

“LORD, PLEASE LIFT MY HEART!”

-How many of you made New Years Resolutions?

-What were they?

-Were you able to keep them?

-What are some others that people may make?

-Let me ask you a thought provoking question...Have you ever made a resolution to try to see things on the brighter side of life? To be more positive?

-Why do you think this could be a good idea?

-What do you think the following statement means: “Life is like a bowl of cherries.”?

-Okay, now what do you think the next statement means...”If life is like a bowl of cherries, why am I always in the pits?”

-Have you ever felt this way?

-Or are you feeling this way at the moment?

-Eventually, I have learned that while most people are not *always* in the pits, sometimes there are circumstances in our lives that make us feel like this and will challenge our faith as to whether God really cares? Have you ever felt this way?

-Rather than tell anyone about these feelings, we may bottle them up and then loneliness and despair sets in. Emotions like these often confuse us because we may be asking: “Why am I struggling with these feelings when I *know* the Lord cares about me?” You may also be asking: “Am I the only one who feels this way?”

-To help answer these questions let’s look at some powerful examples of men and women of faith in the Bible who also felt times of loneliness and despair. When I say their name, tell me a time when you think they may have felt despair or loneliness in their lifetime?

A. Moses (When the people were complaining about not having meat, he became frustrated with them and God. He faced despair. Num. 11:10-15)

B. Naomi (When she lost both her sons and her husband. Ruth 1:19-21)

C. Abraham (Waiting for a son for 99 years. Gen. 15:2-3, 17:17-18)

D. David (When his son Absalom took over his throne. Ps. 22:1-2,6-8)

E. Paul (Imprisonment, beaten, shipwrecked, etc. II Cor. 11:23-29)

F. Jesus (praying in the garden before the crucifixion. Luke 22:39-44)

-And we thought we had the market on frustration, fear and affliction!

-No matter what you are going through today, someone has been there before and someone is still there now. Who do you think these great people of faith went to for help? (God, our Comforter, our Strength)

-Peter offers a wonderful promise from a loving God, opening a door of hope in the midst of our difficulties. Let's read aloud and together what he wrote in verse #1 on our Verse Sheet: (I Peter 5:10-11: "And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen!")

-In your own words, what does this promise say? (We may suffer for a little while, but He will restore us and make us strong and steadfast.)

-Let's read what David said in Verse #2 together on our Verse Sheet: (Psalm 73:26&28: "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will **tell of Your deeds.**")

-According to this verse, Who does David take refuge in? (The Sovereign Lord. Sovereign means One who possesses supreme or ultimate power. Our Lord has the ultimate power in our lives, not Satan!)

-At the end of this verse, what does David say he will do? (Tell of His good deeds.)

-Why do you think it is important to tell of God's good deeds in our lives? (It reminds us of His faithfulness and mercy to us in times when Satan would rather us forget that and instead concentrate on our present circumstances that may be challenging to our faith and question His care.)

-The next verse was by Moses after he found out from the Lord that he would not be going to the Promise Land because of his disobedience at the rock with the water. He struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had originally commanded him to do and so God told him he would die before the Israelites reached the Promised Land. Do you think he was disappointed? Sure! But, let's read together what Moses said in Verse #3: (Deuteronomy 32:3-4: "I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.")

-What do you think about his response after this great disappointment? (He recognized that the Lord, his Rock, was faithful and made no wrong decisions. That whatever Moses had to go through, that God was still worthy to be praised!)

-Wow, I don't know about you, but that was pretty convicting for me!

-Let's look at Paul's response when he was beaten and imprisoned with Silas in Macedonia. Let's read in Verse #4 together: (Acts 16:25: "About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.")

-What do you think about his response? (Again, that no matter what hardships we go through, the Lord is still worthy to be praised! People are listening to our testimonies in our times of hardship!)

-What do you think happens to us when, in the midst of despair, we worship and praise the Lord? (It gets our focus off the circumstances and on the Savior!)

-Now let's look at the response that matters the most to us. Jesus, when He was nailed to the cross. Let's read Verse #5 together: (Luke 23:24: "Then said Jesus, Father, *forgive them*; for they know not what they do!")

-What does this mean to you personally? (That in the deepest of despair, our Lord gave us the best example, to turn to our Heavenly Father first, then forgive whomever and whatever is causing the difficult circumstance, and and pray!)

-You see, all throughout scripture, there are stories of people who struggled with real life issues just like each of us today! But yet, there are comforting words through their stories that can help us through these times, words of praise and hope. God desires to offer comfort and strength through His Word when our lives are confusing and seemingly hopeless. All we have to do is just go to Him and His Word and trust in Him and His faithfulness.

-I want to leave you with Verse #6 today, in hopes that it will revive your faith and your heart in the midst of your struggle. Let's read it together: (Proverbs 3:5&6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path!")

-Who should we trust? (The Lord)

-Why is He trustworthy? (Because He is Lord of all! Yahweh, God of all creation and all that exists.)

-According to this verse, how should we trust Him? (With all our heart.)

-That means nothing held back.

-Should we lean on our own understanding of a situation? Why or why not? (Because our understanding is skewed by humanity and a sinful nature. God sees the whole picture!)

-What do you think it means we should acknowledge Him in all our ways? (In everything, recognize that He is present and able to help us walk through all things with His power and wisdom.)

-At the very end of this verse He gives us a promise that He will direct our paths. He leads us through the dark and dreary into the light of His presence. His presence is the light in dark places, His presence is the knowledge of knowing He is there wherever we are at on the pathways of life. It is in Him alone that we find peace!

-Let us lift our hearts and praise Him for Who He is and His presence in our lives.

AMEN!

LORD, PLEASE LIFT MY HEART VERSE SHEET

- 1. I Peter 5:10-11: “And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen!”**
- 2. Psalm 73:26&28: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will *tell of Your deeds.*”)**
- 3. Deuteronomy 32:3-4: “I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He.”**
- 4. Acts 16:25: “About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”**
- 5. Luke 23:24: “Then said Jesus, Father, *forgive them*; for they know not what they do!”**
- 6. Proverbs 3:5&6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path!”**