

# **A Blessing in the Storm...**

Muscular Dystrophy messed up my life  
and made me whole Volume Two

by  
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Thank you for blessing me with the purchase of my memoir. I've prayed over every page, asking God to give you hope through my words. Most of all, I asked Him to make His love abundantly apparent in your life. I hope you are encouraged by my story. My friend, always remember this...

*"There is no pit so deep that God isn't deeper." ~ Corrie Ten Boom*

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*What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the rooftop for all to hear!" Matthew 10: 27*

## **Introduction**

I really don't understand why my body is so broken. Physically speaking, everything is an obstacle course for me! Although the physical pain is there, it pales in comparison to the emotional pain I feel. Nobody understands what I'm feeling on the inside. But really, how could they? It's not happening to them. Sinister voices are whispering all sorts of things to me... "You're such a fool if you think your physical life and happiness matter to God! He doesn't care you have no balance or coordination. Nor does it matter to Him you hardly have any sensation in your legs from the knees down. You're crazy if you think He cares at all that your toes curl, or that it even matters to Him the AFO's (Ankle Foot Orthotics) you are forced to wear are pressing their metal footplates into your feet."

How pathetic! But how real! Amidst those dark voices, I hear my Savior calling me...

*"My daughter, you could have never written that with the raw emotion of someone who is experiencing this battle without experiencing it for yourself. There are many others who are walking down the same road, and fighting the same battle. You are credible. You are living this. There is no other way for people to believe you. Now you have the compassion I had planned for you to have since time began. You are my mouthpiece. You are an encourager."*

These words spoken by God Almighty are the only reason I need to tell you my story. I know I am to write and publish succeeding volumes of “A Blessing in the Storm... Muscular Dystrophy messed up my life and made me whole.” Only God knows the number of volumes I am to write. My story will surely continue. And when the physical healing does come, people will see how I persevered and ran my race through the good, the bad, and the ugly. And God will receive much glory!

So with that said, I know with absolute certainty that Volume Two needs to begin in such a way as to clearly convey to you this dark place I’ve frequented, and still revisit sometimes. It’s a place where my flesh takes over and screams so many things that contradict God’s Word. It’s a dark place inhabited by demons. It’s a place where they relentlessly push my buttons and invade my thoughts. If I entertain those thoughts long enough, they can have me thinking things of doom and gloom. As soon as these dark and depressing feelings come, is when I have to go straight to my dad—My Heavenly Father. With all of the crazy things going on inside my head, all I can muster to say sometimes is “H-E-L-P.” But God knows that word, and He always - ALWAYS comes to my rescue.

Chances are that you’ve read Volume One, and know all about the snotty, self-centered girl I used to be. In my past life I was a spoiled “princess” existing to serve only myself, but I can tell you that my new life is all about serving King Jesus!

The most significant, but the hardest thing I've learned is that my value or your value has nothing to do with how you look, what you wear, the job you have, what you've accomplished, or the things you've accumulated. Our value and identity has everything to do with *Who* we belong to. Most would agree that we can learn more about God from difficult times than from happy times. Adversity is the “boot camp” that refines our character.

My entire perception on God was transformed by suffering. No longer are my priorities out of order. I know who I am, whom I belong to, and where I belong. I've discovered what it means to live by faith. Trusting God is a matter of the will, and has nothing to do with feelings. Feelings change.

I can't even pretend to be a scholar, but I can and will share the many things I've learned over the last eleven years I've been walking with Jesus Christ. I speak with the authority of experience. Although Muscular Dystrophy was the catalyst helping me see my need for God, I want to stress that this book is not just about physical suffering. It's for anyone suffering with anything. It's for precious souls who have been beaten down by life. When I'm hurting and need to be encouraged, I want to hear from someone who has been, or is going through the fire. I've been through the fire! I'm still going through the fire! Let me say that I couldn't have learned what God has shown me if it wasn't for this disease. The deepest growth in my life occurs in my suffering. It's where God meets me, and I know that after I am tested I will come out as gold! It's truly just as the Bible says...

*"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." 2 Corinthians 1: 4*

Passing on God's comfort is precisely what I plan on doing. So with that said, let's press on. Let's continue running the race of faith!

*"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart." Ezekiel 36: 26*

## Chapter One

### Weaned from the World

*“Most assuredly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in the world will keep it for eternal life.” John 12: 24-25*

Those are some pretty powerful words spoken by Jesus. A grain of wheat must die before it can reproduce itself. In other words, for the spirit to live the flesh must die. So the person following Jesus must die to all purposes in life that are contrary to the will of God. He or she is a person who is so committed to living for Jesus; their earthly life is of less importance and value than serving Him. Being weaned off of the world is certainly no picnic. Nobody willingly walks down the road to Calvary. Calvary is the road that speaks of genuine brokenness and a crushing of self. God uses suffering to afflict the heart and conquer the mind.

To be effective for God’s Kingdom, the heartstrings of our old nature have to be broken. Our unyielding character, which we inherited from Adam, has to be grounded to powder; and that means the breaking of our self-will and self-confidence! Being separated from the things we rely on for comfort and stability, and losing things we hold dear is extremely painful! At the onset of this disease, my body, mind, and soul was plunged into great darkness. I was thrown into a deep pit, where I was confronted with humiliation after humiliation! Yes friends, my soul has throbbed with the agonizing groans of Gethsemane. For lack of better words, the weaning

process is a living nightmare. There is a cutting away of earthly attachments. There is also a deafening silence coming from the throne of God, and every fiber of your being tries to make you believe He has abandoned you.

You may now be at the place I've just described. You may now feel disconnected and lonely. Perhaps you are a brand new Christian, wondering why God would let this adversity come your way. On the other hand, you may be a long-time Christian who always thought you've been trusting Him, but now you're finding that you've been trusting and relying entirely too much on the very thing that has been taken away. It could be your career, your finances, your health, your family and friends, or a thousand other things. Pits come in a wide variety. If you're not a Christian now, I have good news for you. When and if you decide to ask Jesus to be your personal Lord and Savior, the Father gives you a promise...

*"All things work together for the good of those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8: 28*

*"All things work together for good."* Please hear this... even as you question, hold onto God. Keep trusting. Keep waiting. This is a season where Almighty God is starting to prepare you for something much greater than you and I. God never kicked me when I was down. He won't fail you. He will lift your head, and will give you the exact amount of His grace to get you through whatever you're up against. I am greatly encouraged in the midst of my suffering because that's where He meets me. He reveals things to me that otherwise would never come if not for Muscular Dystrophy. Yes, He's walking right beside me in this storm; and more often than not, He's carrying me. He has led me to find small clues as to what is happening to me and why. Yes, He gave me *very small clues* in His Word to help me get a grip on this thing called suffering. Just as He promised, a path was set before me...

*"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with my eye." Psalm 32: 8*

He shows me His truths whether it's through sermons I hear, books I read, or just simply showing me His love through friends and people I encounter every day. In some way or another, He always reinforces His love to me.

YET LOVE PERMITS PAIN. I'll say that again, LOVE PERMITS PAIN. How many of us at one time or another entertained this thought,

*"If God doesn't fix my problem He must not love me."*

That thought entered my head so many times. Because of your circumstances, you may be tempted to question His love for you. We must realize that there are many things God doesn't fix *because He loves us*. Instead of removing us from the problem, He uses that problem to call us. Yes, He calls us. I think if we look at the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, we may begin to start looking at suffering in a new light. Jesus likens the Kingdom of God to a man discovering treasure hidden in a field. Jesus tells us...

*"In the man's excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field." Matthew 13: 44*

Take a minute or two to really think about this; Jesus talks of a treasure hidden in a field, a field that's not a sun-drenched, grass-green meadow; but a dry and sun-scorched, bleak and empty space. Once we realize the treasure we find in it, we start to look differently at our circumstance. Our perspective changes, and just like the man who uncovers the treasure, we "sell everything we own." This means saying goodbye to the pity parties,

the complaining, and the other bitter questions we were so used to asking. We won't be used by God until all self-pity is gone.

In order for God to take you deeper and most intimately into Himself, He must expose all in you that is not of Himself. At first it seems extremely cruel to be cut off from earthly things and people we rely on for comfort and stability. But it's in this time that the familiar sounds and voices from the world are exchanged for the peace and serenity that comes only from the throne of God. When this happens, God suddenly becomes everything! And having Him as our only resource is exactly what He wants! He will calm and color everything we see. This may mean that we do less outward visible work, but the work that we end up doing has more depth and power. This scripture in Isaiah says it all...

*"And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name." Isaiah 45: 3*

The death of my "perfect world" has caused me to find those treasures in darkness God is talking about. I know without a doubt that God has allowed this difficulty to come because it has brought me closer to Him. I will not let this time of trial be a separation. I will cling tighter and tighter to my Lord Jesus. I will still press on through my darkness, because God says there are more treasures to be found. Some of those treasures I can now see in the form of being able to encourage others in their darkness. I know by being faithful and not giving up, I will surely find out that the most exquisite work in my life was done during these dark days. With all certainty, I know that someday I will watch as He brings about goodness and beauty from all of my pain and tears. I now see that death of self is a gateway of life!



I want to share something with you that's a profound confirmation of what the Lord is doing/has done in my life, and perhaps it will be a confirmation for you too... a help for when the things of life throw you for a loop, and you just don't understand why whatever it is, is happening.

I am talking about isolation, the kind of isolation where our soul no longer depends on the continual help, prayers, faith, and care of others. To be alone with God is a place where we are no longer dependent on those around us. The place of isolation is where we absorb power from the Living God.

*“But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31*

We all want to soar like eagles, but take a moment and think about this... there isn't a bird that lives in as much solitude as an eagle. They never fly in flocks, and you rarely see two eagles together. This may mean renouncing or separating ourselves from specific people or things, leaving a strange sense of deprivation and loneliness.

But take heart, for it's in the experience of isolation that God develops an independence of life and faith. Most importantly, *He develops a dependence on Him*. Assistance and inspiration from others is necessary. It definitely helps us grow and bloom in our Christian walk, but sometimes it can actually become a hindrance to a person's faith and welfare. A good example of this very thing in my life is how God had to break the relationship between me and a spiritual mentor, because I was getting way too dependent on *her* faith, and I was neglecting to put all of my trust and faith in God.

God certainly knows how to change our circumstances in order to isolate us. It may take a little while, but once we yield to Him through an experience of isolation, we begin to realize He has done a new work within us, and that the wings of our soul have learned to soar in loftier air. We learn how to live in the sunshine of God, and be content in any storm that comes up against us. No one ever arrives into the full realization of the best things of God in his spiritual life without learning to walk with Him alone. One more thing... A life that is dedicated to God, *knows divine fellowship*, no matter how many human friendships have to be forfeited along the way!

If not for our suffering and adversity, where would our faith be? When suffering comes, it reveals the core of who we are. If we're truthful with ourselves, we usually don't like what we see. It's immature to believe our lives are going to be prosperous and problem free when we become Christians. That's not Christ's teaching. Sure, there are going to be good times, but God wants to make us mature and complete, and that will never happen without pain and struggles. Let's look at what Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth...

*"We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. And He did rescue us from mortal danger and He will rescue us again."* 2 Cor. 1: 8-10

Paul doesn't go into details about the hardships he endured, but we do know they were bad enough to make him think he wasn't going to make it. Paul and his companions realized they could do nothing to help themselves, only to rely on God. Let's be honest, how often do we go through things and think we aren't going to make it? Some people are

very fortunate to learn from the experiences of others who have gone before them. And then there are hard heads, like myself, or those who never had a chance to grab hold of this truth found in Scripture. Some of us are still trying to depend on our own skills and resources. Sometimes it's only when we agonize and struggle, do we turn to God. He is our source of strength and power. Suffering is what drives us, and keeps on driving us to our knees.

Now I know this is going to rock the theology of some, but God ordained this disability. He's the One who has hemmed me in. How can I say that? All you have to do is read your Bible. I really do understand how some can disagree and debate me over that, but it's not until suffering plops itself down in the middle of your life do you start to seriously seek what God has to say about it. "God is in control" is one of the simplest things for us to say, but when suffering strips things away from you like a jackhammer plows through cement, you realize the true magnitude of your own existence. All of us are spiritually bankrupt without Jesus. Let's let scripture speak...

*"He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; he has shrouded my path into darkness." Job 19: 8*

*"I will bring calamity upon them from every direction," says the Lord.  
Jeremiah 49: 32*

*"He has made me dwell in darkness." Lamentations 2: 6*

*"Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him." John 9:2-3*

*"But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope. She will give herself to me there." Hosea 2: 14-15*

Oh, how I've learned that God speaks to us in the desert! That's where we're free from distractions, and we can seriously tune into God. When we're hemmed in from all sides, the only place to look is up. But of course we all have the freedom to become bitter and choose not to look up.

Here's a hard-won ruby of wisdom... I've learned how to walk humbly with my God. I am no longer the same shallow, snotty girl, who was convinced the world revolved around her. Yes I'm talking about suffering, the suffering that took me on the most difficult ride of my life, pushing me to the very brink. I've had moments when I wanted to take my own life, but that's when Jesus stepped in and took it instead. Muscular Dystrophy just happened to be the vessel used to veer me off the destructive path I was on. It was a path where I measured my value and worth on my health and appearance. I was so broken, and this brokenness is what literally and figuratively brought me to my knees. In the midst of the most severe storm of my life is where I found my Life-Giver!

I sure don't have this "disabled" thing down. I'm certainly not a professional at this! I can never forget the sorrow and grief, but God in His wisdom has used both of these things to build my character and make me strong. I can never say that "I have arrived." To arrive in Jesus' arms is a lifelong process. Dying to self is ridiculously difficult. But once we surrender and lay our self-will and pride at the feet of Jesus, a certain sweetness of the heart comes. And that sweetness attracts the enemy, just like honey attracts bees. There is nothing new the enemy is using in battle. His best weapons are depression, guilt, and discouragement. He is actively looking for people to attack with temptation, because he wants to make people hate God. He does this through planting lies, and tries to

deceive us in the battleground of our minds. He's the one initiating the pity parties...

*But the Giant's calling out my name and he laughs at me, reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed. The giant keeps on telling me time and time again..." Boy... you'll never win, you'll never win."*

Those are the lyrics to the song "Voice of Truth" by Casting Crowns, and they are the exact words I hear... "You'll never win, you'll never win." The song continues...

*But the Voice of Truth tells me a different story. The Voice of Truth says, "Do not be afraid." The Voice of Truth says, "This is for my glory." Out of all the voices calling out to me, I will choose to listen and believe the Voice of Truth.*

I know what the Bible says. It tells me that God delights in *every detail* of my life. I would be a fool to turn away from the only One who can truly help me. He alone speaks the Words of Life.

When all of this medical craziness eventually drove me to my knees, reading the story of Job comforted me. The reason I was so intrigued with this book is because God pulls the curtain aside, so we may see what is going on behind the scenes. The story of Job blasts a giant hole into thinking that God only lets us experience happiness, cotton candy, and marshmallows!

We read that Satan approached God, and told Him that the only reason Job worships and trusts Him is because He put a protective hedge around him; Job was a prosperous farmer, had a large family, and had huge holdings of livestock. Job had been greatly blessed, making him a perfect

target for Satan. God gave Satan permission to assault Job on every side. This would be Job's greatest test. Would he cave under pressure and curse God, or would He remain faithful to Him?

*"One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. "Where have you come from?" the Lord asked Satan. Satan answered the Lord, "I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that's going on." Job 1: 6-7*

*Then the Lord asked Satan, "Have you noticed my servant, Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil." Job 1: 8*

*Satan replied to the Lord, "Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" Job 1: 9-11*

*"All right, you may test him," the Lord said to Satan. "Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don't harm him physically." So Satan left the Lord's presence. Job 1: 12*

Satan went to work. Job lost his children, his livestock, his farmhands, and his servants. He was devastated. Job was stripped down to his foundation, but that foundation was built on Almighty God. Satan still held to his opinion that Job was faithful to God only because of His blessings...

*Satan replied to the Lord, "Skin for skin, a man will give up everything he has to save his life. But reach out and take away his health and he will surely curse you to your face!" Job 2: 4*

*“All right, do with him as you please,” the Lord said to Satan. “But spare his life.” Job 2: 5*

God permitted Satan to attack Job physically, but He drew the line when it came to preserving his life. So Satan’s next step was to inflict physical suffering upon Job to prove his original accusation. He struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot. Despite these calamities—these personal attacks—Job still trusted in God.

A few of Job’s friends came to grieve with him. They told Job that he must be suffering because of some terrible sin he committed. They believed that good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. Bad things never happen to good people. Trouble never comes to those who love and obey God. They felt that their role was to persuade Job to repent of the hidden sin in his life causing his suffering.

The story of Job now takes a very interesting turn. Here comes a bystander, a young man named Elihu, who offers another explanation for the pain, by pointing out that God might be allowing it to purify Job. Elihu says suffering isn't always sent to punish us; it's mostly meant to correct and restore us, to get us on the right path and keep us there. He claimed he had the answer to Job's question, which in turn is the same question humanity has asked throughout the ages, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

*“For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride. He protects them from the grave from crossing over the river of death.” Job 33: 14-18*

*"If they are bound in chains and caught up in a web of trouble, he shows them the reason. He shows them their sins of pride. He gets their attention and commands that they turn from evil. But by means of their suffering, he rescues those who suffer; for he gets their attention through adversity." Job 36: 10, 15*

We sin when we angrily ask with our clenched fists, "If God is in control, how could He let this happen?" Questioning like this mirrors a lack of trust. We're unable to see beyond today, and we can't know the reasons for everything that happens. We have to choose between doubt and trust. Will you trust God with all of your unanswered questions? Or, are you using what you can't understand as an excuse for lack of trust? What does the above scripture say again?

*"He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride; for he gets their attention through adversity."*

I was the queen of pride! I was certainly going down the wrong path. I was on the highway to hell, and was totally oblivious to it. Yeah, I grew up in religion. I knew about Jesus, but so does the Devil! I did what Satan and the world told me to do... look out for number one and forget about Jesus! Because God speaks to us through dreams, let me share a dream with you that I used to have. I say used to, because I am certain this dream speaks about the way I was living before Jesus came on the scene...

It was always the same dream. The dream would always begin with me getting ready to leave my home for work. Before I would leave, I would make sure all of the windows and doors were locked, so nobody could break in and get access to my home and possessions. When I'd come home from work, I would always be met with an open door. The open



door was evidence someone gained access to violate me and my things! No matter where I was living, or regardless of how many precautions I took to make my home safe from invasion, the intruder somehow *a/ways* found a way in. I really believe this dream reveals how vulnerable I was. It so clearly speaks of how I had allowed the enemy to have free access to everything I owned. Satan and his demons did as they pleased.

*"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:35*

Honesty is the mark of a good writer. I'm going to be honest and say that some Christians erroneously believe that if God loves you, you won't suffer. I heard that coming out of someone's mouth at my church! At church! That is something that has the potential of stripping someone down to their emotional core; especially if someone is a new believer. Oh and by the way, especially if they're sick in their bodies!

Please hear me when I say this. If you are sick in your body, and you've tried everything you could to alleviate yourself out of your illness and nothing works, AND you are a devout follower of Christ... realize that God is allowing you to physically suffer. I'll say it again. God is allowing you to physically suffer. The only thing you can do is accept the situation and be determined to carry on the best you can. That's the only way you will benefit from your darkness and captivity. Worrying about your situation or striving against what God has placed in your life will only tighten the cord that is binding you! Someone actually told me I was sick because I'm accepting Muscular Dystrophy. Wow, if I never accepted this as coming from the hand of God, I would be an emotional and spiritual wreck. Don't be like Job's buddies. Don't judge anyone until you've walked in their shoes. Our problems cannot always be fixed, but they can be accepted as the will of God for us now, and later will be turned into something

beautiful. Contentment in life happens when you know you are where you belong.

*“For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.” 2 Timothy 2: 11*

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Ministry of comfort**

*“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12: 8-9*

“How can your grace be sufficient in Muscular Dystrophy, God? Your grace is *not* enough for me. I know you cannot be serious. How can you expect me to live like this? Don't you see my heart is breaking?” That was my soul's cry. My flesh seemed to be always screaming for my undivided attention. I was having the most difficult time trying to digest these words found in 2 Corinthians. “PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE heal me, were words that barely escaped my mouth through the myriad of tears that streamed down my face. And I'll never forget the many times I was on the bathroom floor holding my head; all I could do was sob and beg for the pain to be taken away, because I suffer from chronic Migraines.

Over the years I have learned a most important truth. Genuine and lasting comfort only comes from His Word! The Bible reveals verses about suffering that are nothing but life changing. Friends, I've been there and I

know at times we're tempted to think God is uncaring or unmoved by our pain. Despite our thoughts, He's not indifferent to us at all. God meets and ministers to us in our suffering. His Word is divinely designed to help explain the why's, and to encourage us in our suffering. It's what will help us to better face and respond to our trials with victory, not defeat. Until we understand this, we can wallow in self-pity and become eaten up by our suffering. We can become angry and miserable Christians, who gripe and complain in our afflictions.

When I say "comfort," what kind of things come to your mind? A soft and cushy King size bed? Air conditioning on a hot day? Chocolate? We tend to think of things that make us feel restful and relaxed. Biblical comfort doesn't mean comfy and cozy! If you look up the word "comfort" in a Bible Concordance, you'd find something very interesting... the Greek word *parakletos* is where our word comfort is derived. *Parakletos* is a word that means "to come alongside" for the purpose of strengthening or encouraging. Interestingly so, isn't the Holy Spirit also called "*The Paraclete*?" How merciful and compassionate of God to come alongside us and strengthen our troubled souls with His Word. With that in mind, let's look at the above verse again...

*"... My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* 2 Corinthians 12: 8-9a

The Bible says these were the words spoken directly to Paul for the sole purpose of comforting him. Was that enough for Paul? Did God minister comfort to him? You bet. Now Paul sang a new song...

*"Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong".* 2 Corinthians 9b-10

You may be saying, “Sounds wonderful, but you have no idea what I’m facing.” While that may be true, I know with certainty that someone doesn’t need to be going through or have gone through the same trial or circumstance as you. In other words, ministering comfort to someone afflicted with cancer doesn’t require that I now have, or had to have had cancer in the past to administer the same comfort God has given to me in my trial. Very important; I don’t have to be a quadriplegic to minister God’s comfort to another quadriplegic. For sure, there are times where it helps to have similar experiences, but we don’t have to encounter the exact pain or suffering in order to share the comfort God has given to us in our time of need. The comfort is in the Word, not in the experience! God’s provision of comfort is equal to whatever circumstance you may find yourself in. And to prove that...

*“For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 1: 5*

*“The more He will shower us with His comfort.”* It’s a waste of time to look for comfort apart from God’s Word! I’ve learned that if you put your hope in this world, there is none. We will do well if we keep this in mind... we cannot be a man or woman of God without some type of suffering. But be encouraged, God’s character never changes. If He ministered to Paul this way, He will surely minister to you. He is, and forever will be the God of comfort. Afflictions are the price we pay to sympathize. And I’m not saying the first thing you should do when encountering a hurting person is quote scripture to them. Sometimes just being there and listening is soothing to their soul. Those who wish to help others must be willing to face the cross. We would have missed out on the heartbeat of tenderness resonating through many of Paul’s letters if the Holy Spirit didn’t inspire Paul to tell us about his “thorn in the flesh” and reveal how God ministered comfort to him.

Look at it this way, ships are built with the intention of sailing through rough seas and weathering storms. When someone builds a ship and doesn't build it strong enough to ride out blustery weather, it makes that person a poor ship builder, right? The same thing applies to believers. When you were born again, you were meant to be tested. God made His promises suitable for times of wind and stormy weather. It all comes down to trusting Him. I have a friend who told me to pay special attention to the verb in each of His promises. For example, "I *will* never," "I *will* do this," and "I *will* do that." Get it? God's Word of promise is meant to be tried and tested. His promises are YES and AMEN. Use them for your comfort.

The Psalms seem to be a great antidote in times of trouble. They truly express the heart and soul of humanity. David and the other psalmists honestly poured out their true feelings, and asked God for help with their fears and depression. They held back nothing, we hear raw emotion. Every sorrow was yet another note on David's harp, and every deliverance he experienced in his life became a song of praise! If David escaped or was delivered from just one of those sorrowful experiences, just imagine what we could have missed out on! When I'm in the fire, it comforts me to hear from others who are also in or have been in the fire. Time and time again, the psalms help comfort me and countless others when sorrow and despair come knocking on our door.

Please don't allow suffering to make you wallow in self-pity. Stop you're complaining, because the only thing complaining does is give a foothold to the devil. When we complain, we start to worry; worry opens itself up to fear, and before we know it we're speaking words of death instead of words that bring life! Why not pick up your Bible and see what God has to say about whatever has taken hold of you? Only God knows all of the reasons suffering happens, but I know one of the reasons is so that we can comfort others in their time of pain. Not only are we all ministers of comfort, but another reason for this "refining" is so we will be able to pass

on the insights we learn to others. It's the way God works; a deeper dying to self has endless powers of multiplying life in others.

My friend, your pain and suffering is not in vain! You've tried every way that you possibly can to get yourself out of the situation or circumstance you're in, and nothing seems to work - nothing! You feel trapped. You may feel lonely, angry, suicidal, depressed, confused, etc. I know your emotions are scattered all over the map. I know this because mine were too. You're most probably asking, "Why me? Why this? Why now?" There are a million questions going through your mind, and this is where I can let experience speak: my illness caused me to start asking questions, and those questions led me into the fullness of surrender. Oh make no mistake... I was angry at God and the world, but at the same time, so hungry for answers. I had to know why I was going through this, and wouldn't be satisfied until I heard what God Almighty had to say about it. Of course only He entirely knows why, but the Bible does give us some clues as to why we suffer. I've found so much truth in Scripture that helped me wrap my head around the "whys," and I intend to pass along that same comfort to you. So chapter five is full of various scripture that you can meditate on and memorize, but allow me to share a few verses here...

*"But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves by selling me to this place. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and preserve many survivors. It was God who sent me here, not you!" Genesis 45: 5, 7-8*

*"Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" Jesus replied, "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sin. This happened so the power of God could be seen in him." John 9:1-3*

*“God chose things the world considers powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world; things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.” 1 Corinthians 1: 27-28*

The fact is that certain aspects of God’s nature will always remain a mystery. We can believe and put our trust in that, or we can choose not to. We would never see the depths of God’s character without sharing in His suffering. Learn these truths because it will help you make sense of the suffering in your own life. God is not out to hurt us; His intention is to mature us. You will never truly “get that” unless you experience the pain that is designed by God to teach you His truths and apply them to your life. God’s Word is most definitely my number one source of comfort. I think I should tell you that there are many tear-stained pages in my Bible. Some tears that were caused from joy, and even more that were caused from sorrow and grief. And now, overwhelming tears of joy stream down my cheeks when I realize how far God has brought this girl. How He can treat someone so broken down with so much mercy, is nothing but amazing and humbling. Very rough around the edges, He saw me as precious diamond in the rough. I’ve been miraculously transformed, and love to tell anyone how great he is!

Those who say that suffering is not God’s will, fail to see God as Lord over everything, including our afflictions! I used to struggle with this, and second guess whether or not I was doing or not doing what God wanted me to do. Not only is God sovereign, but He sends and controls everything into our lives.

*“Trust the Lord with all your heart and do not depend on your own understanding; Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your path”.*  
Proverbs 3: 5-6...

We certainly don't understand everything about this, but when God allows something to come into our lives, that alone should tell us it's God's perfect will. But here's the deciding factor... are you seeking His will? If so, He promises to direct you. Sometimes that's hard to accept, especially when what we see in front of us sends the message that God doesn't care, or somehow we messed up. It's all predetermined. I know how hard that may be to wrap your head around, but let's first look at some scripture that speaks about God preordaining things...

*"You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed." Psalm 139: 4, 16*

*"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"*  
*Ephesians 1:4*

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* Ephesians 2: 10

*"Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?" "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins."*

*Indeed, Jesus answered, "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him." John 9:2-3*

Afflictions are the price we pay to sympathize. Those who wish to help others must be willing to face the cross. I'd like to address something that is assumed most Christians have a good understanding of...



*“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16: 24*

*Taking up your cross* is something that I believe is misused and misunderstood by many. It's very interesting that some people view their hardships, burdens and difficulties as their cross. But they're wrong. It's not a burden, because burdens are common. It's not a disability. It's not a financial crisis. It's not a weight problem. It's not anything other than your mind and your attitude. With the words “taking up your cross,” Jesus is referring to making a choice to die to yourself; to deny yourself, making a total commitment to Christ, and yielding to Him as Lord. Let's take a look at what Jesus says next...

*“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”  
Matthew 16: 25-26*

When Jesus used this picture of His followers taking up their crosses, they knew without any doubt precisely what He meant. Crucifixion was a common Roman method of execution, and condemned criminals had to carry the cross through the city streets to the execution site. Losing their lives was a very real possibility for Jesus' followers. Being Jesus' real disciple requires a real commitment. If we are striving to protect ourselves from the pain God calls us to suffer, we begin to die spiritually. But how amazing it is when we give our life in service to Christ. We truly discover the real purpose of our lives!

I'd like to share with you some amazing insights I received in God's Word. The stories of Joseph and David have given me the greatest measure of comfort. God has been so kind to me by putting things in front of me (mostly books) to let me somewhat understand what's happening to me in

this whole suffering thing. And my job is to pass it along to you. I've come to understand that God's method is usually to give a vision or a dream first. But before the fulfillment of the dream occurs, all hell usually breaks loose! In both stories we see that, but we also see that what defines us is not the events or circumstances we were surrounded by. The most critical thing is how we respond to those circumstances. My hope is that both of these stories will undoubtedly show you that endurance, patience, and character, are byproducts of perseverance. Trusting that God knows what He's doing is key. And when you come to the place of absolute trust in Him, a multitude of fruit will grow and ripen!

### **Story of Joseph, which begins in Genesis 37...**

Joseph had two dreams, which both implied that he would become a great leader who would have authority over his brothers. The Bible says Joseph was seventeen years old when his adversity began.

He was thrown into a pit by his brothers, and sold for 20 pieces of silver to slave traders, who took him away to Egypt. The slave traders then sold Joseph to Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh, who made him his house slave. Potiphar's wife repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph, but each time he refused her because he was a godly man that had integrity. Potiphar's wife was outraged at Joseph's rejection, so she accused Joseph of rape. After Potiphar got the news of this, he seized Joseph and put him in prison. So you can say that poor Joseph found himself up to his neck in adversity! But praise God, because throughout Joseph's story, the Bible tells us *"God was with him and caused everything he did to succeed."*

While Joseph was in prison he interpreted a dream for one of his cellmates, who just happened to be the Pharaoh's chief cupbearer. He promised Joseph that he would do whatever he could for him if he ever got out of prison. Well the cupbearer did get out of prison and returned to

Pharaoh's staff, but forgot all about Joseph! Poor Joseph rotted in jail for two more years. Two whole years!

Now Pharaoh has some disturbing dreams, but his wise men can't tell him what they mean. It was then that the Pharaoh's cupbearer remembers Joseph, and tells Pharaoh about the Hebrew in prison who can interpret dreams. Pharaoh immediately orders Joseph to be brought to him. With God's help, Joseph was able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. There would be seven prosperous years followed by seven years of famine in the land of Egypt. Joseph told Pharaoh that the solution to this problem would be to store up some grain from the seven plentiful years, and then the later seven years of famine wouldn't destroy the nation.

Pharaoh was so thrilled and impressed with Joseph's wisdom, that he made him second in command in all the land of Egypt! Only Pharaoh himself had greater authority. The Bible says that Joseph was now thirty years old. Do the math. His troubles started in his teenage years, and he didn't come out until he was thirty! This entire process took at least 13 years!

The dreams Joseph had before all of his troubles started, eventually came true. How often do we think our dreams have died when we're in the midst of adversity? This appears to be God's way... to let us go through trials so we can produce a multitude of fruit to bless others. I have to believe that God will give us our dreams back, and I have to believe that God has prepared an amazing future for each one of His children! For me, one word describes this story – *preparation*. Turns out, that all the adversity Joseph endured was his “boot camp.” It made him ready to take on the role as Egypt's governor. It also put him in position to rule over his brothers, just like he had originally dreamt. We see that God's plan was to preserve the nation of Israel, and He did that through Joseph.

## **Story of David, which begins in 1 Samuel 16...**

The Bible doesn't give us David's age when he was anointed king of Israel by Samuel the prophet, but it does tell us he was the youngest of Jesse's seven sons. After Samuel anointed him, the Bible makes sure to tell us...

*"... and the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day."*

*1 Samuel 16:13*

Saul, the king of Israel, was extremely impulsive by nature. He tended to overstep his bounds. He was disobedient to God on several occasions, and God rejected him. The Bible tells us that when the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, a tormenting spirit was sent that filled him with depression and fear. So to ease Saul's troubled mind, his servants had brought in a musician who played soothing music with the harp. And that musician just so happened to be David. He played the harp, along with reciting prayers of praise and sorrows to the Lord while he was out in the fields tending his father's sheep. Being a shepherd is not rocket science, so David had a lot of time on his hands. But he used that time to develop an intimate relationship with the Lord. He also used this time to sharpen his talents and skills. The Bible tells us that David fought and killed lions and bears in order to protect his sheep. His prayers of praise and sorrow, better known as the Psalms, have comforted countless souls throughout the years. The Psalms give us a glimpse of the closeness and strength of David's walk with God. I heard an excellent teaching on the story of David, which I think will encourage and speak to you as it did to me...

The Bible doesn't go into much detail about David's family, but it does tell us that when the prophet Samuel came to Jesse's house to anoint the new king, everyone was there except David. The Bible says he was *"... out in the fields watching the sheep and goats."*

Now, I would think it would be a very big deal when the infamous Man of God comes to your house! Because David wasn't present for this important event, gives me the impression that his family didn't pay much attention to him. Perhaps they even thought of him as insignificant. David was the greatest harp player in Israel, but his family didn't know that! From what we see in the Bible suggests that his family really wasn't interested in what or how David was doing. Maybe you're in that same position today. Maybe your family treats you as a piece of insignificance? Nobody seems interested in you or what you're doing. Treatment like that may make you feel unwanted. But take heart beloved, and watch how the story ends...

A time comes when Jesse sends David to bring food to his three older brothers, who are serving in the Israelite army. Off David goes and walks straight into a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. I think we're all familiar with the story of David and Goliath, but let me draw your attention here...

*"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" 1 Samuel 17: 26*

*Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." 1 Samuel 17: 28*

*And David said, "What have I done now?" 1 Samuel 17: 29*

The sarcastic way that Eliab spoke to David, "*And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?*" gives me further reason to think

that David was treated insignificantly by his family. Then David's reply, "*What have I done now?*" tells me he was probably always getting yelled at or made fun of.

David was the greatest king of Israel. God Himself describes David as a man after His own heart. I could write many things about David, but my focus is on his suffering - the many years he ran from Saul, in fear of losing his life.

Remember that David lived in the Old Testament, and the Holy Spirit was not yet given to all believers. The Bible tells us that from the moment Samuel anointed him, "*The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David.*" When the anointing of God is upon someone, they become a huge threat to the kingdom of darkness. The enemy attacks and it usually results in all hell breaking loose in that person's life! Yet, God allows all hell to break loose! Why? Because it trains and prepares us for something. The time David spent running and hiding from Saul in the wilderness was a time of isolation. All of the crutches in David's life were gone – his friends, his family, his home, and his possessions. As painful of a time this was for David, it was time used to develop a close walk with God. The Psalms give us a tender glimpse of that intimacy. It was a connection close enough for David to be called a man after God's own heart. I want that. My most pressing desire is for God to call me a woman after His own heart.

Let me tell you why this is a story that brings me abundant comfort...

*"Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; **and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.**"* 1 Samuel 16: 13

If you've read Volume One, then you remember I wrote about a friend, a spiritual mentor, who came alongside me and helped me learn the things

of God. She spoke words over my life, words that I believe came from inspiration of the Holy Spirit. After reading this about David, I was reminded of a verse in scripture that she spoke over me...

***“Arise; shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.” Isaiah 60: 1***

I cried tears of joy as I remembered that. God is so good to me.

***Adversity = God’s training ground***

## **Chapter Three**

### **Waiting, is it really a Gift of Time?**

As painful as it is, it most certainly is a gift. We have to understand that God isn’t out to hurt us, but He wants to heal and mature us. Don’t say God isn’t with you when He seems distant and silent. He’s simply waiting on you, because the waiting makes YOU love Him more. While you are waiting on Him your faith is greatly developing, and you’re learning more and more how to exercise your gift of grace. Continue to wait in hope, for He will never come too early or arrive too late. God is more concerned with our character than our comfort. He will allow our earthly comforts to fail us, so we can learn how to depend only on Him. And this doesn’t happen overnight. It’s a learning process.

Why is it that we so easily become impatient with God's delays? We want our Christian walk to mirror the things of God, right? Then why is it that God walks so slowly most of the time? I'm a person that wants everything done yesterday, and you probably are too. It's human nature not to want to wait on God. We want fruit, and we want it now! It doesn't matter that the fruit isn't ripe yet, we'll pick it while it's green.

But after we pick that not-so-ripe fruit and find that it doesn't taste good, we wonder what we did wrong. We fail miserably. We have good intentions; we're earnestly trying to do what we think is the best possible thing to do in the given situation. We simply refuse to wait for the answer to our prayers, because sometimes the answer may take years... yes, years! We are impatient people. I also think we can sometimes try to fight against whatever it is that God Himself has placed in our life, something He has ordained.

*Listen to me...* Stop striving! God is using whatever it is to remove the things you have inside of you that are preventing you from accomplishing the great work He has planned for you to do since the beginning of time! Oh yes my friend, there is a calling on your life . You can be sure God will see to it that you discover what that call is. That is, if you seek it from Him. He will guide you. He will open and close doors in order for you to fulfill your purpose. Seek Him with all your heart and obey His still, small voice. When you stop fighting and let Him have his way, something amazing happens. You will find yourself thanking Him for giving you a purpose. I can testify to that! If you're going through the fire now, please let me save you much heartache and time. It's not just a cliché, but you need to Let go and let God!

*"Let us run the race with patience." Hebrews 12: 1*



“Running with Patience” is a very hard thing to do. Most of us associate the word ‘patience’ by lying still and waiting to move forward. The word ‘running’ seems to suggest action. But there is another kind of patience - the patience that runs. Being still while in the midst of adversity or great tragedy is one thing. What I would like to suggest is the kind of patience it takes to continue working or ‘running the race of faith’ in the midst of hardship. Even though you may have deep sorrow or pain in your spirit, you plug along with a heavy heart and still perform your daily tasks. Can you relate to doing this? What is so difficult about this type of patience is that we can’t just isolate ourselves and stay in bed. Though God may isolate us for a season (*“You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me; Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.” Psalm 139:5-6*), we can’t voluntarily turn into hermits. Most of us are called to exercise our patience in the midst of our adversities out in the open, for the whole world to see—in the workplace, while shopping, at social events, etc. I honestly don’t see anything more difficult than this kind of patience. I’ll be honest and say sometimes I struggle greatly with this.

We need Holy Ghost power to run with patience. Jesus ran with patience. He knew the cross was ahead of Him, but He never shared or spoke openly about the mighty grief He bore throughout His three years of earthly ministry.

While we are still and waiting, God’s voice becomes unmistakably clear; Jesus tells us that He is our Shepherd. We get to know His voice. He is often found gently whispering in the quietness of a humble heart...

*“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” Psalm 46: 10*

*“You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.” John 13: 7*

Jesus was two days of traveling by foot when He heard of Lazarus's sickness. Jesus intentionally delayed going to His sick friend. Lazarus died because Jesus wasn't there to heal him. Upon hearing of Lazarus's illness, Jesus said...

*"Lazarus's sickness will not end in death. No, it happened for the glory of God so that the Son of God will receive glory from this." John 11:4*

Jesus delayed coming because He was waiting for Lazarus to die. He was about to do a great miracle, which would turn the hearts of many towards Him, and this would bring Him great glory. Now if God can raise Lazarus from the dead, He can certainly raise you above your circumstances!

*"All things work out for the good of those that love God, and are called according to his purpose." Romans 8: 28*

As true followers of Christ, any trial we face is going to bring glory to God. It's going to all work out for the best, but again the outcome really depends on our response. The hardest thing is waiting, but the waiting builds up our faith, and draws us closer to our Creator.

*"So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in His good time, he will lift you up in honor." 1 Peter 5: 6*

*"... And in His good time."* My friends, whatever's going on, keep clinging to Him by faith. He knows all about it, and He promises to lift you up. I hope you realize that I'm preaching to myself as well! Actually, now is a good time to recite those promises back to God! He loves to hear you rehearse and deliver His Word back to Him; it pleases Him to hear that we

believe, and It shows our trust in His Word. Don't ever hesitate to quote Scripture back to God.

Waiting... and waiting... and waiting... and waiting on God has a way of revealing who you truly are. You've been waiting for years for something to change, yet change never comes. You will either become beaten down by life, or you will be flying high above your circumstances with God. Make no mistake; you will be tested by the waiting. First, the feelings of despair and cowardice come –*“I can't go on anymore, I'm just going to lay here and die, life is just too hard! Jesus, didn't you come to give me life and life more abundantly?”* I remember crying out and asking that.

Impatience will come along and say, *“You have to get out and do something! To continue waiting on God is time wasted.* Then arrogance shows up on the scene, and sarcastically boasts, *“God doesn't want you sick (or whatever your trial may be). Just rebuke it. Walk in your authority in Christ. We only need to believe and receive the promise by faith (Mark 11:22-25) proclaim it is ours now until we see it manifest in our lives.”* Oh, is that all I have to do? Arrogance is the one that really hurts!

But true faith will never listen to despair, cowardice, impatience, or arrogance. It only hears *“Be still and know I am God.”* And genuine faith continues to stand still on the Rock. If there's any doubt, uncertainty, or restraint in your spirit – just wait.

Even though the Bible could not be clearer when it teaches us that we must wait patiently on the Lord, not everyone hears and believes the same gospel. Because of the support group I founded for those afflicted with disability/chronic illness, I am well aware of the sobering statistic that only one percent of Christians who have a disability or chronic illness go to church. Only one percent! How sad, but keep reading and you'll understand why...

Most people can see right through the prosperity gospel. Still, an alarming amount of people fall for it! It's a gospel that claims God wants you to always be happy - never, never sad. Oh, and we all deserve to live in mansions, drive Bentleys, and never have a financial crisis. That's not Jesus' teaching! One thing that is subtly creeping into the church is the prosperity health gospel, which says God never wants you sick. He doesn't want you on any medicine... all illness is from the devil... you simply need to rebuke it. God wants you to walk in divine health, and that's how you'll know you have God's favor and blessing.

In my travels (internet travels...LOL), I've heard and read some of the insensitive remarks made to suffering people at the hands of fellow believers. Things like, *"Well, how many times do we need to pray for your healing? You should be well by now. God doesn't want you sick. You just need to rebuke your illness. Speak to the cancer. You're sick because you don't have enough faith. Blah, blah, blah!* Sounds like arrogance and pride to me!

I knew the time would finally come when I'd hear those words. That same theology finally found its way to my doorstep. It has hit me right between the eyes. I am quoting something directly from an email I received...

*"we can get sick yes, but we stay sick because we allow it to stay rather than taking our authority over it."*

Wait a minute. We allow it to stay? I have a huge problem with that kind of theology. I know my God. I've devoured His Word. I am certain that He is not mad at me, nor is He picking on me. My physical healing is not dependent on anything I can do in my own pitiful strength. It will happen when God says it will happen, not when I've decided I've had enough. God has a plan and a purpose for me having Muscular Dystrophy. The

Bible I read does not tell me that God helps those who help themselves. On the contrary, tells me God helps the helpless. There was a guest speaker at my church spouting off all of this “prosperity health” nonsense, and I exposed him for the false teacher he was.

Learning humility is a lifelong process. The opposite of pride is humility. Humility is living with what you don't like and accepting what you can't change. To go from being healthy and independent, to being dependent on a walker or wheelchair is humbling! To have trouble walking from point A to point B is humbling! Add in all the glares and stares from people because my body doesn't seem to be cooperating with my mind. It hurts, but not nearly as much as when this disease first manifested itself, thank God. I was humiliated to have anyone see me in my “imperfect” (you have to know the kind of girl I used to be) condition. I almost gave up on myself, thinking it was the end of the world. So believe me when I say, “I've got a pretty good understanding of the word “humility!” And I'm still learning about it every day. So much of life is uncontrollable. Isn't it true that whenever we think we have a pretty good handle on things, that all hell breaks loose? No, you are not in control. You may think you're in control, but you're not. Only God has control, and sometimes... most times, that's a hard thing to learn. That's a really hard thing to learn!

Humility is all about comparing ourselves to the greatness, the majesty, and the splendor of Almighty God. When we look at creation, we feel small by comparison! But Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, doesn't want us to dwell on our smallness. Humility means having the proper respect for God. It does not mean self-depreciation. Truly humble people compare themselves only with Christ, realize their sinfulness, and understand their limitations. On the other hand, they recognize their gifts and strengths, and are willing to use them as the Holy Spirit guides and directs. They have no desire to feed their egos. True faith begins in such humility. Growing in humility is a constant process of daily renewing our trust in Jesus.

"He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged." Isaiah 42:3

## Chapter Four

### My Journey from the Valley to the Mountain

*"I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what He has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord."*  
*Psalm 40: 1-3*

I think the best way to start this chapter is to pause for a moment, and give glory to our awesome God! He's been so good to me. He's been right beside me, guiding and encouraging me to press on in faith, despite what I see with my human eyes. I am fully convinced that I must go through the valley in order to stand upon the glorious mountain of God!

But I haven't always looked to God. He was my last resort. Was raised in religion and knew about God, but that was the extent of it; head knowledge, not heart knowledge. I was a hopeless soul at the end of my rope, holding on by only a jagged thread. There was nobody in the medical community who could offer me answers as to what was

happening to me. I was a medical mystery, but I knew God had the answers. I was hoping He held the key to my healing. My only interest at first was seeking His hand and not His face, but something unexpected happened... I fell in love with my Savior!

Back in Chapter Two, we see that when God first gives someone a vision or dream, there is usually a time of preparation and testing before that dream is fulfilled. It's a time that God uses our circumstances to remove things holding us back, and to mature us spiritually so His plans and designs for us can be accomplished. It's typically a very painful time! Because of the radical transformation God is making in your life, it seems that the vision or dream you first got, has died. But when the time to be used by God comes to fruition, God resurrects that dream!

*"In the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver." Isaiah 49:2*

God is ALWAYS preparing heroes. When God puts them on the scene, or when He reaches for them out of His *quiver*, the world usually wonders where they came from. There are some of us who, when we are placed "in the shadow of God's hand"... not in the spotlight... we flourish! Maybe you're in a season of your life where the sunlight has departed, maybe it's a shadowed sickroom or some shadowed house of grief. If you are in the shadow of God's hand – He's leading you, and there are lessons that can only be learned where He leads. We can't assume that He has pushed us aside. Let's look at that scripture again,

*"... he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver."*

Now think of a warrior. A quiver is the warrior's long narrow case full of arrows he has on his back. God says He's keeping you in His quiver;

He's keeping you nearby till the moment comes when He can send you quickly and confidently on some mission that will bring Him glory. So we need to remember how we are always in easy reach of His hand. I hope that encourages you!

The reason I emphasize dreams and visions is because I had a vision when I first became a born-again believer. And you can guess... all hell broke loose in this girl's life, to where the fulfillment of my vision seemed utterly impossible. I believe I am on the outer edge of seeing God's plan for me come to life. I also believe I am accomplishing part of that plan as you read this book. OK Lori, so what is the vision? I had a vision where I was in front of a large crowd of people telling them how to get healed. It sounds crazy, I know. Perhaps it even sounds illogical, but I know faith always defies logic. I'm not sure if "healing" means physical or spiritual. Maybe it means a little of both? We'll see the true meaning of that word as time goes by.

This is the chapter where I need to give you enough information on me and my physical life, so you'll be able rejoice with me and give God the glory when things start changing! I'm really excited!

*"You're going to be OK. You're going to be OK,"* were the words the Holy Spirit had spoken to me for the first couple of years trying to navigate through my life with this disease. He planted that small phrase in my mind, and it would recite itself over and over whenever discouragement would come and try to destroy me. Those five simple words helped sustain me in the hundreds of times I wanted to give up on life. Trying to adjust and adapt to my "new normal" was too difficult. I was so overwhelmed. Out of all the chaos and confusion I had to deal with, this simple phrase somewhat comforted me, giving me the will to keep plodding along.



Rotten things like shallowness and pride were on the inside of me, and only Almighty God could remove them. I never asked for it; but by His mercy, God performed radical surgery and burned that self-centered pride out of me! I was forced to find the way through this new physical barrier with nothing or no one to help me except for God. I was up close and personal with Him, and the first thing He did, was to get me into His Word. His Word told me that He is my lifeline. He taught me that no matter what, I can always trust and count on Him.

Let me stop here for a moment, and share an amazing light bulb moment I've had. Even though I've read the same scripture a hundred times over, God gave me a new revelation...

*“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37: 4*

This scripture was very hard to swallow when I first came across it. It simply didn't make sense to me. Getting the desires of my heart was not in any way being manifested in my life. I couldn't help but think I was doing something wrong. Have you been there? I was seeking and delighting myself in God, but my most pressing desire was not being met. Physical healing was the desire of my heart. It was what I longed for the most. Indeed, there were small blessings here and there, but nothing ever came remotely close to relieving me from my physical prison. It took many years, but I really get this now. With fresh eyes I can now see what the psalmist really means. God has been working a miracle behind the scenes. It's a process. It's His process.

So now I'm sold out for God. I've devoured His Word. And here is the great thing that resulted... my self-centered desires and thoughts are pretty much gone. At the onset of this disease, here's where I was at... *How can I live like this? When are you going to heal me? What can I do to help myself with this disease? I, I, I...* you get the picture. But things

have changed. I'm more concerned with the lost. I love anything Jesus! I am passionate about worship . I'm more attuned to the things of God. My heart's desires are becoming intertwined with His, and *that is the miracle!*

In the purifying process of silver, the silversmith will not leave for a second while the metal is in the fire. He will take the silver out of the fire when he sees his reflection in the silver. Just like the silversmith, God is waiting to see His reflection when He looks at me. Looking back on everything I've endured makes me confidently say that *"I am OK!"* God has been with me through it all. He promises to never leave or forsake me. Has my physical health changed? Not yet. But I wait patiently for the Lord, and my spirit soars high above my circumstances! Here is the secret...

*"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you."* Isaiah 26: 3

There are many things I keep in my heart and hold onto that give me hope. Let me remind you of something I mentioned in Volume One. If you're just starting the journey with me, here are some amazing words. I believe the Holy Spirit put these words into my heart to comfort and encourage me, as I was battling a powerful spirit of discouragement. I was looking up through the skylight we had over our bed...

I saw a really bright, shimmering star. In my spirit, I heard the Lord tell me... *"I am that bright star."* Clouds rolled in and completely covered the star, and all I could see was darkness. Then He encouraged my spirit by saying, *"Your problems and trials will sometimes be as thick as these clouds, making it impossible to see me. But I am still there."* The clouds rolled away, and I could see the star again. He continued, *"Just as these clouds dissipated, yours will too."*

Before I get into the details about my health, there's something you need to know. I have a bit of a habit re-engineering things! If something doesn't work the way I'd like it to work, or fit the way I think it should fit, I start the re-engineering process in hopes of making things better. And knee braces are no different. For a more desirable and comfortable position, I once heated the metal part of one of my AFO braces with my curling iron, so I could bend it into shape! But, it did work...

About eight months after Volume One was published, my life was made a little easier. My gait was evaluated by the umpteenth Physical Therapist and a Physiatrist, a doctor specializing in gait and movement. "*Been there, done that - nothing ever helps,*" was my attitude. I couldn't help but to wonder why I should even waste my time going to another doctor who wouldn't be able to help me. But I have a big God, and my hope is in Him! That kind of hope is hard to kill. I didn't expect what came next.

Something was actually found that could help me. The way I've adapted to walking with Muscular Dystrophy is part of the problem. My body just compensated for the weak parts, and that put strain on the muscles that are not meant to carry extra weight. It was discovered that I walked with my knees bent, putting tremendous pressure—all of my weight, on my quadriceps. This is one of the major reasons I get so fatigued when I'm on my feet. I walked and stood that way because the spasticity (stiffness and spasms) in my leg muscles would pull my knees back into a position where they would hyperextend and lock with each step. Hyperextension is when a muscle goes the opposite of the way that it is supposed to bend. Knee hyperextension is a condition in which the knee is straightened beyond the normal limits of the joint; it bends backwards. I walked with my knees bent because that would avoid the hyperextension. In hopes of combating this problem, the doctor prescribed Swedish Knee Cages. These are metal knee braces that have a strap behind each knee, which prevent the hyperextension when I walk or stand.

Putting them on for the first time was the best I felt in ten years! The pain that has been my constant companion whenever I stood was alleviated! This was huge. To an extent, the braces also seemed to help with the Knee instability I suffer from. Feeling more stable helped my balance; just a tiny bit, but that's ok... it helped! I was so enjoying the new miracle God gave me. I think I floated, instead of driving all the way home. I would now at least be able to stand comfortably. It was a start! It was a start!

*“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin.” Zechariah 4: 10*

Once I was home, I began trying on my jeans and other pants so I could see how my new braces would fit under them. My happiness and rejoicing instantly turned into sadness and tears. The braces barely fit under my pants. They were just too bulky! With both of those braces on I looked like the Michelin Tire Man!

To make a long story short, I wear both braces when I'm at home. When I'm out and about, I only wear one, because of the bulkiness. Just wearing one knee brace makes me feel a little more secure than not wearing any at all. They are a tremendous blessing. I am very thankful for my Swedish Knee Cages, and I give glory to God!

*“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes it is a tree of life.” Proverbs 13: 12*

With the exception of my Swedish Knee Cages, my physical circumstances seem to scream loud and clear that my hope is deferred again. That's not entirely true. There are some new things I'm trying. I started seeing a Chiropractor. I'm learning about Trigger Points, and how massaging my shin and calf muscles help to slightly alleviate the weird

pain I have in my feet. Massaging my toe extensor muscles helps to somewhat prevent my toes from curling. The massaging helps, but its effects don't last very long. Whatever is in my body making my muscles cramp and stiffen is so powerful; the muscles loosened by massage revert back to being stiff in a matter of a few hours. That my friends, is very discouraging. But I still trust my God.

*"Thou he slay me, yet will I trust Him" Job 13: 15*

I'm still a victim of chronic daily tension/migraine headaches. My neurologist has increased the milligrams for my headache preventative medication. I have less and less horrific headaches. I now average at least four to six migraines per month.

Since I last connected with you in Volume One, my Muscular Dystrophy has progressively gotten worse - particularly my balance. I graduated from using a rolling cane to a Rollator, which is a jazzed up version of a walker with wheels. This Rollator is something I needed to use five or six years ago, the only thing preventing me from this has been nothing but pride. And that's sad. I never wanted to be seen using a walker. *"I don't want to look like an eighty year old grandma!"* So I spent the last five years struggling... using only a cane, when I needed the additional support a walker provides.

Once inside the medical equipment supply store - at the very moment I put my hands on the handles of that Rollator to take it for a test walk... it was as if all of heaven was watching and waiting to see my reaction to it. I am so ashamed it took me this long to surrender to this equipment. You see, for a long time, God has been trying to give me this Rollator in order to make my burden lighter. It was His gift to me, but I refused it because it was not wrapped in a pretty package. I refused His gift because of my stubborn pride! Pride is a poisonous thing. It's pride that keeps us from getting to know the fullness of who God really is.

*“Those who trust in me will never be put to shame.” Isaiah 49: 23*

Only God and I know how hard the last five or six years have been. It has been a huge struggle for me physically to maintain the little balance I do have using only a quad cane. Even though my cane had wheels, it still only supported one side of my body. It took every ounce of energy and strength I had! I would be totally fatigued and worn out just by walking thirty steps. *I hated* being in a crowd, because just one little bump from someone would cause me to lose my balance. *I hated* when kids ran in front of me, because just one little bump from one of them would make me lose my balance. *I hated* to walk anywhere, period. Everything was nothing but a hassle. God in His mercy provided me not only with a walker, but with a walker that has a seat, for whenever I need to rest or simply take a break. God Almighty (*Jehovah-Jireh, My Provider*) has taken a huge weight off of me, and I weep when I think of how great His mercy is. These lyrics play over and over in my mind...

Great is Your mercy towards me  
Your loving kindness towards me  
Your tender mercies I see... day after day  
Forever faithful towards me  
Always providing for me  
Great is your mercy towards me  
Great is your grace

Again, it was my stupid pride that was responsible for my own needless pain and suffering. *“I don’t want to look like an eighty year old grandma!”* Life is about learning how to walk humbly with our God. That was another lesson learned in humility. If you’re in a similar situation; you might need

help (whether physical or emotional) now or in the future, please don't let pride stand in your way. Don't wait months or years before you ask for help. Let me remind you of something said to me by my Spiritual Mentor...

GET OVER IT. YOU ARE ROBBING SOMEONE OF A BLESSING BY REFUSING THEIR HELP.

I hated hearing that. It made me angry. But now I find myself saying this to others.

"God cannot use a man until he has hurt him deeply." ~ A.W. Tozer

## **Chapter Five**

### **Scripture to Meditate on and Recite Back to God**

*"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10: 17*

Just as a life raft is thrown into the water to rescue a drowning person, I'm throwing out a life raft into the waters of your spirit in order for God to rescue you. His Word is our lifeline. I can't stress enough that we need to commit these words to our inner man. When we meditate on the Word, it starts to form our lives. We'll just naturally apply it--In other words, the Holy Spirit can bring God's Word to the front of our minds when the enemy comes in like a flood. These are fighting words, and each

declaration is jam-packed with God's infinite love and power. Faith is our shield, and the Word is our lethal weapon. Repetition is good when the words we repeat are worthwhile...

*"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires." Hebrews 4: 12*

It pleases God to hear that we believe, and it shows Him that we trust in His Word. Don't ever hesitate to quote Scripture back to God. The scripture I want to begin with is from Lamentations, which I have hanging on my fridge. I've dissected this scripture, and I have eaten its very words. Lamentations is a book about sorrow. Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations because of the sorrow that was so deep inside of him when his people, the Israelites, were taken from their homeland...

*"I will never forget this awful time as I grieve over my loss. Yet, I still dare to hope when I remember this: The unfailing love of the Lord lasts forever! Because of His mercies we are kept from complete destruction. His mercies are new every day. Although He brings sorrow, He also shows compassion according to the greatness of His unfailing love."*  
*Lamentations 3: 20-23*

I think a lot about the prophet Jeremiah. This is one of the most pain-filled of his prayers. Jeremiah had hit rock bottom; his emotions, his faith, and his doubt wrestled with the other for control. I can so relate to Jeremiah, as my life seems to resemble his. But when we look at God's response, we can see how His words must have brought much comfort and security to this weeping prophet's heart. And many souls can still find the same comfort...



*"Lord, you know what's happening to me. Please step in and help me. Punish my persecutors (My persecutor is Muscular Dystrophy—what is your persecutor?)! Please give me time; don't let me die young.*

*It's for your sake that I am suffering. When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies. 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.*

*Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook, like a spring that has gone dry." Jeremiah 15: 15-18*

### **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!*

*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!*

*Yes, I will certainly keep you safe from these wicked men. I will rescue you from their cruel hands." Jeremiah 15: 19-21*

Do you worry? Really, what good has worrying ever accomplished? It has never made anyone stronger or provided a way of escape from the fear and anxiety that we all face at some point in life, has it? I'm pretty sure that not everything is going to be smooth sailing. So what is the secret some of us have discovered that keeps us peaceful when the storms of life are raging around us?

*"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you." Isaiah 26:3*

Peace is the byproduct of trusting Him, and just knowing that no matter what we see with our natural eyes, He is surely going to work whatever it is that we're going through for our good. We can never avoid strife in this world, but when we fix our thoughts on Jesus, we can know perfect peace even in turmoil. As we focus our mind on God and His Word, we become steady and stable. Supported by God's unchanging love and mighty power, we aren't shaken by the surrounding chaos. Everybody wants peace. The answer plain and simple is keeping your thoughts and eyes on our amazing God.

We can take a lesson from Job, a man who went through some serious adversity. There are times when we simply hurt so badly, we ask those age-old questions...“Why” and “Why me?” I honestly think that even if God gave us all the answers, our puny human minds couldn't handle it! Job's friends wanted him to repent of some hidden sin. Job did repent, but it wasn't repentance for what his friends insisted upon. He repented for his attitude and acknowledged God's sovereignty, His great power, and perfect justice. Job ate humble pie. He realized how wrong he had been in complaining. He openly and honestly faced God, and admitted he was the one who had been foolish. Take a look at how Job responds to God's questions...

*“I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. 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 to me. You said, ‘Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.’ I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.” Job 42: 1-6*

Let's be serious, and let's gather insights from the story of Job. We must learn that true faith begins in such humility.

If you would walk into my house, there would be no question as to Who the Lord of my life is! There are scripture verses posted from the kitchen cabinets to the vanity sink in the bathroom. There are framed pictures with God's Word hung on the walls of every room. These words are looking back at me as I type this on my keyboard...

*The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name." Psalm 91: 14*

Taped to my bedroom lamp...

*"Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory." Psalm 50: 15*

*"The Lord will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever. Don't abandon me, for you made me." Psalm 138: 8*

Get it?

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of the world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." Can Romans 12: 1 be any clearer?

He can't transform you until you have His Word living inside of you!

Then there's Abraham. Abraham never doubted that God would keep His promise. No matter what happened, or didn't happen, he trusted God completely. His faith was strengthened by the obstacles he faced, and his life was an example of faith in action!

*“...God told him, “I have made you the father of many nations.” This happened because Abraham believed in **the God who brings the dead back to life** and who creates new things out of nothing.”*

*“Even when there was **no reason for hope (we’ve all been here)**, Abraham kept hoping – believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!”*

*And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.” Romans 4: 17-19*

*“...he figured his body was as good as dead.” Oh my, how that hits home for me! But what’s critical, is that he never doubted God would keep his promise. Abraham faced many obstacles, but the obstacles were how his faith was strengthened. He looked to God, obeyed Him, and waited for Him to fulfill His promises. And we can too...*

*Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. **He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises.** And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous, and it wasn’t just for Abraham’s benefit.*

***It was recorded for our benefit** too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.” Romans 4: 18-25*

*“I lift my eyes onto the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth!” Psalm 121: 1*

*“I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!”*

*Philippians 3: 10-11*

*“The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.” Psalm 37: 23-24*

*“Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly abandoned or their children begging for bread.” Psalm 37: 25*

*“And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.”*

*And why have I called you for this work? Why did I call you by name when you did not know me? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one.*

*I am the Lord; there is no other God. I have equipped you for battle, though you don't even know me, so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God.*

*I am the Lord, and there is no other. I create the light and make the darkness. I send good times and bad times.*

*I, the Lord, am the one who does these things.” Isaiah 45: 3-7*

One last thought...

*“In the beginning the word already existed. The word was with God, and the word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created*

*everything through him and nothing was created except through him. The word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.” John 1: 1-5*

How many times do we say we have to apply the Word to our lives? How many times do others tell us that we should apply the Word to our lives? Applying the Word to our lives is dead wrong! Our lives constantly change, the Word never does. The Bible tells us the Word existed in the beginning – way before us. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So therefore, let me suggest that we need to apply our lives to the Word!

I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go ~ Abraham Lincoln

Honest Abe got it right. Where else can we go? So what are you waiting for? You have the whole Bible to explore. Start posting and meditating! Love you and God bless you! Until next time...



#### **About the author:**

I live in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania with my husband, Michael. I am a born-again follower of Jesus Christ. It's my passion to write about my personal experiences to make you realize that God is in the intricate details of our lives.

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