always connected to personal sin.

### **Isaiah 38:116-17 (NIV)**

**....You restored me to health and let me live. Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.**

Once again, just because health and sins are mentioned in the same verse, does not imply that they are in any way connected. It simply means that God deals with both problems, and King Hezekiah was grateful for both.

**Luke 5:17-24 (NIV)**

**One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”**

I believe that a careful reading of the above Scripture will show that Jesus is asking a question: “Is it easier for God to heal, or to forgive sin?” The Pharisees knew that sickness was a result of the original sin of Adam and Eve. They knew that sickness and sin were related. Jesus was challenging them to really explore who He was and what He could do. The Pharisees were curious about Jesus’ healing but were furious about His forgiving sin. This was an ongoing debate between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. It in no way implies that the man who was paralyzed was sick because of personal sin. Like all of us, he probably had both — but personal sin does not necessarily cause sickness and pain. Nor is sickness and pain always the result of personal sin.

**John 9:1-3 (NASB)**

**As Jesus passed by, He saw a man who had been blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.**

Here, Jesus clearly refuted the belief that all sickness and pain was the result of sin.

Satan is called “the accuser of the brethren.” It simply means that he is constantly bringing up sins that I’ve committed that have already been forgiven and cleansed. When I am in pain, I find it hard to fight off these attacks and sometimes Satan defeats me in this area. I fall back into a pattern of belief that says that God is somehow punishing me by sending sickness and pain. That is so far from the truth. God desires what is best for me and will use my pain for His glory and purpose.

*Father, I want to quickly confess any sins that cloud our relationship. But I know that You did not place this pain on me to punish me — but in order for me to bring You glory and actually draw me closer to You in dependence. I don’t understand it all, but I praise You for the pain You’ve allowed in my life. Remind me that it has purpose and meaning.*

## *Category #5*

### *Many Scriptures Refer to National Health, not Individual Health.*

As I surveyed the Scripture, I saw many verses that have been applied to followers of Jesus that were not written for that purpose. Unless you study carefully, the following verses can be misunderstood.

In each of these verses, the writer is referring to the nation of Israel as a whole. Pain or sickness, in this case, refers to national breakdown and the inability to win battles. God promises to heal them or make them strong again as a nation. To do additional research, you would need to read the surrounding verses or chapters.

#### **Deuteronomy 32:39 (NIV)**

**“See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.**

#### **2 Chronicles 7:14-15 (NIV)**

**"if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place."**

#### **Psalm 107:19-21 (NIV)**

**"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind."**

#### **Isaiah 6:10-13 (NIV)**

**Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."**

**Isaiah 57:18-19 (NIV)**

"I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners, creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them."

**Jeremiah 30:17 (NIV)**

"But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds," declares the LORD"

**Jeremiah 33:6 (NIV)**

"Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security."

Be careful how you read the Scripture. Read the surrounding verses and get the context. We can easily interpret one verse to say anything we want to hear, especially when we are in pain.

We have God's promise of healing. But not every verse that mentions the word "healing" applies to personal physical healing. Read carefully. I was so excited when a search of the word "well" revealed hundreds of Scriptures — until I realized it was referring to water wells — not health!

*Lord, keep reminding me that someday You will heal me. Help me to leave the timing up to You. In the meantime, help me remember to read Your Word carefully and not be trapped by Satan's lies of prosperity or health.*

## *Category #6*

### *Some Scripture refers to Spiritual not Physical Healing*

Jesus died for my sins. When He did, He brought me from death to life. I would call that healing! Many of the Biblical writers also referred to it as “healing”. It’s the best healing of all, because even though my body is filled with pain, my soul or inner SELF is alive and well and dancing in fellowship with Jesus and in a right relationship with God.

Here are a few Scriptures that are often confused with physical healing, but I believe they refer to spiritual healing.

#### **Isaiah 53:4-5 (NIV)**

**Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.**

#### **I Peter 2:24 (NIV)**

**He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.**

Physical pain and suffering will only last for a short time — during this lifetime only. But the promise is that God’s salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is eternal. For all eternity I have the promise that I will be pain-free. I may have to wait for that to happen. But I’ve already made my reservation for Heaven because I have chosen to follow Jesus as my Messiah. He has paid for my sins and set me in a right relationship with my God. I don’t have to worry about death — in fact I look forward to that day when I’ll be in Heaven with my Savior and all my wounds will be healed — physical and spiritual.

**II Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)**

**Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

*Father, remind me to live each day to the fullest regardless of pain because this time is short compared to eternity. Thank You for setting me free from spiritual pain and death so that I can worship and draw near to You. Remind me to praise You and celebrate each day of this life.*



# *Category #7*

## *God Promises Physical Healing*

There are several precious verses that promise physical healing and doing away with all suffering, etc. I believe that our major problem is determining “when”. Can we trust that God will heal us in His timing, when He determines it is best? His promises for healing are secure!

**Exodus 23:25 (NIV)**

**Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.**

**Psalm 6:2 (NIV)**

**Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint; heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.**

**Psalm 30:2 (NIV)**

**LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.**

**Psalm 41:2-3 (NIV)**

**The LORD protects and preserves them — they are counted among the blessed in the land — he does not give them over to the desire of their foes. The LORD sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness.**

**Psalm 103:2-3 (NASB)**

**Bless the LORD, my soul, And do not forget any of His benefits; Who pardons all your guilt, Who heals all your diseases;**

**Psalm 147:3 (NIV)**

**He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**

**Jeremiah 17:14 (NASB)**

**Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.**

**Matthew 4:23 (NIV)**

**Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.**

**Revelation 21:4 (ESV)**

**He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.**

What beautiful verses that remind us that our God is the Great Physician.

He is able to heal and remove pain at any time. But there is no specific time promised. We are required to trust His judgment on what is best for us. Some will be healed immediately, some later, and some on the day we enter Heaven. He is our Shepherd, our Creator. He knows what is best. Like Jesus, we need to declare, "Thy will be done."

**Psalm 73:26 (NIV)**

**My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

**Matthew 26:39 (NIV)**

**Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."**

**II Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV)**

**.... I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

*Father, You know my heart. Remind me to always be hoping and looking for Your healing touch — but balance that with submission to You and what You know is best. I want Your will more than I want the pain to stop. I want to glorify You. I want to please You. And I trust You Father.*

# *Following Jesus/Living with Pain*

## *Introduction to Section 2*

I've been thinking about all the many, many things that God has taught me about living with pain. I thought of memories of Him speaking and comforting and guiding, truths from His Word, and practical things that have helped me through the years.

I need to be reminded of these things because there are times when I am hurting and can't think straight. I listen to Satan's lies and question God's love, faithfulness, and knowledge of my situation. There are times when I fret. Even though my heart is right — my head often isn't. I need to remember what God has taught me! I need to be reminded on days when medication affects my attitude and I struggle to be who God has called me to be.

I was amazed to find that the survey of Scripture concerning sickness and pain did not help me to cope with the daily realities of pain. God began to show me that to cope with pain I must focus on following Him in obedience, just as He has called every other follower of Jesus. In that obedience, I have found Him to be sufficient to meet my needs. So, while these verses do not specifically refer to pain, they have pointed me to my Shepherd, my Creator, and my Great Physician. He is the One who will carry me in His arms through all eternity.

It is my prayer that my experience with pain will encourage you. Someday soon we will be pain-free, but until then, my desire is to be pleasing to Him.

I have entered these teachings in alphabetical order to avoid prioritizing any particular one. There are not important and non-important ones. On any given day, I may turn to one that meets my needs more than the others. Other days, I read them from start to finish. They are not chronological or dependent on each other.

May God bless you and surprise You with His love today.

## *Accept Love*

As a young adult I remember wrestling with the concept of not being able to earn God's love. It was an incredible relief to know that I was loved just because I was His child. I couldn't earn it or lose it. I could not change His love for me

But for some reason, that understanding did not carry over into my earthly relationships. I always felt that I needed to do more to earn my parent's love. And I never felt that I could do enough to earn my husband's love. There was always that feeling of inadequacy and never being or doing enough. When I had babies, I wanted to earn their love and respect and never felt that I arrived. I tried to keep the perfect house and yard and cook the best meals. I tried to be the "hostess with the mostest." I cooked, cleaned, and pampered them. I served them with my whole heart.

When my health deteriorated, God stripped away all the ways I tried to earn love. I struggled big time with whether or not I would be loved at all.

But in not being able to contribute anything, something has changed. David, my husband and full-time caregiver, has taught me that I am loved — not for what I do, but for who I am. I still need reminders and sometimes fall into disbelief, but I treasure this new feeling. It almost feels impossible that I worked so hard and never felt loved; and now I do absolutely nothing and feel surrounded by love.

Does Scripture support this? Absolutely!

**Jeremiah 31:3 (NASB)**

**...“I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you out with kindness.**

**John 15:12 (NASB)**

**“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.**

**Romans 5:8 (NIV)**

**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**Romans 11:6 (NIV)**

And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)**

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**I John 3:1 (NIV)**

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! ....

**I John 4:9-10 (NASB)**

By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

*Father, remind me to be quiet and still and let Your love encompass me. Remind me to graciously accept the love of my husband and not doubt it. Let me soak in the love of my family and friends. You have blessed me with love and that really helps me cope with the pain. Remind me to quit striving to earn it, but to simply be grateful.*

## *Amazing Grace*

It's startling sometimes to realize that there are phrases in songs or Scripture that you've heard all your life, but never really understood. A few years ago, I heard a sermon on "Amazing Grace." The song seems to indicate that grace is what God showed toward us by offering us salvation. I agree. But there's something else that I learned that I don't want to forget.

Not only has God offered me salvation, life eternal with Him, but He has provided me with amazing grace that I can use daily. Grace is unmerited (unearned) favor. It's God giving us what we don't deserve. But it's also our ability to give others what they don't deserve!

When I'm in pain, I really need God's grace toward me because I mess up a lot. I also need the grace and undeserved favor of my husband, family and friends — because I fail them repeatedly. But the thing I'm praying for more of, is the ability to give grace to those around me. When I'm in pain, I find that very difficult.

Here are some Scriptures that remind me to give grace to those around me.

**Proverbs 15:1 (NASB)**

**A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.**

**Matthew 6:12 (TLB)**

**And forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.**

**Luke 6:36 (NASB)**

**Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**

**II Corinthians 9:8 (NASB)**

**And God is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;**

**Ephesians 4:1-3 (NASB)**

... walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Ephesians 4:32 (NASB)**

Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

**Colossians 3:12-15 (NASB)**

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, *and* patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so *must* you *do* also. In addition to all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ, to which you were indeed called in one body, rule in your hearts; and be thankful.

*Father, I am so grateful for the grace You have shown me. I am thankful for the grace that others extend to me daily. But Father, my prayer today is that I can be filled with Your grace and be gracious to those around me.*



## *Bitterness*

I have felt Satan tempt me to be bitter, but I see no advantage in going that route. Bitterness comes as a result of unresolved anger. So, I first need to decide who or what I'm angry about.

It's a normal part of grief to go through a stage of anger — anger at oneself, anger at peers, anger at family, anger at doctors or “the medical system”, anger at the pain, anger at the result of that pain. These are all normal responses to grief, but all need to be dealt with. Anger can be a positive motivator to action leading to positive change, but if not resolved it can turn to bitterness.

Bitterness is forbidden by Scripture. Why? Because it is not good for us or for those around us. It is straight from the pit of Hell and causes nothing but harm, hurt, and destruction. That is Satan's plan, so you need to recognize it, acknowledge it, and stop it with God's help.

### **Ephesians 4:31 (NIV)**

**Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.**

### **Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)**

**See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.**

Bitterness separates us from those who could help us. Doctors, nurses, insurance representatives and caregivers are all overwhelmed with work. They often limit their time with those who are filled with bitterness. So, another good reason to deal with bitterness is to get better medical care.

Bitterness alienates and hurts the ones who love us. Bitterness destroys relationships. David is suffering from this pain as much, if not more, than I am. We are partners in this. Why would I want to add bitterness to his life?

So, how do I deal with bitterness? First, I need to remember that I am not exempt from this world's problems. I will experience everything that sin brought into this world and that Satan, and all his evil henchmen, will design for me.

**John 16:33 (NIV)**

**“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

**I Peter 5:8-9 (NIV)**

**Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.**

My only real choice in the matter of pain is to determine whether I will deal with pain alone, or to ask Jesus to be my Savior, Shepherd, Guide, Great Physician, and best Friend as I journey through it. Since I have chosen to let Jesus guide me through pain, here are some sweet Scriptures that assure me that I am not alone in dealing with life's problems.

**Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)**

**Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.'**

**Lamentations 3:19-23 (NIV)**

**I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

**Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)**

**Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of *our* need.**

Another way I combat bitterness is to focus on all the blessings that God has brought into my life. If I focus on the blessings, then I can't be bitter. I am indeed "Too Blessed to be Stressed."

**John 1:16 (ESV)**

**For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.**

**Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)**

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.**

And finally, I consider it a privilege to be counted worthy to suffer for Jesus. Some followers experience persecution from others because of their faith. I feel chosen to experience pain as a way to represent Jesus to a hurting world. These Scriptures remind me of that honor.

**Philippians 1:29 (NIV)**

**For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,**

**Philippians 3:10 (NIV)**

**I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,**

**1 Peter 2:21 (NASB)**

**For you have been called for this purpose, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you would follow in His steps,**

*Father, keep my heart from bitterness by dealing with anger as it arises and filling my heart with gratitude. Thank You that I have been counted worthy to suffer. You have blessed me every step of the way.*

# *Called to Minister*

If God protected His followers from sickness and suffering and pain, then we couldn't relate to those who suffered. But there's something deeper that I'm trying to express.

Jesus Christ came to earth to show us how to live totally dependent on the Holy Spirit to guide us. He didn't come half-way and shout instructions down to us — no. He came and trudged through the mud with us. He “dwelt among us”. He cried with us, he hurt with us.

I remember reading about the great difference it made when missionaries serving in foreign lands began to quit trying to “change” the native culture and instead, began to adopt it. We learned the hard way in the early 1900's, that building American style churches and saying, “Come!” just didn't work. We had to dwell with the natives. The most successful missionaries adapted to their people groups, spoke their language, wore their clothes, ate their food, sang their music, etc.

I believe that God has called me to minister to my “people group”. I am called to minister to the doctors and nurses and caregivers that I would not otherwise meet. I am called to minister to those around me who are dealing with pain and suffering. I'm not big on joining support groups, but I seem to be a magnet for hurting people. If I allow Him to use me to love people, He will draw others to Himself.

## **II Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV)**

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.**

## **I Peter 3:15 (NIV)**

**... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.**

*Father, use me today to minister wherever You need me. Remind me to keep my eyes on You and not on me. Let me see clearly the needs of those around me. Let me give freely from the comfort You have given me.*

# *Choose Wisely*

Yesterday I made a choice. I decided to be lonely. I had not heard from my kids in a few days. I had not heard from friends in weeks. My husband was busy with a project (actually for my benefit). And I was bored and cranky and lonely. I made a choice to be lonely. I could have picked up the phone and called any of probably 50 people who would have been delighted to talk with me (at least for a few minutes), but I made my choice.

King David wrote about a time when he was the King's son-in-law. God had promised him the throne and anointed him for that position. But it hadn't happened yet, and the current King was determined that it wouldn't. David left the palace and began to live in the crags and rocks and caves of Adullam. He no longer lived in a plush palace or even in a shepherd's tent. He was on the run from King Saul, so probably camped out in a different location each night. Not only was he on the run, but apparently his elderly parents were also in his care. This was not a pleasant time for David. Yet, when I read the Psalms, I see his choices in the words, "I will...."

**Psalm 9:1 (NASB)**

**I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders.**

**Psalm 16:7 (NIV)**

**I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.**

**Psalm 31:7 (NASB)**

**I will rejoice and be glad in Your faithfulness, Because You have seen my misery; You have known the troubles of my soul,**

**Psalm 34:1 (NASB)**

**I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth**

**Psalm 63:4 (NASB)**

**So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.**

**Psalm 71:14 (NIV)**

**As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.**

*Father, remind me to choose wisely. There is little left that I can control — but I can control my will with Your help. Remind me to choose to focus on You and not on pain, to focus on joy and peace and love and praise.*

# *Coming Clean*

In 1996, I was not only wrestling with my own illness, but also the serious illness of my pre-teen daughter. I need to be reminded that I can bring my pain — any pain — to God and He understands.

I prayed. I cried. I spent hours holding her and assuring her that we would get through it together with God's help. But deep down inside I wondered! I didn't know how to make her better and I didn't know how to make me better. We just survived day by day and hour by hour.

One Sunday she felt well enough to attend church and I sent her ahead with her dad and brother while I tried to put myself together. I entered the sanctuary and relaxed thinking that for the first time in several months I would be able to worship and maybe get my heart in a better place. A guest soloist was announced. I was not familiar with the song, but the words I reacted to were, "Lord, You are Righteous and Good!" I got up and walked out.

I got into my car and drove straight home. Since the house was empty, I just threw myself on the living room floor and began to scream with every fiber of my being, "Lord YOU are NOT righteous, and YOU are NOT good! You have allowed my daughter to be sick and that's NOT GOOD! I cannot call You righteous! I will not call You good!" Oh, the torrents that flowed out of me that day. Just me and God and He got an earful of what I thought about Him allowing my precious baby girl to be hurt!

I cried until there were no more tears left. I glanced up at my computer screen to check the time to make sure my family wouldn't catch me lying in the floor losing it. There on my screen was a simple picture of an empty cross and the stormiest sky I've ever seen behind it. And suddenly I knew that God understood what it was like to watch His child suffer. I knew that He was good. I knew that He was righteous. But I also knew that He was proud of me for being honest with Him. Now He could begin to work in and through me to deal with my daughter's illness.

I cannot begin to express what a relief it was to be totally clean before God. There was nothing to hide, nothing to be ashamed of. Here's a URL of a song that reminds me to stay "clean" and honest before God.

Clean Before my Lord <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZY07kyo2Lc>



Here are some Scriptures that help me to remember.

**Psalm 22:24 (NIV)**

**For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.**

**Psalm 51:1-2 (NIV)**

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**

**Psalm 51:10 (NIV)**

**Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**I Peter 5:7 (NIV)**

**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**

When I bottle-up my feelings and anger toward God, I just prevent him from touching the really sore spots. It's like trying to get a splinter out of a five-year-old's finger: the hardest part is getting him to release that finger to you! It's the same way in my relationship with God. Until I open up, and let him into my most painful hurts, He waits for me — never forcing, never prying me open with a crowbar, just simply waiting and loving me until I trust him enough to open the door.

*How good it is when I can come totally clean before You, my God. You know me through and through and nothing escapes your notice. Remind me to not hide or run from my feelings when I'm hurting and not coping well — but to let You embrace me and clean me up.*

# Confusion

On June 14, 2016, God spoke to me in an early morning prayer time and said, “Life as you know it is over.” That’s all. I thought He was taking me to heaven, and I was thrilled. The pain for the past 10 weeks had been almost unbearable. I continued to talk with God and listen while I waited for death— but it didn’t come.

When I woke up later, I felt an electrical tingling all over my body that lasted for 3 days. Everything I touched gave me a static shock. But as the electrical sensation faded, so did the pain. I know I’m dense, but it didn’t dawn on me that God had healed me until several days later. I was so sure He was taking me to Heaven, I think I was a little disappointed! Each day after that, I felt stronger and more able to resume simple tasks. I began to tell my family and close friends that God had healed me.

Nine days later, David took me out for a dinner date. When I stepped out of the car, it felt like I had sprained my ankle. The pain was intense. He helped me into the restaurant, and we spent the entire time trying to figure out what was going on. For 9 days I had been totally pain-free, and now it was back. *What did “Life as you know it is over” mean? What did any of it mean? Why did God heal me — only to bring it back?*

The only resolve we came to at the restaurant was that we wanted to praise Him and serve Him and worship Him the same whether I was in pain or not. I confessed that I had let pain rob me of my joy and I didn’t want that to ever happen again.

At the time, I was being defeated by fellow followers who were accusing me of being the reason God couldn’t heal me. Now I felt a deep spiritual healing — a deep sense of peace. I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I was loved, and that God had a special purpose for my pain — or He wouldn’t allow it. I felt His presence in a new way. I felt power to endure the pain knowing that it was His plan for my life. I knew that He was big enough to remove my pain — yet chose not to.

Verses from Scripture that ministered to me during this time were:

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

**For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

**II Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV)**

... Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I felt that God was saying that He was leaving the pain in order for me to better minister to others in pain. He seemed to be saying that He had a purpose for it that would bring Him glory. I felt His love and absolute assurance that He was trusting me with suffering. While I didn't and will probably never fully understand it this side of Heaven, I rejoice in it.

*Father, remind me that You have a purpose and plan for my pain. This is no accident. You could have healed me long ago or taken me to Heaven. Help me to focus on pleasing You and not focus on the pain. Remind me of the joy only You can bring.*

# *Confusion Continued*

Two weeks after God had spoken and said, “Life as you know it is over,” I had a scheduled visit with my Cardiologist. At my previous appointment I had been told I would need heart valve replacement surgery in the fall. She was shocked. There was no sign of heart failure, and she had the echocardiograms to prove it

I felt confused that God would heal my heart, but not take away my pain. I wanted to understand. He directed me to a strange Scripture.

## **Genesis 37:25-28 (NIV)**

**As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.**

**Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.**

**So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.**

This is a portion of the life of Joseph. Joseph’s brothers threw him into a pit intending to kill him after they had enjoyed their dinner. But God sent a caravan of foreigners who just happened to be traveling to Egypt (the exact place where God needed Joseph to be). God began to show me that He allowed Joseph to be sold as a slave because He knew that He *could* use that for His purpose in Joseph’s life. But He didn’t allow the brothers to kill Joseph — because He *couldn’t* use that to fulfill His purpose.

Now, from Joseph’s point of view — slavery was not exactly a pleasant option — but God used it to reach His goals and plans for him.

Could I possibly trust God to use my pain for some unknown purpose?

**Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)**

**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares he LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

**For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

**Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

There are so many things that I don't understand. So many unanswered questions. But one thing is clear: God is up to something, and my job is to trust Him.

A song that really helped me during this time was “Do I Trust You, Lord?” by Twila Paris (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1VMfQpsvbo>)

*Father, You showed me that You are in control of all the details and that I not only can trust You — but it's vital that I do! You and You alone know what Your purpose is in all this. Remind me to trust You and surrender my life, including my pain, into Your hands once again.*

# *Controlling My Thoughts*

In my younger days, I was a counselor for abused women. After some initial sessions, I would put a brightly colored index card on the floor somewhere in the room. Once my counselee arrived and was seated and greeted, I would tell her that we were going to have a great session — but I had one request. “Don’t look at the card on the floor.” Of course, from that point on — she was totally focused on the card on the floor and couldn’t keep her eyes from looking.

Why did she keep looking at the card? Because that’s the way God designed our brains. Trying to not think about something just causes us to focus on it even more. Old thoughts cannot be eliminated from our minds. The more we focus on eliminating them — the more we focus on them.

So, how do we control our thoughts? By replacing old thoughts with new ones. Paul was way ahead of us when he wrote this advice.

## **Philippians 4:8 (ESV)**

**Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.**

The Apostle Paul (at God’s instruction) knew that focusing on something either in the positive or the negative — would still result in focusing on it. So, lying here saying, “I’m not going to think about my pain” is just as damaging as saying, “I’m going to focus on my pain. I must replace the old thoughts with new ones. I need to fill my brain with something else that will occupy it.

## **Psalms 94:19 (NASB)**

**When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your comfort delights my soul.**

## **II Corinthians 10:5 (NASB)**

**... we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,**

Here are some things that I use to occupy my thoughts when pain seems to be taking over my thoughts.

- Performing in concerts of the past.**
- Vacations we've taken.**
- Praying for my grandchildren.**
- Remembering some names of God.**
- Alphabetically listing characteristics of God.**
- Remembering family reunions and naming all the relatives.**
- Singing hymns and trying to remember the 2<sup>nd</sup> verses!**
- Composing praise lyrics to existing tunes.**
- Quoting Scripture from memory.**
- Imagining being on the beach and feeling the waves.**
- Designing a new dessert and imagining the taste.**
- Naming all my favorite restaurants.**
- Remembering old friends and fun times.**

A few years ago, an interesting study came out about the effects of visualizing the capture of cancer cells as part of chemotherapy. Amazingly, this visualization improved the chemotherapy effectiveness. I have no idea if they still use this technique in cancer centers, but I thought it was an interesting finding.

Just as these patients were taught to visualize the chemicals engaging, capturing and killing the enemy cancer cells — Paul tells us to visualize the capturing of every thought. I mustn't let my mind wander into negative things.

*Father, remind me to keep my mind stayed on You. I want my thoughts to be positive and good and pleasing to You. Help me to not focus on the pain, but to take every thought captive. You are my Creator and can help me remember good things to think about.*

# Depression

Many who suffer from pain will experience depression. In most cases it is not the cause of the pain, but it will make the pain worse and reduce our ability to cope with pain. Therefore, depression is a serious matter that needs to be dealt with.

Depression is caused by a biochemical imbalance in the blood that changes our ability to emotionally and mentally cope. It is treatable and most easily treatable in the early stages. Ignoring depression is not a good idea.

I have experienced clinical depression — meaning that it was severe enough to need medication to correct the chemical imbalance. I did not feel sad or unhappy (which are often symptoms), I was simply too tired and lethargic to do the things that needed to be done. I went to my doctor thinking that my heart was worse. He referred me to a psychiatrist who prescribed medication that helped tremendously.

Much depression is circumstantial and once our circumstances change or we adjust to the new situation, the depression usually lifts. But for those living with chronic pain or deterioration of health, the circumstances are not going to change — so we need to be honest and open with our medical team about what we are experiencing. If they do not inquire about your mental well-being, then you should bring it up.

There are some things you can do to help lift the depression, but you should be talking with your medical team about your mental well-being at every visit. Depression left untreated can lead to death.

Here are some of my favorite depression fighters.

A good laugh! David and I look for things to laugh about. When I've had a good laugh, I feel my mood lift and my pain lessen.

Enjoying God's creation. I can no longer run to the beach, or drive through the woods, or go outside to watch a sunrise or sunset or watch the moon rise, but outside my window I see amazing things. Taking time to appreciate the beauty of God's creation gives my mental health a boost.

Exercise. For those of you who are still able to exercise, it is a wonderful tool to help your brain create the biochemicals it needs to help with depression.

A regular schedule. Keep a set bedtime and rising time, quiet time with God, meal times, and medication schedules. David and I also have set aside 1 p.m. to pray together and sing. We try to get in our therapy pool every day — but that has to be flexible because of the weather. That's okay — it's still a part of our daily schedule. All of these normal activities help my mental health by giving my day a rhythm.



Depression is a normal and expected part of dealing with pain. Talk openly and often about it with your doctor and make sure that they are aware of any changes to your mental health. Some medications make my depression worse, and my doctor needs to be aware of those changes immediately.

Does Scripture say anything about depression?

**Genesis 4:6-7 (NASB)**

**Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why is your face gloomy? If you do well, will *your face* not be cheerful? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”**

Sometimes our depression is related to bad behavior or bad thoughts. When we change, we see immediate improvement.

**I Kings 19:4-8 (NASB)**

**But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree; and he asked for himself to die, and said, “Enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” Then he lay down and fell asleep under a broom tree; but behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, “Arise, eat!” And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a round loaf of bread *baked on hot coals*, and a pitcher of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him, and said, “Arise, eat; because the journey is too long for you.” So he arose and ate and drank ....**

Here we see the Prophet Elijah getting depressed because of exhaustion. I believe that this passage shows God’s compassion toward those of us who become exhausted from dealing with pain.

The entire chapter of Psalm 42 provides comfort for many dealing with depression. It is too long to print here.

**Psalm 69:14-15 (NASB)**

**Rescue me from the mud and do not let me sink; May I be rescued from those who hate me, and from the depths of water. May the flood of water not overflow me Nor the deep swallow me up, Nor the pit close its mouth on me.**

Many, many of the Psalms indicate that King David struggled with depression. I love the analogy to sinking in quicksand that he used here. This is my prayer when I feel myself sinking into depression.

Our first line of defense is prayer. But if God directs you to call your doctor, don't delay. Be obedient.

*Father, some days I feel depressed. I know You understand and care. Remind me to come to You with all my feelings. Help me to be open with my medical care team about my mental health and guide them to know how/if/when to recommend additional help.*

# *Different Beliefs*

Many different powerful prayer warriors prayed over me and for me. Some ministered in wonderful ways, and I would seek them out because being in their presence drew me closer to God.

But I also experienced some in my church who condemned me for not having enough faith to be healed. Some accused me of sin in my life that must be blocking the healing. One even refused fellowship with me because I wouldn't agree with him that Jesus would heal anything that I genuinely requested.

These experiences hurt deeply but they pushed me to seek answers directly from God and His Word. As a result, I am stronger and more comfortable with what I believe about God's healing.

## **Luke 6:27-28 (NIV)**

**“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**

## **Romans 8:28 (NIV)**

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

## **Romans 12:18 (NASB)**

**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people.**

## **Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)**

**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

## **Colossians 3:12-15 (NIV)**

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.**

*Father, You are God of both sides. Don't let me cause divisions in the body. Let me be a peacemaker. You know that these accusations hurt deeply. Use the hurt to remind me not to criticize others. Help me to focus on what You have taught me.*

# *Does God Still Heal?*

What do I REALLY believe about miraculous healings? I discovered in 1992, that deep down, I was a skeptic. But God changed that!

Vacation Bible School started on Monday night, and I was certain that God had called me to help a group of high schoolers meet Him in a new way. I was so excited.

Then on Sunday, I fell and twisted my knee. It swelled to twice the size and turned horrid colors. I had never experienced such pain and wondered if instead of teaching VBS, I would be in emergency surgery.

I cried out to God and in the middle of my wailing and tears, God finally got my attention. Now, you heard me state that I was a skeptic concerning miraculous healing. I wasn't sure what I believed, but I leaned more toward skepticism than belief. I definitely heard Him saying, "Why don't you ask me to heal you?" Then He led me to this Scripture.

**Psalm 27:8 (KJV)**

**"When Thou saidst, Seek my face, my heart said unto Thee,  
Thy face, O Lord, will I seek."**

Now that's just a fancy way of saying, "If God tells you to ask Him for something — then ask Him!" So, I did.

When I got out of bed on Monday morning — there was no evidence of a sprain — no discoloration, no swelling, no pain. God had totally healed my knee — miraculously.

*Thank You, Father, for giving me absolute proof of Your power and ability to heal in our present day. Help me to remember that I can trust Your competent Hands.*

# *Dread*

Preserve me from the dread of my enemy. It's a quote from King David that to me means that sometimes the dread of pain is often worse than the pain itself.

**Psalm 64:1 (NASB)**

**Hear my voice, God, in my complaint; Protect my life from dread of the enemy.**

I am amazed that Satan can ruin a perfectly wonderful almost pain-free day, by reminding me that it's only temporary. He has a way of reminding me that I'm getting worse and hard days are ahead. Sometimes, the good days are almost harder than the bad days! Why? Because I know how precious and rare a good day is, and I try so hard to use it wisely.

Staying in the present is a popular phrase right now. I did a mindfulness training class years ago that helped me focus on the present. One exercise we did in the class was simply eating a raisin. They gave us a single raisin and asked us to put it in our mouths but to take at least 10 minutes before we swallowed it. We tasted it, felt its texture with our tongue, felt it soften and swell in our mouths, etc. It was an interesting experiment. Its purpose was to help us to appreciate the present without rushing past it in our haste to get to the next thing. I still use the memory of that experience to help me to enjoy the present and concentrate on pleasant things.

I want to completely appreciate and embrace the good days.

These Scriptures help me to enjoy the present and place the future in God's hands.

**Matthew 6:34 (NIV)**

**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.**

**II Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)**

**Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

Psalm 118:24 (ESV)

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

*Father, when I have a time that is relatively pain-free, help me to praise You and focus on Your blessings. Preserve me from the dread of what tomorrow or the next hour might bring. Help me not to overdo but help me not to under enjoy this time. Guide me carefully and show me how to spend each second wisely.*

# Duplicity

Duplicity. What is it? It is not the same as hypocrisy. It is being double-minded.

Last night I was thinking two completely different thoughts — *I've got to find help for this pain. I've got to find the right medication. I've got to find the right doctor. I've got to get this figured out.* At the same time, I was humming, "Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus." Don't be double-minded.

## **II Chronicles 16:12 (ESV)**

**In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians.**

When I was able to confess these thoughts, God met me, forgave me, and let my body relax in Him.

Now, I am not against doctors. They have helped me tremendously during the past 60 plus years of pain. I've had some really great doctors. But my first and foremost doctor is my Creator. I need to seek His face at all times. He will guide me and instruct me in the way I should go.

## **Psalm 32:8 (NIV)**

**I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.**

## **Psalm 121:1-3 (NASB)**

**I will raise my eyes to the mountains; From where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who watches over you will not slumber.**

Early that morning, He began to show me ways that I could improve things without medications or doctors. He showed me that the angle of my neck on the couch was all wrong and could be making the vertigo worse. David rearranged the cushions and added pillows and padding to make a better surface for me — and I began to feel better immediately. With God you don't have to wait for an appointment! Our God stands ready to help when we cry out to Him and don't have a duplicitous heart.



Oh, how I love the Creator of my Heart. He knows that I so quickly slip into a position of unbelief. I forget that I have an Abba who loves me.

*Father, forgive me when I mentally scurry around trying to find solutions without consulting You. You are my Great Physician and my Creator. Who better to ask? Remind me that You are available 24 x 7 and have solutions that comfort and soothe. Help me turn to You first for instruction.*

# *Emotional Fragility*

Pain has a way of stripping away my emotional strength and leaving me feeling helpless, dependent, and fragile. I don't cope well — with anything! I feel like an infant. I want my husband to be 100% totally focused on me and my emotional needs. There is nothing pretty about emotional fragility.

There is very little that I can do to meet my physical needs. I am very dependent on others to provide for me. But putting the responsibility of my emotional well-being on top of that is a recipe for disaster.

So, what do I do when I'm feeling fragile and emotionally unstable? I go to the Rock that never fails. If I go to anyone else, I put an unbearable burden on them that God never intended.

Oswald Chambers writes in [My Utmost for His Highest](#),

*When once we get intimate with Jesus we are never lonely, we never need sympathy, we can pour out all the time without being pathetic. The saint who is intimate with Jesus will never leave impressions of himself, but only the impression that Jesus is having unhindered way, because the last abyss of his nature has been satisfied by Jesus. The only impression left is that of the strong calm sanity that our Lord gives to those who are intimate with Him.*

Here are some Scriptures that helps me know that even though I'm fragile — He's not.

**Psalm 3:3 (NASB)**

**But You, LORD, are a shield around me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.**

**Psalm 18:1-2 (NASB)**

**"I love You, LORD, my strength." The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my savior, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

**Psalm 18:18 (KJV)**

**... the LORD was my stay.**

**Psalm 73:26 (NIV)**

**My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

**Proverbs 18:10 (NASB)**

**The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.**

**Isaiah 40:29 (NIV)**

**He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.**

**Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)**

**Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.'**

**Isaiah 46:4 (NIV)**

**.... I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.**

*Father, You know that pain makes me feel fragile and childish. Remind me to run quickly to You and let You be my all-in-all, the air I breathe, and the song I sing. Fill me up to overflowing with You so that I don't become an emotional burden on others.*

# *Entitlement*

Yesterday was a bummer! And that's putting it mildly. When I examined the source, I came up with the word "entitlement". I somehow got it into my head that pain entitles me to be rude, mean, critical, hateful, demanding, etc. **It doesn't.**

That kind of behavior just opens the door for Satan to put David and I at odds, sustain emotional injuries, and hurts, and strains our caregiving/receiving relationship. The attack begins with Satan's suggestions of entitlement, then leads to destruction and chaos, making us more and more vulnerable to Satan's continuing attack. In other words, it leads to a vicious cycle of hurt.

Jesus warned His followers to not fall for the entitlement lie by modeling it.

## **Matthew 20:28 (NASB)**

**Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."**

Jesus taught that He didn't come to be served, but to serve. If anyone deserved to be entitled, He did. Yet He chose to keep His eyes on the needs of others.

## **John 13:3-5 (NASB)**

**Jesus, knowing that the Father had handed all things over to Him, and that He had come forth from God and was going *back* to God, got up from supper and laid His outer garments *aside*; and He took a towel and tied it around Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began washing the disciples' feet and wiping them with the towel which He had tied around Himself.**

I love the way John sets this up. Jesus, knowing that He was Lord of Lords and King of Kings — took a towel and began to serve His disciples. Wow! He really deserved to be worshipped yet chose to serve others.

## **John 14:1 (NASB)**

**Do not let your heart be troubled.....**

These words were spoken by Jesus as He was telling His disciples the kind of death that He would endure. But instead of crying and expecting them to minister to Him, He turned and ministered to their needs. He put others' needs first.

**Luke 23:28 (NASB)**

**But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.**

Here we see that Jesus had suffered and been tortured all night, scourged to the point of death, and was, at the moment, struggling to carry the cross. Yet, He stopped to minister to a group of women and warn them of the coming destruction of Jerusalem that would happen in about 30 years. He set His own pain aside to minister to others.

**Luke 23:42-43 (NASB)**

**... “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”**

And finally, we see Him in excruciating pain — so far above any pain I've experienced — yet making the effort to care for the soul of another.

If I'm going to follow Jesus — then I need to be very careful about the suggestions that Satan puts in my ears. If Jesus didn't play the entitlement card, then I must reject it, too.

*O Father, forgive me when I get my eyes on me, my pain, and my needs. Remind me of the model You have given me to keep my eyes on the needs of others. Remind me to look around me and minister in Your Name and in Your strength.*

# *Exceeding the Limits*

I need to remember a very painful time that continues to pop up every now and then.

When I feel better, I overdo. Then I get in too much pain to function and feel terrible because I know that I caused it. I spend days or weeks or months in bed recuperating. Then I feel better, so I overdo. A vicious cycle begins that seems to have no “out”.

Back in California, I knew without a shadow of a doubt that God had called me to care for people. I love counseling. I love Bible teaching. I love serving my Lord and His people. I truly believed that because I was God’s servant, therefore, He would only give me assignments that were good and best for me.

These are some Scriptures that guided me.

**II Corinthians 9:8 (TLB)**

**God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more so that there will not only be enough for your own needs but plenty left over to give joyfully to others.**

**Philippians 4:19 (NASB)**

**And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**

As I would splat flat on my face, again and again, I knew that God was trying to show me something — but what?

I call myself God’s servant, but am I really tuned enough to know what He desires of me? How lazy I become in my diligence to listen and know for sure what He is calling me to do — especially if it’s something I don’t want to do or something that I really enjoy doing. Many times, I say I am serving God, but I am setting my own agenda and schedule.

It was another song that helped me to see that I might be confusing God’s call with my own desires. “Lead the Way” by Ken Medema (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeZyjJp7WzE>) gave me some things to think about.

The last verse is:

*There's no way in this world that I can do everything that love means for me to do. But as long as morning breaks another day, Lord, I'm yours. I will follow. Lead the way.*

Yes, God promises to provide me with everything that I need to accomplish everything that He's called me to do. But He hasn't called me to do everything that my heart wants to do or that my eyes see needs to be done. And I must be careful.

I admitted that a lot of the things I was doing were because I felt they needed to be done; or because they were just fun for me; or because they satisfied my desire to be needed and useful. But I found very few ministries that I could honestly say, "God called me to do this — therefore, I can do it without worrying about it harming my health.

*Father, You know me. You know my limitations. You know the desires of my heart. Remind me to take the time to submit my plans to You and let You guide me to Yours!*

# *Facing Death*

At the age of 25, I had my first stroke, and soon after, took time off work to spend with my best friend who died of colon cancer at the age of 28. We spent three months studying God's Word together and determining what we believed about death.

God formed in my friend and me a solid belief in Heaven and His good plan. We came to realize that without earthly death, we could never experience that amazing, eternal life that He has prepared for us.

Seeing death up close was one of the best tools God has given me for facing pain. It's like driving a beaten-up, broken-down junk of a car that you hope will get you to your destination. But when you arrive, you discover a luxury sedan with all the bells and whistles waiting for you.

I love the song that says that one day I'll wake up and realize that I'm not homesick anymore— 'cause I'll be home. (BJ Thomas, Home Where I Belong)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlwon4AQJL4>)

Because I have made the decision to be a follower of Jesus, one of these days my physical BODY will be separated from my SELF (the real me) and the Holy Spirit will carry me to Heaven. Yes, my physical BODY will die — but my SELF will live eternally, forever, with a new BODY.

In Revelation 21:4 God says that when I arrive in Heaven, He will wipe away every tear and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

These verses encourage me.

## **John 14:1-3 (NIV)**

**“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**



**II Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)**

**Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

*Father, remind me to enjoy this day by imagining what Heaven will be like with You. Pain is only temporary and will pass. You promise to take me to a much better place. Fill me with joy and anticipation of that glorious day!*

# *Fatalizing*

I am guilty of fatalizing. It's a very real problem for those of us dealing with pain. The doctor says the hip has further deteriorated and all-of-a-sudden my mind is dealing with hip-replacment, then complications from hip-replacement, then probably a stroke or permanent problems from the surgery, then years and years of confinement. I don't even hear him say that it's not bad enough to talk about surgery — my mind is off and running.

I often take what the doctor says and start picking out caskets and planning the funeral. Paul says to take those thoughts captive. Get out the lasso and capture them, reign them in. Sometimes just acknowledging that I'm guilty helps to stop the cascading thoughts, but other times I need to talk it through with David, or a friend, or my medical team.

**Psalm 118:24 (NASB)**

**This is the day which the LORD has made; Let's rejoice and be glad in it.**

**John 14:27 (NASB)**

**Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor fearful.**

**Romans 8:5-6 (ESV)**

**For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.**

I'm grateful that David understands my "Eeyore" tendencies and can give me a better perspective. It really helps when he can go with me to doctor's appointments. Then afterward, we can discuss what was said. Sitting increases my pain which decreases my ability to think clearly. I need someone to help me process what the doctor says.

*Father, help me to set my mind on You and not fret about things getting worse. Help me to stay in the present and celebrate today. Remind me to listen carefully and ask good questions so that I don't fatalize.*

# *Finding Purpose*

Having purpose is so essential to coping with pain. I find purpose in writing and teaching. I wrote a workbook for my grandson on the Gospel of Luke. But soon I knew I had only scratched the surface of what God had really asked me to do.

Using the Harmony of the Gospels, I began writing a comprehensive study of the life of Jesus as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I called it The New Way and gave it to my granddaughter for her birthday. I set it up in the same workbook style and once again began working day and night to complete it. I could only type a few sentences before I become too tired or in too much pain to continue, but day after day I worked to complete it. Since I couldn't sleep very long because of pain, I often wrote at strange hours and just napped when I could. My whole existence revolved around writing what God was teaching me from His Word. I learned so much that I had never understood before. I could hardly wait to move to the living room and see what new things He would show me.

Soon David and I felt God leading us to prepare The New Way as an on-line Bible study for those who might never have studied God's Word. How rewarding it was to be teaching God's Word to people I had never met!

These Scriptures encourage me.

**Isaiah 40:8 (NASB)**

**The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.**

**Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)**

**Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.'**

**Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)**

**Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

**Colossians 3:16 (NASB)**

**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another....**

**II Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)**

**All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.**

**Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)**

**For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**

*What a wonderful God You are. Even when I am old and gray and crippled and by the world's standards — done, You still have a purpose for me! Remind me to focus on the purpose and not the pain.*

# *God Knows the Plan*

I love this teaching from Samuel Rutherford. It really blesses me as I deal with my own pain and with the pain of those I love. I like to read the entire letter at the following URL. <https://www.puritanboard.com/threads/christ-is-no-idle-husbandman.94081/>

I have this one section of the letter posted on my prayer room wall reminding me to not be afraid of God's plans for my life.

*Why should I tremble at the plough of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know that He is no idle Husbandman, He purposeth a crop.*

Note that Husbandman, which is an old-fashioned word for farmer is capitalized because it is referring to God.

I was raised on a cotton and soybean farm in Arkansas. One year we had a lot of dust storms that were covering over the fertile topsoil. Daddy used a breaking plow at a depth that he had never attempted before. The danger was that it would destroy the top fertile soil and cover it with unusable deeper dirt. The advantage was that if he could judge the exact right depth, he could bring the topsoil back to the top and cover over the sand that had accumulated. So, it was a high-risk operation. I remember watching as Daddy weighted the plow so that it would cut very deeply into the soil. I remember thinking that the earth looked like it was bleeding. But I also remember at harvest time, Daddy's fields yielded abundant crops.

Learning to release myself and my loved ones into God's care is essential. Understanding **why** it is safe to release to Him is vital. He is Omniscient. (He knows everything — past, present and future). This is no experiment like it was with my earthly daddy. God already knows His intended purpose and exactly how it will turn out.

## **Deuteronomy 33:12 (NASB)**

**... "May the beloved of the LORD live in security beside Him Who shields him all the day long, And he lives between His shoulders."**

## **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

**For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

Romans 5:3-4 (NIV)

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

*Father, thank You for patiently pursuing me. You know that the pain is not pleasant. and I often don't understand what You are trying to accomplish. But help me to not lose sight of the fact that You do! Remind me to trust You even when I don't understand.*

# God's Timing

I had been taught that at the end of the New Testament, the miraculous healings stopped. I no longer believe that's true. I believe we've just changed our expectations.

The same God who healed Miriam in the Old Testament is the same God I serve today. The problem is that healing has ALWAYS been used by God for a specific purpose and not just to relieve sickness or pain — and I mustn't get confused on that.

Satan convinces us that if we get a paper cut, God should just be a vending machine that heals it. When He doesn't, we feel confused and scared and wonder whether God even exists. Remember, Satan has a purpose, too. He wants me to doubt God's love and care.

God is in control. He is good. And He knows what is best. I must remember that God does everything with a purpose and direction in mind. I must trust Him.

Jesus spoke this to the Pharisees.

## **John 5:19 (NIV)**

**...“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.**

In other words, even Jesus allowed God to make the decisions as to who to heal and when. That's outside my realm of expertise. God knows what is best.

It's hard to wrestle through these thoughts. Healing may come immediately, but it may not happen until I arrive in Heaven or any time in between. But He *will* heal me — He promises! Leaving the timing up to him — that's the tough part.

## **Luke 22:42 (NIV)**

**“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”**



**James 4:13-15 (NIV)**

**Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”**

*Father, remind me that You will heal me someday. Help me to relax and let You be the Great Physician who knows what is best for me. Thy will be done.*

# *Insomnia*

There are many nights when my body is just unable to sleep. Sometimes it's from pain, others from medication, and others because I'm just not tired, or I have a project on my mind. Sometimes when I pray and ask God if I should continue to try to sleep or just get up and be productive, He encourages me to use my time wisely.

I move to the living room, turn on the lights, get a glass of milk, and get busy writing, editing, researching, and studying Scripture, or worshiping.

I sometimes listen to podcasts or read e-books. I like to catch up on e-mail. I like to read the poetry of Annie Flint. Because she was a woman of great faith and lived with constant chronic pain, her poetry often reflects what I'm feeling. That URL is [https://www.preceptaustin.org/annies\\_poems](https://www.preceptaustin.org/annies_poems)

Sometimes I turn on my praise music and sing along. Sometimes after an hour or two of activity, I can return to my bed ready for sleep. Sometimes, I work all night. But how rested and refreshed I feel the next day is NOT dependent on how much sleep I get. It is totally dependent on my attitude toward God's provision of rest. Some of my best days come after I've been awake all night. I'm trusting that God will provide everything that I need to accomplish everything that He's called me to do.

## **II Corinthians 9:8 (NIV)**

**And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

## **Philippians 4:19 (NIV)**

**And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

*Father, help me to face this day refreshed and filled with confidence that You will supply everything that I need for the requirements of the day. Help me to praise You and honor You by not complaining or fretting about "no sleep." Help me to praise You for the time well spent with You.*

# *Keep a Weapon Handy*

Sometimes, and usually when I least suspect it, negative thoughts invade my brain. Many years ago, I discovered that I needed to keep a weapon handy that I could use to stop the thought immediately.

I remembered being taught as a child to “Stop, Drop, and Roll” if our clothing caught on fire. Our teachers and parents drilled it into us. I knew I needed something similar that I could do automatically without question and without too much thought to immediately defeat Satan’s attack. What I found was an old song by Twila Parris. It’s simply called “Praise Him” and here’s the URL.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIVV-0-0ITE>

When I realize that a negative thought is in my head — I simply begin singing, humming or whistling this song. It has become a firm habit and it works!

Some people choose a small portion of Scripture, a song, a poem, or even just a thought like “God is good”. The world calls it a mantra. I call it my weapon against Satan’s attacks or more literally — it’s the baseball bat that I keep with me at all times to whack him!

Will Satan ever give up trying? Nope — not until I’m in Heaven. But in the meantime, I make sure my weapon is handy. I’ll probably need it before the day it through!

**II Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)**

**We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,**

**II Thessalonians 3:3 (NASB)**

**But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.**

*Father, thank You for giving me a weapon to quickly defend myself from Satan's attacks and remind me to quickly run to You. Thank you for guiding me to be prepared mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.*

# *Know What You Believe About Eternity*

Helen Keller, who was born both blind and deaf, said that you are not prepared to live until you are prepared to die. Developing my belief system concerning death was important because it freed me to live fully, but it also helps me deal with pain.

**Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)**

**.... And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Jesus was able to endure the cross and all the preceding torture because He kept his eyes on the goal. My goal as a Jesus follower is to spend all eternity in Heaven with Him. Some days that's all I can hold onto when the pain is overwhelming. I know that one day God will call me home and I will never feel pain again.

I believe that knowing what I believe about death and eternal life gives me an advantage over pain. I have chosen to follow Jesus and He provides me with all the tools I'll need to look to the future with confidence and assurance.

*Father, remind me of Your promises of life everlasting with You because of Jesus' payment for my sins. Help me to keep my eyes on You. Give me victory over this pain so that You will be glorified. Remind me to not lose sight of Heaven.*

# *Loneliness*

There is a unique loneliness that comes with pain. I am afraid if I talk about it, then people will move away from me — won't want to be around me. I know it's not just my imagination; I've seen it happen to others who are diagnosed with a chronic or fatal disease. Friends drop like flies.

But even with a few, faithful, amazing friends there is still a feeling of loneliness and a part of myself that they will never quite understand or experience — and I wouldn't want them to!

There's a loneliness in having an invisible disease. I look pretty good if you visit or talk on the phone with me. I can keep up a good front for a few hours — but it's just a mask, a cover up. It's hiding the real stuff. My friends and even close family often don't understand the effort it takes to sit up, or talk, or hold a phone, or even smile.

There's a loneliness in having a rare disease. My own doctor doesn't even know all the things that I deal with on a daily basis.

Lately, as the pain has increased, I've discovered that my husband is struggling with my level of suffering and that has created one of the loneliest feelings yet. I would do anything to shelter him from my pain.

Laura Story wrote a song called "Blessings." Here's the URL.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQan9L3yXjc>

The words that especially speak to me are:

*What if my greatest disappointments or the aching of this life is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy?*

These Scriptures help me get my head on straight.

**Psalm 91:4 (NIV)**  
**He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge....**

**Psalm 139:1-12 (NIV)**

**You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.**

**You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.**

**Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.**

**Isaiah 40:11 (KJV)**

**He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom....**

**Isaiah 49:15 (NIV)**

**"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!**

**Luke 12:7 (NASB)**

**But even the hairs of your head are all counted....**

*Father, when I am being attacked by loneliness help me to remember that You are always here with me. And, in fact, it is the loneliness of pain that has driven me to such an intimate relationship with You. Remind me to look up and rejoice in Your great love for me.*

# *Long Nights*

Pain causes me to need to move approximately every 15 minutes all night long so that my muscles don't begin to cramp and spasm. Other nights, I must stay in my living room bed to elevate my head and prevent acid reflux. Still other nights my body is reacting to an increase or decrease in medication and my brain is in hyperdrive. Very seldom do I get what is called a "good night's sleep."

But I have learned that not sleeping is not the same as God not providing rest. It is amazing how well I can function without sleep if I've spent my time well, instead of fretting.

I've read up on all the current tips for getting good sleep and I use a lot of over-the-counter pain patches, creams and gels for pain, eye covers to make the room darker, sound makers for gray noise, etc. But my best efforts don't compare with prayer.

One of the first questions I ask Jesus is whether I should be trying to go to sleep, or whether I should move to the living room bed and try to be productive.

Often, He encourages me to be still and let Him hold me. If I can stay in bed, it's better for me physically. Sometimes, I cry softly in his arms because it helps me to relax. Sometimes, I visualize being on stage and singing worship music to Him. Sometimes I try to remember Scriptures that encourage me. Sometimes I pray for family and friends. But one of the best ways to fall asleep in His arms is to just be still and let Him guide me to relax. I imagine His gentle soothing voice saying, "Be still, little one, I'm right here."

**Psalm 46:10 (NIV)**

**He says, "Be still, and know that I am God...."**

**Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)**

**The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; ....**

But there are nights when even after hours of trying, I can't find the switch to turn off my brain and make my body lay still. So, I move to my living room bed. Again, I ask God the question: Should I try to sleep, or should I be productive?



If I feel that God is leading me to try to sleep, then I keep the lights off and spend time getting comfortable — making sure I've got the right blankets and pillows and position. Then I begin worshiping again — only this time, I can do it out loud. I sing quiet hymns or praise songs. I may cry quietly. Or I may talk aloud to Him. We have a lot of good conversations in the wee hours of the night.

I've found some quiet instrumental music that will help me fall asleep knowing that my Shepherd is holding me close to His heart and rocking me in His arms. The URL for my sleeping music is:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7sRf6bKywBfVEhNPT3Vpm6qryL1BL4fD>

I sometimes listen to podcasts or e-books. I've found that new ones keep me awake, while old familiar ones work best to put me to sleep.

I sometimes listen to Scripture being read

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>

One of the keys that I have learned is this: **How rested I feel when I wake up is more dependent on my attitude than on how much sleep I've gotten.**

If I'm waking up every 15 minutes — then I try to be grateful for those precious 15 minutes and not fret. If I get a whole hour — then I thank Him and continue in a spirit of worship hoping that I can fall asleep again.

**Psalm 62:1-2 (NIV)**

**Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.  
Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will  
never be shaken.**

**II Corinthians 9:8 (NIV)**

**And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things  
at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every  
good work.**

**Philippians 4:19 (NASB)**

**And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches  
in glory in Christ Jesus.**

*Father, You are sufficient for me. You will provide everything I need — including rest. You designed me and know my needs better than I do. Remind me to trust You instead of fretting when my body refuses to relax and sleep. Help me to trust Your provision for me.*

# *Make a Pain Plan*

When we lived in California, we had an earthquake preparedness kit. Now that we live in Florida, we keep hurricane supplies. I now have a Pain Plan.

Not every day is at the same level of pain. So, in order to give David an indication of how much help I will need, we simply designate “A days” and “B days”. On an “A day”, I can pretty well take care of my personal needs and will only need him to prepare meals and come if I need help with something. But if it’s a “B day,” he knows that I will need him to help me with dressing, grooming, eating, as well as emotional support. I will need him to be more attentive and more patient with me. It has helped us to have a way of communicating the level of care that I need.

When David was full-time employed and I was pretty much on my own, “B days” meant either convenience foods or take out instead of being on my feet cooking. They were not days to tackle cleaning or yardwork. A friend of mine keeps a stash of ice cream, but only allows it on “B” days. She says it’s her way of helping herself cope with the hard days.

Now on “B days” I usually am unable to type, so I have music available, podcasts and audio books. I have pre-recorded television shows that I enjoy. I sometimes enjoy hearing the Bible read aloud to me. I’ve covered these separately, but it’s important that I have them available and accessible so that when the pain hits suddenly, I know what I can do to hold my mind steady and not give in to the pain.

Before my pain became so limiting and I was still able to sit and study God’s Word, my favorite place to go was the Psalms. I started highlighting promises that helped me stay my mind on Jesus and truly worship. Then, when I was having a bad day, I could flip through the Psalms and read just the highlighted portions. That helped so much.

Someday I hope to get all those verses entered into my computer so that I can run quickly to the Psalms that speak to my heart and calm me during the storm of pain. Once the pain hits hard, I don’t have the brain power to look up favorite Scriptures.

## **Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV)**

**“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

David has posted a white board with this verse on it. It hangs near my living room bed. It’s not fancy, but oh, how I have leaned on that verse from God’s Word to get me through hard times.

Just a quick note: Throughout the Psalms, King David talks about his enemies. Pain is my enemy and every time I see the word “enemy”, I just replace it with the word “pain”. So, this verse says to me, “Don’t be terrified because of pain...”

Another thing I use is a “Have You Tried This?” list. Pain tends to paralyze my brain. Some of the things on my list include:

Have you tried ice packs?  
Have you tried a heating pad?  
Do you want to hear Scripture read aloud?  
Would a warm bath feel good?  
Would gentle stretches help or hurt?  
Do you want to be distracted with a movie or TV show?  
Do you want a podcast or audio book?  
Do you need to rearrange the pillows?  
Do you need more blankets or less?  
Are you low on liquids, salt or sugar?  
Would chocolate help? (always!)  
Do you need a hug or gentle touch?  
Have you tried over-the-counter creams and patches?  
Do you want music? Quiet and relaxing or loud and boisterous?

**Psalm 32:8 (NASB)**

**I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will advise you with My eye upon you.**

**Psalm 46:1-3 (NASB)**

**God is our refuge and strength, A very ready help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth shakes And the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; Though its waters roar *and* foam, Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.**

**Isaiah 30:21 (NASB)**

**Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.**

**Isaiah 41:13 (NASB)**

**For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand, Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’**

When pain hits hard, I may need to change positions and/or activities every few minutes until I find something that will allow some respite. Having a plan keeps me one step ahead of the pain and less likely to get stuck.

*Father, remind me that You will carry me through the hard times. Help me to cry out to You and let You hold me. You know what will help and what won't. Give me wisdom and guide me. Help me to trust You to supply all my needs.*

# *Manipulation*

Manipulation is anything I do or say to make others see me differently than I really am.

I am amazed at the amount of manipulation that Satan tempts me to use. A dear friend of mine says that she deliberately manipulates her doctor. If she dresses nice, wears makeup and jewelry, he immediately assumes she is okay — even when she is not. So, she makes sure to not wear make-up, leaves off the bling-bling, and dresses in sweatsuits or comfort clothes. She says it is amazing the difference in his response. Is this wrong? Or is it just being honest?

For a couple of years, I saw my son and his family so rarely, that I hid the truth from them. I dressed nice, continued to cook, sat up to play games, hugged them and sent them on their way. Then I would suffer for weeks trying to recover from the damage.

But I'm guilty of the flip side, too. When I have had visitors and needed to transfer, I required more help from David. I slumped a little lower in the wheelchair, I drug my feet a little more than necessary. I needed more assistance. I've also noticed that I groan a little louder when I'm in pain and feel that David is not being as attentive as I desire.

What is this? The Bible calls it lying.

Whether we are manipulating others to pity us, or to think we are stronger than we are — it's still dishonest.

These Scriptures help me to be transparent and honest regarding my pain.

**I Chronicles 29:17 (NIV)**

**I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity....**

**Proverbs 6:16-19 (NIV)**

**There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.**

**Proverbs 10:9 (ESV)**

**Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.**

**Proverbs 12:22 (NIV)**

**The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.**

**II Corinthians 8:21 (ESV)**

**For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man.**

**Ephesians 4:25 (NIV)**

**Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.**

**Colossians 3:9 (NIV)**

**Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices**

*Father, remind me to be honest about my pain. It's so tempting to cover it over and it's equally tempting to exaggerate it. Please help me to be transparent and open so that You may be glorified.*

# *Medication versus Faith-Walking*

Should I take medication or should I faith-walk? I believe that God expects me to do both!

## **Romans 14:23 (NASB)**

**But the one who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.**

It is my job to pray about it and listen carefully for a “check” from the Holy Spirit. God will guide me if I let Him.

In both the Old and New Testaments, medication (of the time period) was mentioned positively.

## **II Kings 20:7 (NIV)**

**Then Isaiah said, “Prepare a poultice of figs.” They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.**

## **I Timothy 5:23 (NIV)**

**Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.**

This old joke has been told a thousand different ways, but it helps me to remember an important truth.

*A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help. Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, "Jump in, I can save you."*

*The stranded fellow shouted back, "No, it's OK, I'm praying to God and He is going to save me." So the rowboat went on.*

*Then a motorboat came by. "The fellow in the motorboat shouted, "Jump in, I can save you."*

*To this the stranded man said, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and He is going to save me. I have faith." So the motorboat went on.*



*Then a helicopter came by and the pilot shouted down, "Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety."*

*To this the stranded man again replied, "No thanks, I'm praying to God and He is going to save me. I have faith." So the helicopter reluctantly flew away.*

*Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, "I had faith in you but you didn't save me, you let me drown. I don't understand why!"*

*To this God replied, "I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more did you expect?"*

These Scriptures help me when I'm considering a new medication or procedure.

**John 9:6 (NIV)**

**After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.**

**Acts 10:15 (NIV)**

**The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."**

**I Corinthians 8:8 (NASB)**

**Now food will not bring us close to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat.**

Everything in the world belongs to God! I can relax and know that there is nothing forbidden to a follower of Jesus except disobedience.

Jesus most often healed by touching the person, or by simply speaking a word. But in John 9:6 He used dirt! I serve a God who can use anything to accomplish anything He wants to accomplish.

Yes, I need to pray for clear direction, but unless the Holy Spirit tells me, "No", then I can let God send whatever rowboat He wants to use to help or heal me. I serve an awesome God.

*Father, help me not to fret about displeasing You by using the resources You send. That's just a lie from Satan. Instead remind me to receive Your provision for me with a grateful heart. But remind me to check with You first and not be deceived by Satan's lies.*

# Music

I can no longer perform concerts or even get into a proper position for singing correctly — but that doesn't mean that I can't sing! David and I have set aside 1 pm each day as a time for us to sing. We usually pray for a few minutes and then sing a couple of songs together. It's amazing how God speaks to my heart through the old hymns. It's also amazing how much it helps me forget the pain. Focusing on the words, the music, the blend with David, and letting my heart just freely worship allows my body to relax.

My son encouraged me to listen to some YouTube videos of his church's praise team. He sent me the URL's and David showed me how to set up a play list. What a blessing!

I'm not like people who love music as a background. I want to listen to each word and experience the music fully. I appreciate all the harmonies and intricacies of the music — so once again, it's a way to focus my full attention and let my body relax.

So, now I've created multiple play lists on YouTube. I have some for sleepless nights, others for deep pain, but most are just a mixture of songs that encourage and bless me.

Here's the URL for a few of my favorites.

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7sRf6bKywBd4uqlxmDYt1\\_TufZuX0tOY](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7sRf6bKywBd4uqlxmDYt1_TufZuX0tOY)

King David apparently knew the value of singing and making music to relieve his stress, pain, and frustrations. Here's some of the Scriptures that he wrote.

**Psalm 7:17 (NASB)**

**I will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness  
and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High.**

**Psalm 9:2 (ESV)**

**I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name,  
O Most High.**

**Psalm 13:6 (ESV)**

**I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with  
me.**

**Psalm 21:13 (ESV)**

**Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength! We will sing and praise  
Your power.**

**Psalm 27:6 (NASB)**

**And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, and I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.**

**Psalm 59:17 (NIV)**

**You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely.**

*Father, thank you for creating music. Remind me to sing praises to Your holy name and worship even when I hurt. Thank you for the many other musicians who are helping me to keep my mind focused on You. Bless them today.*

# *Negative Thoughts*

I thought I was doing really good with not saying negative things to or about others. Then God took me to a very familiar verse. But this time He showed me something different that I hadn't noticed before.

## **II Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)**

**We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

God was pleased that I wasn't saying negative or hurtful things to others. He was pleased that I was managing with His help to lasso them before they came out of my mouth. But He knew that I was still thinking them. Argh! That was a battle of much greater dimensions.

A long time ago, I read the book, *Lord, Change Me* by Evelyn Christenson and I knew that God wanted to change me from the inside out. It wasn't enough to not say what I was thinking. He wanted to transform my thinking. That's an ongoing battle that I still haven't totally won. And I will win it ONLY with His help. But I've found that the more I praise Him and worship and think about Him, the less negative thoughts I have. And the more I quit thinking negatively, the more generous I am with words of encouragement and gratitude.

It's not easy "becoming" all that God has planned. It's a constant seemingly uphill battle. But I'm so grateful that He designed us to change and become more Christlike until the day we step into Heaven.

A song that encourages me is "One Day"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vD547KDBxks>

This song encourages me to keep changing and growing until the day He calls my name and I enter Heaven. My favorite line is: "I wanna get so close to Him that there's no big change on that day when Jesus calls my name."

These Scriptures remind me to change from the inside out.

**Psalm 19:14 (KJV)**

**Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.**

**Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)**

**For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he ....**

**Matthew 15:18-19 (NASB)**

**But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and those things defile the person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts ....**

**Matthew 23:26 (NASB)**

**You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may also become clean.**

*Father, remind that it's not enough to not say negative and ugly things. I need Your help to not even think them. Keep my thoughts pleasing to You today.*

# *New Problems*

I deal with chronic pain all the time. For the past 20 years there has never been a time when I was not in pain — often excruciating. I have smiled through it, I have ministered through it, I have cared for others through it — but a few months ago, when vertigo hit — I cried and pouted and struggled like it was the end of the world.

Dealing with new problems always provides Satan a toehold to get into my mind.

I'm reminded of a sermon that a former pastor preached. He was talking about how the ocean waves that would scare most people out of the water are what some professional surfers call "the best." How did they get to that point? They weren't born loving the biggest waves. But gradually, and with practice they increased their capacity to handle and actually enjoy the challenge of them.

## **Romans 5:3-4 (NIV)**

**Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.**

## **Romans 15:13 (NASB)**

**Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

## **Philippians 1:6 (NASB)**

***For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.**

## **Philippians 3:13-14 (NASB)**

**Brothers *and sisters*, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of *it yet*; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

## **Hebrews 12:1 (NASB)**

**Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

*Father, it seems that each new problem tangles my feet. Remind me that You have a plan that will result in my growth. Help me remember that You have a purpose in all this pain, and I don't have to fear. Remind me that You are making me spiritually sturdy and resilient.*



# *Praise the Lord for Pain*

In 1972 I read, *Praise the Lord, Anyway* by Frances Hunter. The book challenged me to not only praise the Lord when things were going good — but to praise Him at all times and in all circumstances.

P.T.L.A. became a motto to remind myself that even though I didn't understand the purpose, God could be trusted to turn it to good.

As I deal with pain, I often don't understand the purpose, but I have seen some good come from it.

By being bedfast, obviously I am not running at breakneck speed doing unnecessary, ineffective, and time-consuming ministries. I have the time to really seek God's face and determine whether something is His will.

By being bedfast, I have become aware of ugliness and sin in my life. I believe that God is changing me into a more patient and considerate person.

By being bedfast, I have more time to pray and intercede for others.

By being bedfast, I have more time for worship than I've ever experienced — and it is good.

By being bedfast, I have more time to dig deeply into His Word for my own pleasure and it is changing me and growing me.

By being bedfast, I have more time to focus on what He shows me to write so that it can benefit others.

By being bedfast, we have reexamined our marriage and I have discovered that I am loved more deeply than I could ever comprehend. I am so grateful for this time that we have been forced to work together. It has been humbling and good.

By being bedfast, I have more time to appreciate God's world. My view is more limited, but I am seeing more. Only God can do that!

**Psalm 27:14 (NASB)**

**Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage;**

**Yes, wait for the LORD.**

**Psalm 90:12-17 (ESV)**

**So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.**

**Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV)**

**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”**

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

**Lamentations 3:25 (ESV)**

**The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.**

**Philippians 4:4 (NIV)**

**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!**

**James 5:7-8 (NIV)**

**Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.**

*Father, remind me that while the pain is not pleasant, the results have brought me great joy and pleasure. Remind me to rejoice in Your plan for me today. Thank You for giving me this special time to grow.*

# *Pride*

Why is it so hard to admit that I need a wheelchair, or a walker, or braces, etc.? Because I'm still resisting these things being a part of my identity. My identity needs to be based on who I am as a follower of Jesus — not based on Dale and her strength. I have always been the strong one that everyone else leaned on. I must deal with my pride.

My first attempt to use the wheelchair at church was a catastrophe. One man said, "I saw you last night and you weren't in that — what are you trying to pull?" Most just wanted to know what horrible thing had happened. How could I explain a lifetime of pain? What was I supposed to say, "I gave up!" So, I put the chair aside.

It took several years before I felt comfortable using the wheelchair and it became such a blessing — giving me freedom and independence. I found it much easier to use the wheelchair when we moved to Florida where no one knew the "old" me.

Laying down my pride was hard. These Scriptures help me to surrender.

## **Jeremiah 9:23 (NIV)**

**This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches,"**

## **I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)**

**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

## **Philippians 3:3 (NIV)**

**For it is we who ... serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh.**

## **James 4:10 (NIV)**

**Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

*Father, remind me that these tools are Your provision for me. Forgive me for resisting them. Help me to see that they are assets and very helpful. Remind me to set aside my pride more quickly and accept the help You give me.*

# *Promise of a New Body*

When I get to Heaven, I will get a new body! I am so grateful that God understands my need to have something to look forward to.

The Apostle Paul wrote about this new body.

## **I Corinthians 15:35-44 (NIV)**

**But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body....**

**So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.**

**If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.**

When we plant an acorn — we get an oak tree. When we plant this physical body (in death), we will get a new body that is equally different and far better.

The Apostle Paul called our earthly bodies “perishable”. Perishable means breaking down and becoming unusable like perishable food. It rots and we throw it away. This body wears out, breaks down, gets sick, gets old and stiff, gets covered with scars.

Paul said our new body is imperishable. That means it will never die or wear out or get old or sick or unusable.

Paul described the earthly body as represented by dishonor and weakness. This could refer to blemishes, scars, or flaws. It could refer to crippling conditions that deform or the effects of disease and stress on this earthly body. But it could also be his assessment that this body stinks! Processing food, releasing sweat, bad breath, even the process of healing often involves putrid smells. Other scholars believe that Paul was describing those body parts that we don't want others to see, including our flab or untoned places or our “private” areas.

Paul said the new body will be glorious! I'm looking forward to a glorious bod!

The third description Paul gave is that the earthly body is weak while the new body is powerful.

And the final description is that our earthly body is natural while our heavenly body will be supernatural. Wow! This earthly body has to obey all the earthly laws — like gravity and energy conservation, etc.

As I read about Jesus after his resurrection, I see interesting examples of his supernatural abilities.

**Luke 24:31 (NIV)**

**Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.**

**John 20:19 (NIV)**

**On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”**

*Father, I'm tired of this broken-down body. Fill my imagination with joy today as I think about the new one You have planned for me. Remind me that time on this earth, in this body, is very short.*

# Rebellion

When God began showing me ministries that I needed to resign, I became angry. I was angry that I couldn't do what I wanted to do. I was short-tempered, critical, and self-centered. I blamed everything on my physical pain when I should have been dealing with my spiritual disobedience.

I believe that my anger was the result of outright rebellion against God.

**Psalm 95:6 (NIV)**

**Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;**

I needed to learn to kneel before my Maker. I believe that means to submit to Him, to surrender to Him, to give Him my life. But I think it also includes acknowledging that He IS my maker, and He knows what hurts and what needs extra care and what needs to be rested and what needs to be strengthened. He is MY Maker. He knows what is best for me. Instead, I was running from my Maker — determined to go my own way and do my own thing.

**Psalm 84:11 (NIV)**

**For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.**

**James 4:1-3 (NIV)**

**What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.**

My anger stemmed from God withholding something from me that I wanted badly — the ability to minister the way I wanted to minister. Yet, the way I wanted to minister was destroying me and everyone I loved. God knew what was best for me, but...

I will always treasure a Bible study that was led by my dorm mom in college. Each day for one week we got up early and looked at the very simple first phrase of Psalm 23. It says, “The Lord is my Shepherd”. And each day she put the word “but” after it. Each day we examined our tendency to not want to be shepherded.

Now, I found myself living my life as if I did not have a loving Shepherd to guide me. And that “but” was keeping me from love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control.

I knew I needed to do some re-evaluating of my life, spend more time in prayer and Bible study. I wanted to seek God’s face and really hear what He had to say to me. And He provided the perfect opportunity. I had a severe low back spasm that resulted in pain that could not be worked around. I was flat-of-my-back with nothing to do but face God and do business with Him.

**Romans 8:1 (NASB)**

**Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus.**

**James 1:5 (NIV)**

**If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.**

**1 John 1:9 (NIV)**

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

As I lay in bed week after week wondering what the future held for me, I had to deal with my anger. I knew that I had to become the servant that I claimed to be. I had to surrender to His will and not my own desires. It didn’t lessen the pain — but it did ease the anger.



*Father, the words “outright rebellion” break my heart. Remind me that only one of us can be in charge of my life. I choose to surrender, to submit, because I know that You love me and want only what is best. Please help me to be a good sheep and let You be the Shepherd.*

# Reframing

One of the tools that I used in counseling was called re-framing. It's taken from the art world. A painting or photograph can be placed on a particular mat with a specific frame and it will look a certain way. But you can take that same painting or photograph and change the mat and frame — and it will look entirely different.

Re-framing is very useful especially in dealing with the emotional stuff that comes with pain.

The other day I saw a photograph of my family at Myrtle Beach. I began to cry and say, "I'll never see the ocean again, never play in the waves with my grandkids, never enjoy a vacation away from this bed with my kiddos and their families." My heart was broken and of course the physical pain became worse.

Then I felt that God was asking me to "reframe it". I began to praise Him for all the beaches I've seen and played in. It was quite a lengthy list for a little Arkansas farm girl. My heart was lifted up, and David and I began to talk about some of the fun times we'd had with our kids at beaches. We remembered times we'd had alone on beaches, and wonderful memories came flooding back. My body began to relax, and the pain became bearable.

I can't change the picture. This is God's design for me. But I can change the frame.

## **Psalm 40:1-3 (NIV)**

**I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.**

## **Philippians 4:4 (NIV)**

**Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!**

## **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)**

**Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

*Father, remind me to reframe my thoughts and make them pleasing to You. Give me wisdom to see my life through Your eyes. Fill my heart with gratitude and joy.*

# Respite

The pain won. I was drowning in it. It swirled around me and encompassed me with a ferocity as great as any white-water rapid. It tore at my body and all I could do was sob. I heard myself moaning and tried to stop because I knew it would hurt David but there was no other consciousness except pain. Floods of pain. I gave into it and let it take over. Hour after hour I just focused on the surges — now sharper, now stronger, now lessening, then increasing again as torrent after torrent engulfed me.

There was no sleep. There was no relief. Pain was all I knew. Tears soaking my pillow was my only response. Father, help me. You know pain. Jesus, You understand. Your body was mutilated and tortured for my sins. You know. You understand.

About 2 a.m. I remember turning on my side and readjusting the pillows. The pain was so incredible. Suddenly, I felt God's hand touch my back. I don't remember if He spoke, but I knew it was Him and I felt the warmth of His touch. He touched my neck and my spine felt like playdough in His hands as He reformed each vertebra. He started at the base of my skull and moved quickly down my spine. While I felt as though He touched and re-formed each bone — it was only a few seconds in time. Then He touched my low back where my spine is totally out of alignment, and I felt Him put it back in its proper place. It hurt for just a second — and then I realized that I had no pain. From head to toe, all I felt was peace. It was incredible. It was almost like when you are playing loud music and unexpectedly the electricity turns off and you are in sudden silence. It was startling to feel no pain.

I worshipped. I praised God and He said to sleep. So, I did. For four blessed hours I slept deeply and was refreshed. I had not slept for weeks, and I felt I was in Heaven. I woke up about 6:00 am and began praising Him for healing me. I worshipped and felt Him present with me.

After an hour or so, He asked me if I would praise Him equally if He brought back the pain. And I had to confess to Him, that while I did not want the pain — just knowing that He could heal me at any time was enough. And I confessed to Him that I wanted His presence, His love, and His will to be done more than I wanted the pain to be gone. Within a few minutes, I knew that the pain was returning. But it was okay. I was assured again that my God knew what I was going through and that this was in His plan for me.

## **Exodus 3:7 (NIV)**

**The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.”**

**Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)**

**“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid ... for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

**Psalm 34:18 (NIV)**

**The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

**Matthew 11:28 (NASB)**

**“Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”**

*Father, it is enough to know that You can heal me at any time. You could just speak the word and I would be whole. But thank You for the added assurance that You hear my crying, and You are touched by my suffering. You are not distant or uncaring, and You will never leave me alone. Thank you!*

# *Retraining the Brain*

Retraining or re-programming my brain is one tool I use to cope with pain.

When I had my first stroke, I needed a CAT scan to look at my brain. A large gruff technician shoved a humongous needle in my arm and left the room without so much as a hello. I tried to be brave, but his lack of compassion just unnerved me. So, I lay there crying softly. When he returned, I was still sobbing, and he asked me what was wrong. I told him my arm hurt really bad. He looked at me with disgust and I'll never forget his words, "I just shoved a 3-inch-long metal needle into your little, tiny arm and it's pushing dye that's probably burning the heck out of your blood vessel — and you think it shouldn't hurt?" He shook his head and walked away. It made me mad, but it made sense. It helped to understand that it should hurt and in some way that made it easier.

Fast forward a couple of years later when I was taking childbirth classes. The trainer told us that pain was a normal part of childbirth and the more we could prepare ourselves for it — the less it would hurt. Something about knowing what to expect made it easier to handle.

After surgery to reconstruct my foot, I was diagnosed with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome. The book, [Taking Charge of Your Chronic Pain](#), by Dr. Peter Abaci, reminded me that the brain can be reprogrammed to think of pain as normal. With God's guidance I began to try to deal with this mass of pain that I found at the end of my right leg. My entire right foot was a terrifically bright, pounding red. My foot looked and felt like I had stepped in a pot of boiling oil.

The first thing I noticed was that every time I told someone that my foot felt like it was deep-fat-fried — my foot actually burned worse. That seemed strange. How could just speaking something affect the pain level?

Then I noticed that the foot pain would be relatively calm until someone asked me how I was doing. Suddenly, the pain would be raging hot again. So, I requested that my family and friends quit asking. However, when a friend would forget and ask, the pain would increase back up to the original level. Interesting!

I began to guard my speech and use my words to encourage progress. Finally, I felt ready to get rid of any reference to the heat and began describing my foot as feeling tight or uncomfortable.

Now this “describing-my-foot exercise” was not just something I did aloud for others; I also had to internalize it repeatedly. Instead of crying, “It burns! It burns!” I had to force myself to think, “It’s uncomfortable”. Each time I forgot and referred to the burning — the burning returned. Each time I described it more mildly, I felt myself relax and the foot calm a little.

I credit this mental exercise for being one of the most helpful tools for dealing with pain and I use it almost every day.

Is there a Scriptural basis for this? Oh, yes!

**Romans 12:2 (NIV)**

**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

**II Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)**

**... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

**Philippians 4:8 (NIV)**

**Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.**

*Father, remind me to take every thought captive and bring it to You. Guide those thoughts to be pleasing and healing and comforting. Remind me that my words have an impact on my level of pain.*

# *Reversing Roles*

In June, 2016, God told me that life as I knew it was over. Now, looking back, I think I understand what He was telling me. He was not removing me from this earth (yet!), but He was changing my ministry to something brand new.

We retired to Florida in October 2017. That was an incredible, faith-walking adventure that I will write about someday. At the time, I was still relatively strong and could manage the housework and cooking and laundry, even though I was in a lot of pain. We thought God was calling us to a ministry similar to what we had done when we were younger, and we were excited and eager to get started.

But life took a surprising turn on March 16, 2019. My spine suddenly deteriorated to the point that I could no longer walk and couldn't sit for more than 30 minutes. I became bedfast and dependent on the wheelchair. Yes, "life as I knew it" was definitely over, and God had warned me 3 years earlier.

David designed a computer so that I could at least keep in touch with people through e-mail. Soon, I felt that God was leading me to write a special Bible study on the book of Luke for my oldest grandson's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. I spent months learning how to use on-line Bibles and concordances and commentaries. It was strange lying down to do ministry, but I felt so blessed that God had called me to pass on the knowledge that He had given me. It gave me a purpose and direction to focus on.

And finally, the words "Life as you know it, is over!" didn't seem so terrible. I had never done ministry flat of my back or read my Bible on a computer. God was definitely up to something new!

Adjusting to this new "position" took both of us working as a team. David was teaching me to cope with computers and make them do what I needed. I was teaching him to do laundry, clean, buy groceries, and cook! I helped him as much as I could from bed, but we were both determined to keep me from doing anything that would further deteriorate my spine.

Reversing roles at the age of 66 is not something I recommend, but it certainly has given both of us opportunities to grow and explore new avenues. And I manage to keep David always wondering what I "did" to the computers to make them behave so crazily! This was not our plan for retirement, but apparently it is God's plan.

## **Psalm 18:30 (ESV)**

**This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.**



**Psalm 19:8 (TLB)**

**God's laws are perfect. They protect us, make us wise, and give us joy and light.**

**Isaiah 55:8-9 (NASB)**

**"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."**

**Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)**

**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

**Hosea 14:9 (NIV)**

**Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.**

*Father, You are a God of surprises. Life as we once knew it is over, but the next adventure is just as much fun and we're enjoying it together with You. Remind me that your creativity is unlimited and Your plan for us is good.*

# *Sandpaper*

I used to lead Growth Groups, groups of followers who wanted to be transparent and real as we tried to apply Jesus' teachings to our lives. When someone would mention a boss or co-worker, a family member, or friend who was "getting on their last nerve", we called it *sandpaper*. Our belief was that God would use that person to polish us and make us better, if we would allow Him to have His way in our lives.

Sometimes it is really hard to believe that this pain that hurts so badly could possibly be of benefit to me. But I've found that God's Word is true when He says that He'll work everything out for good to those who love Him and are walking according to His purpose.

**Romans 8:28 (NASB)**

**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**

Recently, I have felt raw from the sandpaper. God has shown me how totally selfish and self-centered I become in the face of nausea and vertigo. He has revealed ugly spots that I didn't know were there. I can excuse them — or I can deal with them. I can lash out at those around me — or I can let the light and love of Jesus shine through me.

**Matthew 12:34 (NASB)**

**.... For the mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.**

It's my call. I don't believe that Jesus gets mad at me when I fail, but I know it makes Him really proud when I depend on Him to get me through the hard times. He's the One who enables me to love and care for others instead of focusing on myself. And it's a good feeling to feel His strength instead of my weakness.

**Psalms 55:22 (NASB)**

**Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you ....**

**Philippians 4:13 (NASB)**

**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

*Father, You know my heart's desire is to please You. Remind me to let You sand away the sin that accumulates and roughens me. Help me to remember that my words are a reflection of the state of my heart.*

# *Satan's Lies*

I must be very careful about the tiny, tiny insinuations that Satan places in my mind that God somehow enjoys my suffering, or that He is sadistic or takes pleasure in my pain.

## **John 8:44 (ESV)**

**You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

Jesus said that at times God may appear like the unjust judge or the father who gives a scorpion or a rock, but He is NOT. I must stand guard against anything that smears God's reputation as Love and Good.

Jesus says that suffering brings about good things. Not everything that He gives me looks good or feels good — but it IS good. That's really hard to comprehend at times. I must bring these thoughts to His feet and surrender them there. He will help me come to the right conclusion. And the right conclusion will not lead me to a feeling that God is evil or behaves in any evil way.

These Scriptures remind me of God's unfailing love.

## **Psalm 36:7 (NIV)**

**How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.**

## **Isaiah 54:10 (NIV)**

**"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you.**

## **Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)**

**...“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”**

**Romans 5:8 (NASB)**

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

**Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)**

**For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**I John 4:16 (NASB)**

**We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love....**

*Abba Father, You have lavished Your love on me. Remind me that Satan is a liar who wants me to feel unloved. Remind me that that is not possible because Your very character is love!*

# Security

Often David has to remind me that God knows where I am, even when I don't. Pain makes me totally insane some days. God knows when I am struggling, and He is holding me in His arm even when I am pushing Him away. I believe because of His pain on the cross — He knows. He understands. He has compassion and sympathy and care for me.

This I know; even in my worst pain, my meanest attitude, and my most horrid accusations of His lack of love — He has promised that He will never leave me or forsake me. He is here, present with me, even when I can't see Him.

And when I cry out to Him, He assures me that He hasn't gone anywhere. He's still there holding me and watching over me and providing everything I need to emerge stronger.

## **Deuteronomy 31:8 (NASB)**

**“And the LORD is the one who is going ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not desert you or abandon you. Do not fear and do not be dismayed.”**

## **Psalms 94:14 (NASB)**

**For the LORD will not abandon His people, Nor will He abandon His inheritance.**

## **Psalms 40:11 (NASB)**

**You, LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me; Your mercy and Your truth will continually watch over me.**

## **Romans 8:38-39 (ESV)**

**For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

## **Hebrews 4:15-16 (NASB)**

**For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as *we are*, yet without sin. Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of *our* need.**

*O Father, I am so ashamed of the way I accuse You when I am insane with pain. Remind me that You understand, and while You would prefer that I would trust You, You have compassion on me. Thank You for these promises that You will not abandon me or ever stop loving me.*

# *Seeking God's View*

In 2002, the head of Neurosurgery at Stanford University said that there was nothing that he could do to help me. My spine had so deteriorated he recommended I stop all exercise and activities, be fitted for a wheelchair, take the strongest pain pills I could tolerate, and accept the fact that my useful life was over.

Soon after that, I was driving my daughter home from college when she began to talk about one of her classes and what she was learning. She explained that everyone had a “world view”. But a person’s “world view” was based on the glasses that they wore. Each person’s glasses are different — some based on faith, some on science, some on their environment, etc.

I realized that I was letting a medical expert tell me what to expect instead of looking to my Creator. I resolved to change glasses.

**Psalm 48:14 (NIV)**

**For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.**

**Isaiah 1:3 (NIV)**

**The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.**

**Jeremiah 29:11 (TLB)**

**For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

**I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NASB)**

**Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.**



Now, I know that God uses all kinds of rowboats including doctors, medications, and procedures, but I must stay vigilant to keep my faith anchored in what God is saying to me — not what doctors may tell me. It takes time alone with God to seek His face and know His leading. And that takes diligence and commitment.

**Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)**

**You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.**

*Father I want to know Your “say so.” Help me to take the time to discern Your voice and trust You to guide me step-by-step. Remind me that You are my Creator and only You know what my future holds.*

# *Self-Discipline*

After I broke my heel and was mostly recovered, I asked my surgeon if I should be walking or not walking. His reply was most helpful. He said “You have severe arthritis in your feet and probably at some point will be unable to walk. If you can tolerate the pain, I would recommend that you walk as long as you can and enjoy every second of it!”

I thanked him for his insight and have applied his advice to life. I’ve known for years that someday my condition would not allow me to do the things I love, so I have lived life fully and ignored the pain as much as possible. That required discipline to keep going.

But now I’m struggling with a new requirement for discipline. Looking back, putting up with the pain seems easy compared to the discipline that is required now.

Now, I must obey certain restrictions to prevent further damage and getting into uncontrollable pain. That requires a discipline that I definitely cannot do in my own strength. It goes against who I am as a person. The trouble is not knowing what is too much. Okay. That’s a lie. I’ll be honest. Most of the time I **know** what I shouldn’t do — but it’s really, really, hard to not do it.

Are there Scriptures that encourage me to think of the long-term effects instead of the short-term pleasure?

**Psalm 27:14 (NIV)**

**Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.**

**Proverbs 16:32 (NIV)**

**Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.**

**Proverbs 25:28 (NIV)**

**Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.**

**Romans 12:1 (NIV)**

**Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.**

**I Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)**

**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

**I Corinthians 9:24-25 (NIV)**

**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.**

**I Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)**

**No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**

**Philippians 4:13 (NASB)**

**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

**II Timothy 1:7 (NIV)**

**For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.**

*Abba Father, this is more than I can handle on my own. I need You to remind me over and over to take care of myself. But You know my heart — I would much rather serve and care for others. Help me to learn this new discipline and self-control in obedience to You. You not only promise to guide me, but to equip me with the strength to do it. Thank You.*

# *Self-Identity*

Self-identity affects pain. I need to remember who God designed me to be. My pain becomes worse when I feel fragile, weak, disabled, in-valid, inadequate, and sickly. God's Word says:

**Psalm 119:73 (NASB)**

**Your hands made me and fashioned me ....**

**Psalm 139:13-15 (NIV)**

**“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.”**

**Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)**

**“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”**

The word “handiwork” in Ephesians 2:10 is a Greek word that is often translated “masterpiece”. That’s mind-blowing!

I was designed by the God who created the universe, and He considers me to be one of His masterpieces. That is a precious reminder to me. I am not a mistake, a freak of nature, a missed DNA or RNA sequence. I am designed, created, put together just as the Master Designer planned.

I am unique! I have limitations and am weaker than a lot of people. I am also stronger than many. My body is a rebel at times and refuses to cooperate or respond as expected. Praise God, I am different! God designed me perfectly. I am strong and unique and wonderfully designed for the purpose that God has for me.

*Dear Father, help me to celebrate being me today, knowing that you designed me perfectly. Remind me that I am not broken or “less than.”*

# *Setting Boundaries*

I was dealing with heart failure and constant pain when my elderly parents suddenly began to need my attention.

For two exhausting years, I flew back and forth between California and Arkansas. I would no sooner return home than another crisis would hit, and I would be back on the next flight.

After much prayer and lots of discussions, I remember how hard it was to tell them that I could no longer continue to care for them in Arkansas. They decided to make the move to California so that I could have a better support system and be with my husband and actually take better care of them. It was hard to set limits or boundaries concerning what I could and couldn't do. I wrestled with whether it was right to place my needs above theirs.

**Galatians 6:2 (NIV)**

**Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.**

**Philippians 2:17 (NASB)**

**But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.**

**Philippians 4:19 (NIV)**

**And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

Paul says he poured himself out for the baby churches. Can I pour myself out for others and trust that God will take care of my needs? Where is the line?

When I look closely at the life of the Apostle Paul, I see that he surrounded himself with friends and fellow followers to encourage him, strengthen him, help him, etc. Very seldom do I find the Apostle Paul alone. He could pour himself out — because he was being “poured into”.

Here's a piece of a blog by Pastor Chris Jackson from June 14, 2017.  
(<https://chrisjacksononline.net/2017/06/14/>)

*There is a mandatory rhythm attached to Eucharistic living, however. We cannot pour out indefinitely without being replenished ourselves. If we try to live lives of overextended, unsustainable service we court burnout and disaster. Rather, we must embrace a Eucharistic rhythm wherein we are broken and poured out, but then get replenished and reassembled by the grace of God.*

I have often quoted Philippians 2:3-4 as evidence that I should disregard my own needs and focus only on others.

**Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)**

**Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

When I am in pain, I am sometimes self-centered and self-focused, but most of the time, I need permission to take my own needs into account. Philippians 2:4 says we are to look “not only” to our own needs, but also to others. It is wrong to interpret this Scripture to say, “ignore your own needs.” It is disobedience.

*Father, remind me to acknowledge my needs before You and let You guide me in what I should and should not be doing. Father, help me to obey. Remind me to keep those limits out of obedience to You.*

# *Shhhhhhh!*

When my mother was dealing with the pain from a broken hip, a physical therapist used this exercise. I use it often when I'm experiencing pain and find it very comforting.

The physical therapist said that the first sound a baby hears in the womb is the swishing of the mother's blood through her heart. It sounds like "Shhhh. Shhhh. Shhhh. Shhhh." It is a soothing sound to us because our brains remember the warmth and comfort of the early womb — even though we don't. The therapist would use it whenever Mother became distracted with her pain and couldn't focus on the exercises.

My question was whether it would work if I said it to myself. The answer is "yes!" So, quite often when the pain is getting to me, I simply purse my lips and start "shushing." I usually begin pretty fast and then gradually slow the tempo until I'm totally relaxed.

It reminds me of the huffing that is taught in childbirth classes — and I'm sure that it has a similar root. But I've found that the "shushing" really quiets me and helps me to relax.

## **Psalm 119:76 (NIV)**

**May your unfailing love be my comfort ....**

## **Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB)**

**"Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light."**

## **John 14:26-27 (NIV)**

**But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**

## **II Corinthians 1:3 (NIV)**

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,**



**Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB)**

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

**I Peter 5:7 (NIV)**

**Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**

*Father, when I'm having trouble dealing with pain, help me to remember this very simple exercise. Keep my focus on You and teach me to relax in Your arms.*

# *Spiritual Retreat*

We flew to Chicago to help prepare for our son's wedding. I had never felt so tired in my life. Within hours of arriving back in California, I was in the ER in suspected heart failure. They sent me home but said a cardiologist would call me within 48 hours. I spent most of those 48 hours in prayer because I was already packed for a solo cross-country drive and spiritual retreat that had been planned for months.

At the 48-hour mark, when the cardiologist still had not called, we took it as a sign for me to proceed with my planned retreat.

David kissed me goodbye, and I began a journey that is still a highlight of my life. I will be forever grateful to God for that trip and the dependence on Him that I learned. Soon after leaving Southern California, I discovered I didn't have cell-signal for miles and miles of highway. That produced in me such a feeling of being safe in my Father's arms — mixed with absolute terror! I was extremely tired and at times stressed about my health, but God was at work, and I felt His presence surrounding me. It was an awesome trip.

David joined me in Chicago for our son's college graduation, and I was ready to give up the steering wheel! I had driven over 2,600 miles alone with God.

David and I enjoyed our special time with our son but we both knew that my choices were leading us into dangerous territory. My heart rate was fluctuating between 100 and 300 beats per minute, and I was having trouble concentrating on anything except breathing. I actually don't remember the wedding. I know I was there — I have pictures to prove it, but I have no recall.

It was a life-time dream of mine to spend that time alone with God — spending 100% of my days and nights in worship. I knew with all my being that I needed that retreat more than I needed medical intervention.

I spent the next 6 months in bed trying to get the heart failure under control.

I know better than to ignore my body's needs, but I also know I must not ignore my spiritual needs. And sometimes they are in conflict. Only God can guide me.

**Acts 5:29 (NIV)**

**Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"**

**Romans 12:2 (NASB)**

**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

But I mustn't forget: I must be willing to face the consequences when I make the choice. There are consequences for ignoring the doctor, there are consequences for ignoring God, and there are consequences for ignoring my own personal emotional and spiritual needs. I MUST be sure that I am willing to pay the price for my choices.

And David reminded me that I should consider how my choices affect those that love me.

*Father, thank You for that precious memory of an extended retreat with You. Remind me of the things I learned about trusting You one-step-at-a-time. You are such a good God to give me so many great memories. Remind me to dwell on the wonderful times I've had and not get pulled down into pain.*

# *Start the Day Right!*

One of things I'm working on right now is to wake up with praise on my lips — not pain. It's so easy to let my brain "evaluate" my body status in my first waking moments. "Yay, the headache is gone," or "Uh-oh, trouble in a new spot". Instead, I want to wake up praising God for a new day.

Sara Groves put it this way: *In the morning, when I rise, help me prioritize all the thoughts that fill my day. .... I want to praise you. I need to praise You. Let the first song that I sing be praises to my God and King.....*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeDnRxJ\\_p08](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeDnRxJ_p08)

## **Deuteronomy 18:4 (NASB)**

**You shall give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first fleece of your sheep.**

The Jews were required to bring the first fruits of their harvest to God in worship. Rather than evaluating my health or pain level, it is my desire to bring my first thoughts to God in worship and adoration.

*Father, I desire to sing Your praises first and that takes discipline and practice. Remind me to stop negative thinking quickly and help me to establish this new habit. I want to bring my first fruits of praise to You every morning. The day goes so much better when I do.*

# *Stayed Upon Jehovah*

## **Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)**

**You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.**

Oh, what a promise. I like to re-phrase it this way: *You keep me in perfect peace when my mind is stayed on you. I do trust You. (Dale's version)*

In order to understand what “stayed” means, you would have to know what a “stay” is. If you asked women in previous centuries what a stay was — they could tell you readily. It was the metal clip that held a corset or girdle tight. This undergarment had stays lined up in two rows. Someone would then lace them together as tightly as possible, and it would hold her in the popular posture until it was released. The only other stay that I know of is found on ice skates. Those metal hooks are stays. You wrap the laces around them as tightly as possible to support your ankles.

If a stay doesn't stay — there's a real problem. You have no support. In the case of the corset, others might see a figure you'd rather keep hidden! But in the case of the ice skates, a broken ankle could be the result. But my stay is Jesus. He's solid and will not fail.

I think this is a beautiful picture to remind us to fasten our minds securely on Jesus. When we do, we can be assured of perfect peace.

## **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

The only way I am going to get my mind stayed on Jesus is by continually submitting to the Holy Spirit's leading. Sometimes that means a-1000-times-a-day, reminding myself that I have been called to obedience — not to a life of luxury or ease or comfort. When I actively seek to carry out God's will for me, my mind will be transformed or renewed so that my thoughts and actions become closer in line with God's. And the more I keep my mind under His control, the easier it is to be in the center of God's will.

Pain has a way of getting my attention focused on other things! Will I mess up? Yes. Getting my mind to stay on Jesus is just like developing any other habit. It takes time and effort. I fail repeatedly. The key is to get up, confess that I've failed and start over again. Jesus understands my struggle and He's cheering me on. God doesn't get tired of watching His kids learn to walk! He just picks me up, brushes me off and sets me on the path again. It's not an easy habit to develop especially since Satan (the thief and liar) doesn't want me to have my mind stayed on Jesus. He's got other plans for my mind and my pain.

**John 10:10 (NASB)**

**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have *it* abundantly.**

*Father, remind me to keep focusing my mind on You. You and You alone can give me love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness and self-control. I so desperately need You to be in charge of my mind. Keep me stayed on You.*

# *Surprises*

I finished the on-line version of The New Way and was puttering around with some other possible writing. I didn't feel any strong leading to anything in particular. Physically, I was experiencing difficulty in swallowing. The muscles in my throat and larynx were growing weaker and I found it hard to talk for more than a few minutes without becoming hoarse.

Over the next few weeks, every time I prayed, God brought to mind that I should do a podcast of The New Way. For weeks I ignored it. Finally, I asked David, "What's a podcast?" When he told me, I laughed because I knew that it was ludicrous for me to even consider such a project with my throat muscles getting weaker daily. I must be "off-track" spiritually to hear such things!

Yet, each morning, God continued to remind me that I should give it a try. So, I finally told David what I was hearing. So, David got everything set up and we began experimenting with possibilities. There were so many hurdles to overcome — sitting up high enough in my bed, vocal difficulties, technical difficulties, overcoming brain fog to read what I had written, etc. Yet, the podcast became a reality and is now available world-wide.

We serve an awesome God who knows no limits. He can use anyone or anything no matter how broken or messed up it is. He is the Creator of all things and doesn't need our help — just our availability.

These Scriptures encourage me.

**Psalm 71:18 (NIV)**

**Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.**

**Psalm 92:12-14 (NIV)**

**The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,**

**Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)**

**“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”**

**Isaiah 46:4 (NIV)**

**Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.**

God not only accomplished the podcast, but he strengthened my throat muscles in the process so that I can talk again and my swallowing has improved!

*Father, help me to remember that You are my Creator and Your purpose for me will always be fresh and new. Your plans don't grow old just because I do. Remind me to stay fresh in my relationship with You and to eagerly watch for today's new project. You are fresh every morning.*



# *Tears*

It's okay to cry. I've found that tears can be very therapeutic. Scientists have shown that God designed our tear ducts not only to wash our eyes, but to wash away stress and tension. So, I cry.

It's important that I not use tears to manipulate David or make him feel badly, so I usually tell him that I need a good cry and he understands. Other times, I just let the tears roll down and he never knows. Some of the medication I take makes me very emotional and tears come without warning and could mean anything from joy and happiness to frustration or anger or just fatigue. I've learned that I can't stop them — so I just cry. Sometimes I need a noisy boo-hoo, complete with nose blowing, other times, I just need to let the tears flow freely but quietly.

These verses remind me that God is very aware of my tears and does not discourage their use.

## **II Kings 20:5 (NASB)**

**“... ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David says: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears....’”**

## **Psalm 30:5 (NASB)**

**... Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.**

## **Psalm 56:8 (NASB)**

**You have taken account of my miseries; Put my tears in Your bottle. Are *they* not in Your book?**

## **Luke 6:21 (NASB)**

**.... Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.**

## **Revelation 21:4 (NASB)**

**And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain....**

*Father, remind me that tears are part of Your creation and You designed them for my benefit. Help me to not be ashamed of them or try to prevent them. Thank You for the relief they bring and the reminder that You see each one. Remind me that they are temporary and someday You will wipe them all away and change them to joy!*

# *Training the Tongue*

During my prayer time, God asked me when I was going to accept being bedfast. I told Him that I had! I was not complaining, I was trying to stay busy with what I could, and I didn't feel any bitterness. Wasn't He proud of me? What I heard shocked me. As I continued to pray, I felt that God was saying that because I refused to accept my new role, I was hurting my husband and my marriage. God opened my eyes to what I sounded like:

"David, shouldn't you have the oven pre-heating if you are going to have dinner on time? David, if you would check on my needs more often, I wouldn't have to "ask" you to get up to get me things. David, the bathroom needs attention before our daughter arrives. Why are you doing that? It would be easier if you did it my way. Don't fold the towels that way, I've always folded them long ways."

So right then and there, I committed to quitting the nagging and bossing. I found out that that was easier said than done! Within minutes of encountering David, I started all over. This time I apologized and told him it wouldn't happen again. The look he gave me told me that God knew what was in my husband's heart. David's look was one of distrust and disbelief. He had already decided that I was incapable of changing. Once again, I confessed and asked God to change me. This was going to take a lot more work than I realized!

## **I Corinthians 9:24-25 (NIV)**

**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.**

## **Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)**

**You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

## **Philippians 4:13 (NASB)**

**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

**II Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)**

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,**

The second day was equally hard, and I messed up a couple of times, but each time, I apologized and asked for forgiveness. We began to talk about the damage I had caused to his self-esteem because I wouldn't release my jobs to him. It made him feel incapable and incompetent. I thought I was being helpful.

On the third day, as we prayed together before bedtime, we celebrated a whole day without my being critical or bossy for the whole day.

**Proverbs 21:23 (NASB)**

**One who guards his mouth and his tongue, Guards his soul from troubles.**

**Ephesians 4:29 (TLB)**

**.... Say only what is good and helpful to those you are talking to, and what will give them a blessing.**

**James 1:26 (NIV)**

**Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.**

I still struggle with controlling my tongue but with God's prompting, I am doing much better, and David is much happier.

**Psalms 19:14 (ESV)**

**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**

*Father, You know that I desire to please You and I want to help David in the best way possible. Remind me to let go of my old role and fill my lips with words of praise and encouragement for the new way things are being done.*

# *Trusting Him*

I woke early to spend some time in prayer. I apologized to God that so often thoughts about pain and questions and concerns about the future distract me from worship. I'll be right in the middle of worship and the next thing I know, I'm thinking about what will happen when things deteriorate further. One morning I asked God why my prayer time and worship were so often disrupted by these thoughts.

His reply seemed to be "Because you do not trust Me."

We talked about that, and I assured Him that I do trust **Him** — it is **me** I don't trust. I am just not sure that I can handle much more pain and I'm afraid that I will bring shame to His Name. I'm afraid that I won't be able to glorify Him and show others His goodness to me.

His reply seemed to be the same, "Because you do not trust **Me**."

I realized that saying that I trust God means that I trust Him to be my Good Shepherd and to provide me with everything that I need.

Saying that it's me I don't trust is a lie if I've surrendered myself to His care.

Deep down inside I find that frustrating because it gives me no wiggle room to feel sorry for myself or fret. I really have no choice but to trust Him completely or to not trust Him at all.

These Scriptures remind me to trust.

**Psalm 28:7 (NASB)**

**The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart triumphs, And with my song I shall thank Him.**

**Psalm 56:3-4 (NASB)**

**When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid....**

**Proverbs 3:5 (NASB)**

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.**

Isaiah 12:2 (NASB)

“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid;  
For the LORD GOD is my strength and song, And He has  
become my salvation.”

Isaiah 26:3 (KJV)

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on  
thee: because he trusteth in thee.

*Father, please teach me to bring my worries and fears to You —  
but to also confess that they are sinful and an indication that I  
am not trusting You. Remind me that I am Yours and You are the  
One in charge.*

# *Worship*

One of the best ways to deal with my pain is to turn my heart to worship. I do it in many different ways. Sometimes I sing, sometimes I play other's music, sometimes I listen to or read Scripture.

**Psalm 18:2 (NASB)**

**The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my savior, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

**Psalm 118:28-29 (NIV)**

**You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

Sometimes I recall miracles that He has accomplished or blessings that He had provided. But my best way to worship is just to start praying out loud and praise Him for Who He is.

*Father, You are my Rock, and my Fortress, my Stronghold and my Deliverer. You alone are my Strong Tower, my Hidey Hole. The One I run to, my place to hide. You are my Cleft in the Rock, my Strength and the One Who Lifts my Head. You are my Sustainer and Stay. You are my Refuge and the One who brings comfort and peace and solace and balm. You hold me in Your arms and gather me under Your wings. There I find warmth and peace and a shelter from the storms. You are my refuge. You are my refuge. Let me run to You and be surrounded by You. Let me walk in the shadow of the Almighty. Let me be held in the palm of Your hand. I love You, Father. Please, please guide me now — but most of all just hold me close to Your heart and let me feel Your presence. Surround me, encompass me with Your love.*



# *You are Not Alone*

God gave me fellow followers to help me in this journey.

**Romans 12:4-5 (NIV)**

**For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.**

I am by nature an extroverted loner. I was taught to be self-sufficient from childhood. It was a matter of pride and privacy. I don't like to let people know that I need help. I must battle to defeat the personal desire for self-sufficiency and that battle only becomes stronger as my need for help increases.

It's hard to ask for help because it makes me vulnerable. When I ask for help, I am humbling myself and admitting my inadequacy, my weakness, my emotional instability, and I open myself to criticism, sympathy, or even rejection.

God's Word says that He has given me a body of followers to help me and for me to help.

**I Corinthians 12:25 (NASB)**

**....care for one another.**

**Galatians 5:13 (NIV)**

**... serve one another ....**

**Galatians 6:2 (NASB)**

**Bear one another's burdens ....**

**Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)**

**Be kind and compassionate to one another....**

**I Thessalonians 4:18 (NASB)**

**... comfort one another....**

**I Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV)**

**...encourage one another ....**

**James 5:16 (NASB)**  
...pray for each other....

**1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)**  
As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Help me to remember that if I persist in self-sufficiency — I will deny others the opportunity to do what God has called them to do. I will actually block the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. That sounds pretty serious to me. Also, then we both miss receiving the incredible blessing that comes from obedience.

*Father, I don't want to become a burden to others, but remind me to lay down my self-sufficiency and pride and let others fulfill their calling. Give me the grace to know when to ask for help and when I can give it. Teach me the proper balance.*

# *Following Jesus/Living with Pain*

## *Epilogue*

Yesterday afternoon I was feeling relatively good. I had been watching a movie with David because he had a head cold that was making him miserable. All of a sudden, I had the desire to get out of bed and go cook dinner for him.

As I lay here, I knew exactly what he would want. Throughout our marriage, I have tried to please him with comfort food when he felt bad. I knew immediately that I wanted to cook biscuits and sausage in a dish called pigs in a blanket. I would dip mine in sorghum molasses and he would dip his in strawberry jam. I thought about the possibility of just getting out of bed and going to the kitchen — then reality set in.

I couldn't walk to the kitchen without my wheelchair. I couldn't lift the mixing bowl. I couldn't lift the flour bin. I couldn't reach for the measuring cups. I couldn't control the muscles to get an accurate measurement. I might could reach the shortening sticks if they weren't too far back in the refrigerator, but I couldn't cut them into the flour. I couldn't lift the milk carton and again wouldn't be able to get a measuring cup or accurately measure the amount. And I began to cry quietly.

I lay here and began to think through what I've recorded in this book. I began to praise God for the 46 years that I was able to make special dishes for David. He and I have enjoyed each one. I was able to recognize that that time has passed, and cooking is not God's plan or expectation of me at this time. I told myself it was okay to weep and grieve over loss as I recognized that I would never make biscuits again for my beloved. But there was a deep acceptance. In the past I would have had a pity party and manipulated David into feeling sorry for me. But there was no pity — just sadness mixed with gratefulness that we were still able to be together.

I cleaned up my tears and called David over to my bed. I told him that when I didn't feel good, I just changed the menu to something easy. I suggested that a frozen microwave dinner would be perfect for tonight since I knew he didn't feel like cooking. The look of relief on his face was all I needed to know that I had succeeded in pleasing him and loving him well.

So, as I enter this new phase of acceptance, I know that this book was written not for you — but for me. And I am grateful for the things God has taught me along the way.

In His service and in His arms,

Dale