

“I Can’t”

Can’t Bear It

I marvel at Heman, the poet who wrote Psalm 88. His lot in life was unrelieved distress. “My soul is full of troubles,” he lamented (v.3). He was fed up with suffering. Heman looked back and remembered poor health and misfortune. He looked around and saw adversity and abandonment. He looked up and found no solace. “I am distraught,” he complained (v.15). He was “adrift” (v.5), “in darkness” (v.6), “afflicted” (vv.7,15), and “cast off” (v.14). He could see no light at the end of the tunnel; no resolution of his sorrow.

It seems that the greatest challenge for people who are hurting is often not the immediate heartache of the loss. Instead, the biggest problem is adjusting to the different kind of life that follows. What once was normal may never be normal again. So the challenge for those offering help is to assist the sufferers as they establish the “new normal.” It may be a new normal that no longer includes robust health, a treasured relationship, or a satisfying job. Or it may be living without a loved one who has been taken in death. The gravity of such losses forces us to live a different kind of life—no matter how unwelcome it may be.

When our “new normal” comes, it’s easy to think no one understands how we feel. But that isn’t true. Part of the reason Jesus came was to experience life among us, resulting in His present ministry: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Our Savior lived a perfect life, yet He also knew the pains of a broken world. He endured sorrow; He suffered agony. And He stands ready to encourage us when the dark moments of life force us to embrace a new normal. In our desert of grief, Jesus can provide an oasis of hope.

Can’t Overlook It

Fanny Crosby lost her sight as an infant. Yet, amazingly, she went on to become one of the most well-known lyricists of Christian hymns. During her long life, she wrote over 9,000 hymns. Among them are such enduring favorites as “Blessed Assurance” and “To God Be the Glory.”

Some people felt sorry for Fanny. A well-intentioned preacher told her, “I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you.” It sounds hard to believe, but she replied: “Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I was born blind? Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.”

Fanny saw life with an eternal perspective. Our problems look different in light of eternity: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor. 4:17-18). All our trials dim when we remember that one glorious day we will see Jesus. The way we view eternity will affect the way we live in time.

Can’t Fall Asleep

Try as we might—tossing, turning, fluffing the pillow, pounding the pillow—sometimes we just can’t fall asleep. After offering some good suggestions on how to get a better night’s sleep, a news article concluded that there really is no “right way” to sleep. There are numerous reasons why sleep eludes us, many of which we can’t do much about. But sometimes unwanted wakefulness is caused by anxious thoughts, worry, or guilt. It’s then that the example of David in

Psalm 4 can help. He called out to God, asking for mercy and for God to hear his prayer (v.1). He also reminded himself that the Lord does hear him when he calls on Him (v.3). David encourages us: “Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still” (v.4). Focusing our minds on the goodness, mercy, and love of God for His world, our loved ones, and ourselves can aid us in trusting the Lord (v.5).

The Lord desires to help us set aside our worries about finding solutions to our problems and place our trust in Him to work things out. He can “put gladness” in our hearts (v.7), so that we might “lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make [us] dwell in safety” (v.8). Even when we cannot sleep, God can give us rest.

Can't Remember Me

It seems that young people in China are beginning to forget how to write the characters that comprise the beautiful calligraphy of their traditional language. Some are calling the phenomenon “character amnesia.” Heavy usage of computers and smart phones often means that writing is neglected and some can no longer remember the characters they learned in childhood. One young man said, “People don't write anything by hand anymore except for their name and address.”

Some people appear to have “character amnesia” of a different sort. When faced with a dilemma, they seem to “forget” the right thing to do and instead choose the easy way out.

God called Job “a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). God allowed Satan to take everything Job had—his children, his wealth, and his health. But despite his heart-wrenching circumstances, Job refused to curse God. “In all this, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (v.22). Satan had challenged God's assertion of Job's blameless character, but he was proven wrong.

Character amnesia? No. Character is who we are; it's not something we “forget.” Those who have lost character did so by choice.

Can't Change

We often think God has assigned us to change the world around us, when in reality He is more interested in changing us. Why? To make each of us “a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2Tim. 2:21). God often uses the most unlikely people in the most unlikely places to teach us some of life's most difficult lessons. And just when we think we've arrived, He is instructing us further. If you want to be an agent of change for the better, don't resist the true Source of Change. He has your best interests and His at heart. Only when we are changed can we become agents of change for the better.

A Moments Wisdom

- Speak the truth in love, then let it settle in rather than hammer it in.
- Our world teaches people the first tenet of the faith of selfishness: “Be yourself.” The Bible teaches us a higher state of being: “Be like Jesus.”
- Dwelling on the negative simply contributes to its power.
- The strangest fact about negative emotions is that some people actually prefer them.
- God never built a Christian strong enough to carry yesterday's sorrows and tomorrow's anxieties piled on the top of today's duties.
- Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.