

Have You Had Enough?

Let's face it, life is filled with frustrations and pressure seems to come from all angles. These might include IRS notices, bill collectors, family issues, politics in the workplace, betrayal of friends, health issues, destructive and uncontrollable behaviors, lawsuits, and last but not least bounced checks.

Have I hit a nerve yet?

Life is messy and can be very unfair. Most of us start with such high expectations of life and I believe this is where much of the problem lies. Now that I know what I know, at 50+ years of age, I don't think growing up with fairy tales, Disney movies, and cartoons is such a good idea.

I'm no psychologist, but it doesn't take a genius to figure out that whatever we fill our minds with is what forms these unrealistic expectations. Does the saying "garbage in, garbage out" ring a bell? The problem with children is that they don't know what reality really is. They are still trying to figure things out, but whatever their minds process gets stored and it has a lasting effect.

So here I am today, an adult, with unrealistic expectations trying to figure things out and constantly disappointed. The dream house, car, spouse and job are nowhere to be seen. The idea of retirement still motivates many people, but that is no longer looking probable for many.

John 16: 33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

Reading this verse tells us a lot. Jesus tells us things so that we can have peace in Him. We will have trials and

sorrows. And we can have confidence because Jesus has overcome the world.

Compare the truth we just read from the John 16 verse above with "...and they lived happily ever after."

Do you see the problem with this?

Regardless of where we got our expectations, we all experience trials and have to deal with life as it plays out. So what about you?

Have you had enough?

Are you about ready to "throw in the towel"? (It's OK, keep reading!)

It seems that God allows ourselves to reach these most frustrating times so that we in some way reach a "breaking point". You can probably relate, this is when everything seems to be going wrong, the world conspires against you, and the pressure builds up and it leads us to either burst into tears of uncontrollable sobbing or shout out in a fit of rage, or both.

We can only handle so much and after allowing things to get to us, there is the "straw that breaks the camel's back" and that's when we let it go. Can anyone relate to this, or is this just me? When we come to God for help in these times I think we are exactly where He wants us to be, which is fully surrendered.

The fact is that we are powerless (without Jesus)

For many of us, after years of thinking we had things under control and that we didn't require anyone's assistance, we came to realize that we really needed God's help and that led us to humble ourselves and cry out to Him:

Exodus 2: 23 Years passed, and the king of Egypt died. But

the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God. 24 God heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.

This is where God steps in and starts to work.

We reach a place of brokenness and I think this is necessary or a normal course of action in which God uses to work in our lives. I've reached several breaking points with tears and they end up being times of healing and end with a great sense of peace on the other side.

Let's examine a few characters in the Word of God who have reached a breaking point and see what God's response was and where it led, shall we?

***Exodus 5:** 19 The Israelite foremen could see that they were in serious trouble when they were told, "You must not reduce the number of bricks you make each day." 20 As they left Pharaoh's court, they confronted Moses and Aaron, who were waiting outside for them. 21 The foremen said to them, "May the Lord judge and punish you for making us stink before Pharaoh and his officials. You have put a sword into their hands, an excuse to kill us!"*

22 Then Moses went back to the Lord and protested, "Why have you brought all this trouble on your own people, Lord? Why did you send me? 23 Ever since I came to Pharaoh as your spokesman, he has been even more brutal to your people. And you have done nothing to rescue them!"

This was a particularly bad day in Moses' life. It seemed that what he was doing was backfiring against the Israelites. Moses could not do a thing about it, except take it back to God, the One who sent him there, to begin with. Notice that he is very

direct with God and he doesn't hold anything back, including God's call to send him in the first place. Also, as far as he was concerned, God had done nothing so far towards releasing the people.

What was God's response?

Exodus 6: 1 Then the Lord told Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. When he feels the force of my strong hand, he will let the people go. In fact, he will force them to leave his land!"

2 And God said to Moses, "I am Yahweh—'the Lord.' 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El-Shaddai—'God Almighty'— but I did not reveal my name, Yahweh, to them. 4 And I reaffirmed my covenant with them. Under its terms, I promised to give them the land of Canaan, where they were living as foreigners. 5 You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. And I am well aware of my covenant with them.

In verse 1 God explains to Moses that it was all part of His plan so that "he will force them to leave his land!" And then God makes it clear who He is, the same God as his ancestors and He reaffirms the covenant.

Now let's look at Elijah:

After winning the contest on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal, Jezebel threatens his life...

1 Kings 19: 1 When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. 2 So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them."

3 Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to

Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. 4 Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."

He had had enough.

You see, even this great prophet and man of God had a breaking point. From this point, the Lord feeds and restores him and is then led to Mount Sinai where God teaches him a few things.

And then there's Job:

Job 3: 1 At last Job spoke, and he cursed the day of his birth. 2 He said:

*3 "Let the day of my birth be erased,
and the night I was conceived.*

*4 Let that day be turned to darkness.
Let it be lost even to God on high,
and let no light shine on it.*

Of course, after having lost everything, Job goes on and on in utter agony, understandably. He doesn't know why the tragedy (read chapters 1 and 2) happened to him and he wants answers. Sound familiar?

Finally, after an unspecified amount of time, God responds...

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

Job 38

1 Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind:

*2 "Who is this that questions my wisdom
with such ignorant words?"*

*3 Brace yourself like a man,
because I have some questions for you,*

and you must answer them.

*4 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell me, if you know so much.*

*5 Who determined its dimensions
and stretched out the surveying line?*

*6 What supports its foundations,
and who laid its cornerstone*

*7 as the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?*

Notice how God puts Job in his place right away, as if to say: "I am the Creator of all things, and you are a mere human" God goes on and on to set His servant straight, bringing Job to this conclusion:

"I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

Job 42

1 Then Job replied to the Lord:

*2 "I know that you can do anything,
and no one can stop you.*

*3 You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such
ignorance?'*

*It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me.*

4 You said, 'Listen and I will speak!

*I have some questions for you,
and you must answer them.'*

*5 I had only heard about you before,
but now I have seen you with my own eyes.*

*6 I take back everything I said,
and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."*

Through Job's trials and sorrows, he questions God and really wrestles with his circumstances and why God allowed it. Ultimately it all leads to his repentance and Job takes back everything he said. Through these trials and sorrows, he

becomes a changed man, true transformation (even in the Old Testament!).

Although he was the most righteous man in all the land (Chapter 1), he had only heard about God before. But now, after going through a tragic sequence of events and the dialog with his friends and Maker, he has seen God with his own eyes. Without his trials, would he have had a chance to get to know God in such a personal manner?

Psalms 50

*14 Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God,
and keep the vows you made to the Most High.*

*15 Then call on me when you are in trouble,
and I will rescue you,
and you will give me glory.”*

And then there's Jeremiah

For those that have read about Jeremiah, you know the trials he endured, check out this plea in chapter 15:

Jeremiah 15: *15 Then I said,*

“Lord, you know what's happening to me.

Please step in and help me. Punish my persecutors!

Please give me time; don't let me die young.

It's for your sake that I am suffering.

16 When I discovered your words, I devoured them.

They are my joy and my heart's delight,

for I bear your name,

O Lord God of Heaven's Armies.

17 I never joined the people in their merry feasts.

I sat alone because your hand was on me.

I was filled with indignation at their sins.

18 Why then does my suffering continue?

Why is my wound so incurable?

Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook,

like a spring that has gone dry.”

This sounds like a typical prayer, doesn't it? Can you relate to this? "I've done all these good things, and you still allow me to suffer?" I think he crossed the line, however, at the end of verse 18. Then God responds...

Here it comes...

19 This is how the Lord responds:

*"If you return to me, I will restore you
so you can continue to serve me.*

*If you speak good words rather than worthless ones,
you will be my spokesman.*

*You must influence them;
do not let them influence you!*

*20 They will fight against you like an attacking army,
but I will make you as secure as a fortified wall of bronze.*

*They will not conquer you,
for I am with you to protect and rescue you.*

I, the Lord, have spoken!

*21 Yes, I will certainly keep you safe from these wicked men.
I will rescue you from their cruel hands."*

God has a great way of putting Jeremiah in his place, then gives Him great instruction and ends up by encouraging him.

Notice that in neither of these responses does God give a direct answer to the questions He's asked. Nor does He respond to the ignorant accusations. He always offers something that brings conviction, builds up, comforts, encourages and is instructional. He doesn't get into arguments with His servants, nor defend His decisions. He does things His way, which are always right and it is our decision to work with Him or against Him. It is our responsibility to allow Him to change our lives and transform us so that we work with His perfect plan through our daily surrender, not fight against it.

Matthew 12: 30 "Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and

anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me.

And Jesus illustrates this Himself in the garden just prior to His own trial:

Luke 22: 42 *"Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."*

On that note, I will leave you with these last few verses...

Philippians 1: 29 *For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.*

Galatians 6: 9 *So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.*

Romans 5: 3 *We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.*

Revelation 3: 10 *"Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world."*

"Dear Lord, your Word is precious. Thank you for revealing yourself and your very nature in these passages we've read. You give us understanding and help us to know you more. This

will help us to be more faithful to you. For we know that your plans for us are good and that you have a great purpose through these trials which we endure. Thank you for these trials and for what you are doing in our lives through them. You are a great and masterful God. We love you and give you all the praise, in His name, amen."

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