

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

activated

Vol 16 • Issue 11

THE HIDING PLACE

Finding refuge

Life as a Climb

Is it worth it?

Squeezed

Let Him handle it





EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION HARD TIMES

At the time I'm writing this, my car has been giving me trouble. It's been like this for a while; and whenever it seems like it's fixed, it's not long before something goes wrong again. It's already cost quite a bit of time and money, and it's looking like more will be required before the root problem is found.

When things don't work the way they should, I get stressed, and this has been my nemesis of late.

Perhaps you're going through a rough patch too. Or maybe you're facing a major hardship or heartbreak. Maybe you recently lost your job or someone you were close to. Maybe you've been beaten down one too many times, and you just can't imagine that anything good can happen in your life, that you could catch a break.

Whatever you're dealing with, you're not alone. Jesus Himself experienced hard times—He even asked His Father if it was really necessary to go through with His trial and execution.¹

Sometimes our hardships can be so overwhelming that we become paralyzed. When we feel trapped by fear or grief, unable to take the tiniest step toward recovery, what we need most is a guide—someone or *something* to give hope and illuminate the path toward healing. It can be a friend, an inspirational book or website, music, or most importantly, God. No matter what our circumstance or difficulty, we can rest assured that God will always be faithful.²

If you happen to be struggling today, or if you know someone else who is careworn, then you have come to the right place for healing. I hope my car will—eventually—run as good as new. What is more certain is that God will help you through your difficulty. His Word promises “The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles.”³

Samuel Keating
Executive Editor

1. See Matthew 26:39.
2. See 2 Thessalonians 3:3.
3. Psalm 34:17 NLT

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THE CAVERNS

By JOYCE SUTTIN

FOR MY SON'S TWELFTH BIRTHDAY, he wanted to explore underground caverns near our home. I was less enthusiastic, but despite my efforts to come up with alternatives, he couldn't be dissuaded, so on a blistering hot day, my sister-in-law and I set out with our three children. Walking into the mouth of a huge cave, my heart was pounding, but soon I was pleasantly surprised to see the gently sloping walkways, clean and well lit. As we descended further, it felt as if the air conditioning had been turned on.

As we read the signs and studied the rock and crystal formations, we began to appreciate rocks in an entirely new light. What might have seemed inscrutable in the darkness, glistened beautifully in the colored spotlights. We spent hours

underground and returned to ground level with a new appreciation of the wonders of God's creation and the breathtaking beauty of hidden things.

I was at a point in my life when I felt like I was lost in some caverns spiritually. My world had flip-flopped and I felt distant from all I had ever known. I also felt quite isolated and purposeless. But a few hours in the caverns helped me to have a new perspective.

One thing I was reminded of is that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.¹ Even in a place that might seem terrifying, His light is there to guide each step and keep me from falling. Not only does His light protect me, but it helps me to see the beauty that is around. My life is filled with light as long as I am in His presence.

Sometimes God's path leads to a place in the shadows. It takes time

for our eyes to adjust to the changes and see things as they are. But even in the darkness there is growth and beauty and order. Like my son exploring the caverns that day, I realized that I needed to have a sense of fun and adventure.

It also made me appreciate those who had gone before. Someone had gone down into the darkness and had worked to make it a safe place, placing lights and signs. I realized that I needed to spend more time reading devotional material from those who understood the situation I found myself in. They can help teach me some deeper lessons of faith and encourage me to continue to trust God's loving hand and direction in my life.

JOYCE SUTTIN IS A TEACHER AND WRITER AND LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO, USA. ■

1. See 1 John 1:5.



SQUEEZED

BY MARIA FONTAINE, ADAPTED

THERE HAVE PROBABLY BEEN TIMES when you've felt like you've been squeezed to the last drop and you didn't have an ounce of strength or willpower left. The apostle Paul admitted to "despairing even of life,"¹ and I'm sure that many of us have gone to those depths at one time or another. We've reached the point that we felt we couldn't even bear

to get up in the morning and face another day, and maybe you're going through something like that right now. Perhaps you have been for a long time.

But here's the important part: Despite Paul's trials and tribulations—both in the form of outward persecution and in the form of inward despair, discouragement, and doubt—he held on, declaring that, "I don't care what happens to me, as long as I finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do. And that work is to tell the good news about God's great kindness."²

That's a good one for us to remember: "I'm going to keep holding on no matter what happens. I'm not going to let it deter me from the life path God has given me." That's the kind of

determination that kept Paul going, so that even though he was "perplexed," he was "not in despair."³

"Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."⁴ How can you be unmovable? By holding on to the Rock—Jesus.⁵ Everything else is unstable and can get washed away when the waves of life toss you to and fro. The only thing that'll stay right there and won't budge an inch is Jesus!

And don't worry if you don't think you're strong enough to hold on, because you don't have to be strong in yourself. God will give you the strength.⁶ All you have to do is put your will on His side and *want* to hold on, and He'll give you the strength to

1. See 2 Corinthians 1:8.
2. Acts 20:24 CEV
3. See 2 Corinthians 4:8.
4. 1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV
5. See Psalm 62:6.
6. See Psalm 46:1; 18:1–2; 121:1.
7. Isaiah 50:7 ESV
8. Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 54:10 NLT; Hebrews 13:5
9. James 4:8



The next time that something seemingly bad happens to you, look for the divine in it. Look for the soul in the mundane, everyday occurrences of your life. Look for the spark, look for the light.—Leigh Hershkovich

Overcast does not always forecast rain neither does difficulty always forecast failure.—Kevin McKoy

keep holding on even when you don't think you can anymore.

But you do have to determine in your heart that you're going to follow God no matter what. As Isaiah said, "The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame."⁷ He must have been going through a pretty tough time, but he was determined to hold on regardless; and if you do the same, you won't be ashamed either.

When your life is burdened with problems, it's natural to wonder *why*. One reason for problems is that life itself is a constant struggle. Wherever you are, whoever you are, whatever your job, this life, living on earth as a human being, involves a lot of

problems, period. And believe it or not, that's God's plan.

Sometimes we're tempted to wonder, *How can I manage this? It's just too much!* We can be comforted to know that God allows this as part of His plan for us. He sometimes allows us to see the mountain ahead of us so we'll come to the end of ourselves and acknowledge that we can't do it on our own without His help.

If the problems were any smaller and we thought *we* might be able to handle them, we'd be tempted to try to do it in our own strength. It's just human nature. But if it gets so difficult and so big, that's often the point at which we truly commit all things to Him.

Regardless of how we may happen to feel, if we love God and are walking

by faith and following His Word, then we know that our relationship with Him is firm. And we certainly know that His love for us is unchangeable, unwavering. He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love. The mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. I will never leave you nor forsake you."⁸

So no matter how much we might feel "squeezed to the last drop," we're not alone. His love is there for us—always. If you "draw near to God, He will draw near to you."⁹ A comforting thought!

MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ■



NO CHALLENGE TOO GREAT

BY IRIS RICHARD

THE VOICES SEEMED MUFFLED as I slowly woke out of the anesthesia following a medical procedure on my back.

I heard the doctor's gloomy prognosis: "She might not be able to live a normal life and certainly she shouldn't have any children with a serious back condition like this."

Another concurred: "She might be confined to a wheelchair from the age of 30 if the scoliosis keeps progressing as rapidly as it has been."

When I reached home later that day, I locked myself in my room and sat by the window for hours, staring out at the gray, cloud-laden sky as tears rolled down my cheeks. All I could think of was spending life in a wheelchair.

I was twelve when I was diagnosed with a serious case of scoliosis in three parts of my spine. The diagnosis was

followed by countless doctor and hospital visits. The scoliosis rapidly worsened. To slow the progress of the curvature, I began sleeping in a plaster mold and wearing a thick plastic corset during the day.

The song went out of my life, and I became shy and withdrawn, for fear of my crooked spine being noticed. I wore loose-fitting clothes to try to hide the slight hump that had formed on the right side of my back due to the curvature. But despite my despair, an inner voice encouraged me to not give up, and eventually, after months of hard training at physiotherapy, the progress of the scoliosis started to slow down.

With time, my faith in God also increased, and I realized that prayer was augmenting my success in achieving my life's goals, despite the

setbacks this chronic condition kept throwing at me. God sent special people into my life, like a gifted massage therapist who helped me for years with her services and friends who assisted me during the delivery of my seven children. I learned to live positively with this physical challenge and even improve my health. The forecast of being confined to a wheelchair thankfully never materialized, and the scoliosis hasn't worsened.

Now, almost 50 years later, I am grateful for the obstacles that I learned to overcome. Prayer is what has given me victories over what seemed like life-threatening defeats.

IRIS RICHARD IS A COUNSELOR IN KENYA, WHERE SHE HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK SINCE 1995. ■



PAINTING a RAINBOW from LIFE'S darkest STORM

BY ELSA SICHROVSKY

I FIRST LEARNED ABOUT FU-HUA CHUANG when my family and I watched a documentary that featured several severely disabled yet talented young people. I was struck by the radiant smile that seemed to illuminate her whole being, reflecting the inner beauty of her soul.

In 1994, Fu-Hua was a lively and promising ten-year-old Taiwanese girl who ranked at the top of her class and dreamed of becoming an artist. But tragedy struck when she and her family were caught in a house fire. Although all of them survived, Fu-Hua slipped into a three-month coma caused by smoke inhalation. When she regained consciousness, it turned out that the poisonous fumes had irrevocably and radically altered Fu-Hua's life, leaving her blind, mute, and paralyzed from the neck down. Aside from head and neck mobility, the only physical ability she retained was her hearing.

As time passed and her friends and former classmates gradually

forgot her, Fu-Hua slipped into deep depression that spiraled into suicidal thoughts. What hope was there in a wheelchair-bound existence, dependent on her mother to dress, feed, and help her with all the basic necessities of life?

It was a Christian television program that pierced through Fu-Hua's anguish, inspiring her to put her trust in God. As her faith grew, so did her hope; and from her hope, three dreams emerged—to attend university, to become a writer, and to spread love to every corner of the globe. Between physical therapy sessions, Fu-Hua listened to over 300 audiobooks, which enabled her to build academic competence and graduate from high school. Then her teacher helped her gain entry to university, where Fu-Hua has since been pursuing her bachelor's degree.

Through a painstaking process of moving her head to communicate in Morse code, Fu-Hua has also composed over 300 poems that articulate with optimism her

struggles, faith, and experiences. Using this same method, Fu-Hua has also given motivational speeches at high schools across Taiwan and China. Through her speeches, she has touched thousands with the message of God's love and hope. Her dreams are coming true!

Fu-Hua had every reason to give up on life, yet she not only chose to live but to make encouraging others her purpose. While her life will always be fraught with pain, difficulties, and struggles caused by her physical condition, Fu-Hua says, "Life is a path. At times we encounter pain, failure, and sorrow, but if we have faith, the future is always bright."

ELSA SICHROVSKY IS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT. SHE AND HER FAMILY ARE ENGAGED IN MISSIONARY WORK IN TAIWAN. READ MORE ABOUT FU-HUA'S STORY HERE: WWW.WANTCHINATIMES.COM/NEWS-SUBCLASS-CNT.ASPX?ID=20111211000026&CID=1603. ■



Life as a CLIMB

BY ANNA PERLINI

THE OTHER DAY, some friends took me on what I thought would be a short climb. We parked the car and took a look at the summit. We got out our climbing gear and started putting on our boots and gathering what we needed in our backpacks.

It doesn't seem that far or that difficult. Good! I thought.

During the winter, I had suffered a knee injury and subsequently felt a bit out of shape. In any case, I was looking forward to something simple.

We started walking uphill, and it wasn't long before my legs began to hurt and I was having a hard time breathing, but I was still hopeful it would be a short climb. Then the path changed into a rockier, winding trail. We were still surrounded by tall trees that kept us from seeing any kind of view around us. I knew we must have been making some progress, judging by the time, but it wasn't until we came out of the woods and stopped by a gorgeous lookout point that we could actually see the progress we'd made and how far we still had to go in order to reach the top.

Those few minutes spent admiring the breathtaking view of the lake

1. Proverbs 25:11 KJV
2. <http://www.perunmondigliore.org/>

beneath us, taking a picture and a sip of water, encouraged us and gave us the feeling that we were doing well and making progress, even though the summit still seemed quite far.

Then the path turned into a genuine climb, and I could feel myself beginning to panic a little. The sky had been gathering dark clouds, and a few raindrops started falling, making the rocks slippery. We met others along the way, some experienced climbers, some attempting the hike for the first time. The uncertainty of the weather made everyone feel some trepidation. The rain didn't last long, but the clouds remained. It wasn't an easy climb, but the view got more intriguing and majestic over time. It definitely made it worth it all.

At one point, on a particularly difficult passage, my more experienced friend whispered in my ear, "You're doing well, you know. There are others climbing today who are having a much harder time." Those few words had a profound effect on me: they turned my gaze away from myself and my personal struggle. I took a look at a girl climbing for the first time, who looked worried. She was slowly making it too, helped by her friend. I smiled at her and said a few words. What a help encouragement can be: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."¹

And finally, the top!

There's always something exhilarating about reaching the summit, no matter how tough the climb, but this time a magical sense of peace filled my soul and brought tears to my eyes. I was able to see the path we had taken to the top. Many turns were needed in order to get up here, and they had made the journey richer—not easier, but definitely more interesting and exciting.

On the way back down, I couldn't help but reflect on some of the events that have taken place in my life. When you are in the thick of the forest and on a hard uphill climb, it's often hard to make sense of things or understand where you're standing or to gather the strength and conviction to keep going. All you can feel is the sweat, the strain, the tiredness. In that moment it's so easy and even understandable to give up and turn back, and to be honest, a few times I have been so tempted to.

What has kept me going has been Jesus and His Word, as well as the encouragement and support of dear friends along the way.

ANNA PERLINI IS A COFOUNDER OF PER UN MONDO MIGLIORE,² A HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVE IN THE BALKANS SINCE 1995. ■

FACE THE WIND

If a bird is flying for pleasure, it flies with the wind, but if it meets danger, it turns and faces the wind, in order that it may rise higher.—*Corrie ten Boom* (1892–1983)



You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do.—*Eleanor Roosevelt* (1884–1962)



The things we try to avoid and fight against—tribulation, suffering and persecution—are the very things that produce abundant joy in us. Huge waves that would frighten the ordinary swimmer produce a tremendous thrill for the surfer who has ridden them. "We are more than conquerors through Him" in all these things—not in spite of them, but in the midst of them. A saint doesn't know the joy of the Lord in spite of tribulation, but because of it.—*Oswald Chambers* (1874–1917) ■



THE SECRET SUPPLY

BY ROSANE PEREIRA

The strongest people out there—the ones who laugh the hardest with a genuine smile, those are the people who have fought the toughest battles. Because they've decided they're not going to let anything hold them down, they're showing the world who's the boss.—*Author unknown*

THERE IS AN OLD FABLE ABOUT TWO NEIGHBORS who planted similar orchards. One watered his plants every day, but the other, only every few days. When the dry season came, the trees of the first farmer withered, but the trees of the second kept growing steadily. Since these trees hadn't been watered so often, their roots had grown downward to find the underground water tables.

I remember when I had to dig deep for the hidden waters. Our family was living in a city at the border of Brazil and Argentina. Business was going well, and we had just moved to a nice house with a yard that we

transformed into a small football field for our boys. Then my husband had a sudden stroke and passed away after three weeks in the Intensive Care Unit. My whole world seemed to fall apart.

The emotions that come after losing someone so close can only be known by experience. It was like an arm or a leg was missing. I would often dream of him still being around and would sometimes see someone in the street and think for a split second that it was him, but of course it couldn't be, as Jesus had called him home.

My faith in heaven and that I would one day be with him again was what kept me going. Those deep waters of knowing that God would never leave me nor forsake me¹ gave me strength to face the many challenges that lay ahead.

Today I enjoy my grandchildren and consider myself tremendously blessed. When troubles come my way, as they still do, I remember how God didn't fail me during that most difficult time and gave me strength to go on. My secret supply comes from Philippians 4:6–7, which I have posted above my desk:

“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”²

ROSANE PEREIRA IS AN ENGLISH TEACHER AND WRITER IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL. ■

1. See Hebrews 13:5.

2. NLT



Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge.—Psalm 91:3–4

HE LOOKED SO SAD WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM. He was quite a few years older than I, but like I did during my first days in that impersonal hospital ward, he felt scared and worried.

My bed was on the other side of the room, but I gave him a reassuring smile.

“It will be all right.”

But he turned away, closed his eyes, and pretended he was asleep.

A hospital is a strange place. All patients are on the same level; everyone faces a common enemy—fear. *What’s wrong with me? Will I get better? Will the operation be successful?*

Later that day, I again tried talking with my fellow patient. I’d already been there for nearly two weeks and was starting to feel like a veteran.

“Why are you here?” I asked.

He looked so despondent, I almost felt bad I had asked. Then he softly answered: “I was going on holiday. Car was in front of the door. I went to use the bathroom one last time. That’s when I saw the blood ...”

He fidgeted with the hospital sheet. “And now I’m here instead of in a hotel in France with my wife. I feel like jumping out of the window.”

Right then the doctor stepped in with a solemn face and told my new friend: “Mr. Williams, your surgery is scheduled for first thing tomorrow.”

When the doctor left, I could tell he was in the depths of despair. He didn’t want to talk anymore and pretended to be asleep again.

Suddenly I felt the nudge of God’s Spirit.

Write a few verses from Psalm 91

on a card and give it to him before he goes to surgery.

Psalm 91? What if he doesn’t believe in You, Lord?

Just do it!

So I did. The nurse gave him the card the next morning before wheeling him out.


The operation was a success.

And so was the card. When I talked to him the next day, he said: “Thank you so much for those wonderful words. They gave me so much strength. Did you write that?”

“No,” I answered, “God did. They’re from the Bible.”

“Amazing...” he mumbled, then he smiled. “Maybe I need to read that book for myself.”

KOOS STENGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER IN THE NETHERLANDS. ■



BY STEVE HEARTS

HIDING PLACE

IN THE TEMPESTUOUS, STORMY MOMENTS OF OUR LIVES, we often focus so intently on finding a way of escape or rescue that we altogether forget about the most reliable and true source of shelter and refuge.

Last night, sleep seemed to totally elude me. I had been facing a low moment of discouragement, doubt, and frustration. I was restless in both mind and body. It was all I could do to prevent my thoughts from going places they ought not to go.

It was raining fairly hard outside. Although in the physical I was sheltered, warm, and dry inside the house, my spirit felt the exact opposite. The rain outside seemed to

pour in unison with the ongoing difficulties I've been facing for a while. Inside, I felt exposed and unprotected from the cold winds, soaked to the bone and drenched by the rain that seemed like it would never stop.

I was quickly losing my grip on hope, and my faith was flickering low. I told God that I wanted with all my heart to hang on and be faithful, but that this would only be possible with His help. Then I lay in silence for a moment.

The answer I received was rather unexpected. I was guided to listen to the song "Hiding Place," by Steven Curtis Chapman.¹

I put on the song, not expecting much. After all, I knew it like the back of my hand. Yet, each word seemed to hit the spot like a cup of hot coffee on a cold, rainy day, or like the sensation one feels when coming in from the winter cold to a warm place.

*I'm not asking You to take away my troubles, Lord.
'Cause it's through the stormy weather I learn to trust You more.
But I thank You for the promise that I have come to know.
Your unfailing love surrounds me when I need it most.
You're my hiding place,
Safe in Your embrace,
I'm protected from the storm that rages.
When the waters rise,
And we run to hide,
Lord, in You we find our hiding place.*

As the song continued to play, God spoke to me. *Are you taking shelter in My promises and My love for you? Or are you too busy looking and hoping for a way of escape from all this?*

I had clearly been doing the latter. I had been hoping and praying to be rescued from this situation, instead

1. Watch the song here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdVj231PFA>
2. Psalm 46:1-3 CEB
3. Psalm 57:1 NIV
4. Deuteronomy 33:27 NLT



of using God's Word and love for me as the shelter it was meant to be. No wonder I felt so exposed and vulnerable.

It's not that I can't or won't bring you out of this situation somehow, He continued to speak to my heart. But meanwhile, let Me be the refuge and shelter I promised to be for you until the storm runs its course.

With these words came flooding back a series of promises I have known for as long as I can remember:

"God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble. That's why we won't be afraid when the world falls apart, when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea, when its waters roar and rage, when the mountains shake because of its surging waves."²

"I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed."³

"The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you."⁴

None of these promises speak of "rescue" from trouble, although God can and does rescue us according to His will. More important, He is our "refuge" as we go through trials and difficulties. Just as running into a building during a storm does not cause the storm to cease; rather, it provides shelter until the storm runs its course.

With this renewed perspective on storms, I can now fully trust and rest in Jesus to be my refuge and shelter for as long as the storm lasts, leaving the final outcome in His hands.

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. ■

THE SAVIOR OF MY TODAY

Dear Jesus, sometimes I feel like the storms of life are overwhelming me, yet You promise I can find refuge in You. Help me to grow in faith, secure in the knowledge that there is never a moment when I am not overshadowed by Your love. Please forgive my shortcomings, enter my heart, and be with me always.

I am with you always, even to the end of the age.—*Jesus, Matthew 28:20*

Your journey has molded you for your greater good, and it was exactly what it needed to be. Don't think you've lost time. There is no short-cutting to life. It took each and every situation you have encountered to bring you to the now. And now is right on time.—*Asha Tyson*

These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.—*1 Peter 1:7 NLT* ■

Sharing the Balm of Love

BY DENNIS EDWARDS



SOME YEARS BACK, at midnight on March 17—Saint Patrick’s Day—I received a call from my 27-year-old son’s roommate in Bermuda. My boy was missing, and his clothing had been found on a nearby beach.

My first reaction was to get on my knees and cry out to God in prayer. As I did, I saw a picture of my son entering heaven to the joy of my parents and other loved ones who had already passed on. I immediately knew he would not be found alive. Sure enough, five days later, his body washed ashore.

What helped me through those difficult days? What was the healing balm? Of course, my relationship with God was my greatest source of comfort, but another important key to my healing in a tangible, physical

way was the love and encouragement I received from others.

On my first day in Bermuda, while asking for directions at a shop, I mentioned to the girl working there that I was the father of the young man who had recently drowned. “I’m so sorry,” she said tenderly, and gave me a hug. On numerous other occasions, I received similar encouragement from strangers.

God promises to comfort us in our times of tribulation. Jesus said He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to us. He wants us to be comforted. But if we keep our troubles locked inside, if we keep the pain in, we won’t receive the love and encouragement we need, and our healing process will be longer and perhaps never complete.

So don’t keep those emotions hidden. Don’t suffer in silence. Share

your hurt so that others around you can help heal it. God works this way to draw us closer to one another and to make us His arms and hands and lips and ears for one another.

When we receive love and encouragement in our hour of need, we are later able to return that to other anguished or suffering souls who pass our way. “God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”¹

DENNIS EDWARDS IS A RETIRED TEACHER WHO WORKS WITH A PORTUGUESE NGO INVOLVED IN SUPPLYING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR POOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS. ■

1. 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 NLT



THE FINAL STRAW

Quiet Moments
BY ABI MAY

“ANSWER ME SPEEDILY, O Lord; my spirit fails! ... I look to the Lord for help. I wait confidently for God to save me, and my God will certainly hear me.”—Psalm 143:7; Micah 7:7 NLT

“The straw that breaks the camel’s back” is the final item in a collection of burdens or troubles, perhaps even a seemingly small thing that threatens to take you beyond the point of endurance. The strain has been building up for a while, and finally you sense that you are about to crumble. You can’t stand it any longer.

1. See Matthew 15:22–28.
2. See 1 Chronicles 16:35.
3. See Jeremiah 17:14.
4. See Mark 10:47–52.
5. See Matthew 14:30–32.
6. Acts 2:21
7. Psalm 50:15

But you do, or rather you *did*, otherwise you would not be reading this today. Looking back at those occasions when you survived what seemed so terrible at the time can be a great encouragement. Reading the Bible can also be reassuring, because it describes the lives of people who were saved against the odds.

“Help me,” cried the desperate mother on behalf of her daughter, whom Jesus then healed.¹

“Save us, O God of our salvation,” cried the people,² and He did, countless times.

“Heal me, O Lord,” begged the prophet Jeremiah,³ who, despite his many troubles, including imprisonment and worse, lived a long and productive life.

“Have mercy on me,” cried a blind man to Jesus as He passed. Minutes later, he received his sight.⁴

“Save me!” was the desperate plea by Simon Peter, sinking under the stormy waves. Jesus held out His hand, and did just that.⁵ Peter later declared that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”⁶ He knew all about it. He had been saved in so many ways.

One central feature of these examples is that each person, in their own way, called on God to help them.

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble,” God tells us, but He doesn’t leave it there; He promises: “I will deliver you.”⁷

So perhaps the best means of surviving the final straw—or any straw, for that matter—is to *ask*. Help is on hand.

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

CLIMB ON THE ROCK

“When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”¹ “The Lord is my fortress; my God is the mighty rock where I hide.”²

If you feel overwhelmed, climb up on the Rock. You have Me, the Rock, and you can rest in My ability to keep you through anything that threatens to overwhelm you. When you feel weak because of your cares and burdens, when you feel depression threaten to blacken your thoughts and hang a feeling of despair over you, you can climb up on the Rock and rest in My grace.

Times in your life may sometimes be confusing. There may be occasions when you are tossed to and fro and you feel uncertain, not knowing what the future holds and not knowing which way to go. It is only natural to feel fear in these moments.

You are like My disciples in the boat when the waves roared and the storm raged, and they cried out, “Master! Help us! We will perish!”³ They thought they would die because the storm was so great. You may feel that the turbulence of your emotions and your life are too much. But remember that I am the Lord of your vessel. I can calm the seas. I can keep you through any storm, no matter how long it lasts. Wait on Me. I will never leave you nor forsake you;⁴ I will be the help and the strength that you need in the midst of this turbulence. Hold on to My Word, believe Me through the storm, know that I have never abandoned you and will never abandon you, and I can cause all things to work together for good.

Look for the light at the end of the tunnel. Rest in Me and you will find strength that you know not of.

1. Psalm 61:2 KJV

2. Psalm 94:22 NLT

3. See Luke 8:24.

4. See Hebrews 13:5.

