

Chapter 2: The Secret to Finding Strength in Your Greatest Crisis

I learned a great lesson in my greatest crisis.

For me personally, relationships are my greatest vulnerability. My mother was a wonderful woman, and I know she did her best to do the right thing for her children. But I think that past hurts and wounds, that never quite healed, kept her from bonding with her children in a healthy way. I definitely have wrestled with abandonment issues much of my life.

It is good to understand our past and how things influenced us, but in that process forgiveness is critical. Blaming our parents or other people for our weaknesses robs our power and makes us victims. If we focus on bitterness there is no room to find healthy solutions and move forward. There is nothing more emotionally toxic than bitterness. I have learned not to give away my power.

I love what David said in Psalm 27: 10 "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." None of us have had perfect parents, they were human subject to human faults. But I do not have to be stuck in any issues that came out of how I was raised, because any place where my parents may have failed me, God can fill in the gap and bring healing. I can change my focus from blame and find comfort and hope. I can honor and respect them for who they were, my parents, and still take an honest look at any wounds that came from my relationship with them. And I can expect God to heal those wounds.

If I look back at my life, it is very clear what my greatest crisis was. It was a combination of several things happening at the same time. I found out my first wife was cheating on me. We had only been married for a year and a half, I am sure I was not the perfect husband, but I really wanted our marriage to work. This was the woman that lead me to the Lord. We led a very successful and wonderful church youth group together, which I loved, and those kids looked up to us a role models. When my marriage started to come apart I felt like many in my church turned against me and I felt isolated. My wife moved out and filed for divorce. Not long after that I found out my mother was dying from terminal cancer. I could not believe my wife left me. At first I kept thinking she would come back and we would work it out. But time made it clear that was not going to happen. I remember one night I became completely overwhelmed. I was in our mobile home and grief and fear started to take over. To be completely honest, which is embarrassing, I was crying for hours. I was praying. I could not think of anyone I could call and talk to. I felt like I was losing control of my emotions which made it even more frightening. As more time passed I felt like I was going to go crazy.

I was praying, I was crying, and Hebrews chapter 3 and 4 kept coming into my mind. I read both chapters. The apostle Paul was writing about when the children of Israel, who had been lead out of slavery in Egypt by the Lord, were in the wilderness and were about to enter into the land, and what stopped them -- and Paul was warning the believers of his day not to make the same mistake they did. I read the end of the Numbers 13 and then all of Numbers 14 to get a little more clarity on what happened. The children of Israel sent out spies to see what the promised land was like, and the spies said the land was very good but there were giants in the land and they felt like grasshoppers compared to

them. When the nation of Israel heard what the spies said they became filled with fear and lost hope. Only 2 of the spies, Joshua and Caleb told the people not to worry and that God would give them victory, but the people did not listen. Numbers 14:1 seemed to light up for me: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept all night." That felt uncomfortably familiar. The people got so worked up they were ready to stone Moses and go back to Egypt. At that point God intervened and passed judgment on the nation:

²⁶And the LORD spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
²⁷How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur (complain) against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

²⁸Say unto them, As truly as I live, says the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

²⁹Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me.

³⁰Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

³¹But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

³²But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

³³And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

³⁴After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

This was a VERY serious turn of events for the nation of Israel. They were given a promise, they were meant to go from their slavery in Egypt to a wonderful land that they could settle and call

their own, but now that changed and they were destined to stay another FORTY years in the wilderness and only the survivors, their children, would enter into the promised land. Somehow I knew that I was in a similar situation. God had a place of promise for me, a place of abundance, and I too could lose that promise if I had a wrong response to my current situation. Only two people from the whole nation would end up in the promised land, Joshua and Caleb. I wondered how many people nowadays truly appropriate the blessings and inheritance that God has for them? It seemed that few people were getting into their "promised land" today.

I turned back to Hebrews 3: 18, 19: "And to whom swore he (God) that they should not enter into his rest (the Promised Land), but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Then I scanned up to verse 12: "Take heed brethren, lest there be any of you with an *evil heart of unbelief* in departing from the living God." That surprised me. I never thought of unbelief as a sin or evil before.

I was still very upset about my current circumstances. I said, "Lord, don't you feel bad for me and what I am going through?" I will NEVER forget the answer I got. It was a very clear impression in my spirit. "If I felt sorry for you right now it would destroy you. You need to make a deliberate, cold blooded decision, that regardless of how you feel, or how things look right now, that everything is going to be OK."

I knew that God had a better future for me. I had to hold on to that promise and believe it. I confessed my unbelief as sin and I repented. I wanted to be like Joshua and Caleb, I asked the Lord

to give me the same spirit as Joshua and Caleb and that I would have faith and follow Him fully. When I did that I got the strength I needed, I had hope again. The anxiety and the fear lifted, the crisis passed. The situation did not change, but my response to it did.

That was 30 plus years ago as of this writing. I can truly say that God took me to a better place. I had more struggles along the way, I had a second divorce and a lot of pain with that, I had more issues to work through, but I never lost hope that God would one day take me to a better place, and He did. I have a wonderful wife today, we have a strong healthy relationship, and we have been married a long time.

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Every time I find myself in a serious crisis where I am losing hope, I pray for the same spirit of Joshua and Caleb, that I will follow Him fully, and I make a decision to believe God that everything will be all right in the end regardless of the circumstances. He has never failed to give me the faith, strength and the victory I needed.

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David knew this secret. He said in Psalm 27:13 "I would have fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

David was in situations where he would have lost all hope and strength unless he believed that God would get him through it.

The best example I can think of for that is in I Samuel 30. David and his men had been away in battle. When they returned to their camp in Ziklag they found it utterly burned with fire and their wives and children were carried away as captives of the Amalekites. The bible says, "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep." (I Samuel 30: 4) They literally cried until they were so exhausted they no longer had the strength to weep. Very bad for David, but about to become much worse. It goes on to say, "And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters," Now if we just stop here we see that David just lost his 2 wives and his children, his home burned to the ground, his possession stolen, and now, even his friends and his men have turned against him and were seriously considering killing him. There was not a living soul he could trust or turn to for comfort or strength. No one offered him any kind of encouragement or hope. But that verse ends with, "but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." David knew where he could go for strength when everything in this earthly realm failed him. I am so grateful and feel so fortunate that this applies to me too, and also for everyone that turns to the Lord. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me,; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) David then asks the Lord, "Shall I pursue after this troop,? shall I overtake them?", and his answer was: "Pursue: for you will surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." So David persisted, because of the strength he found in God, long after most men would have given up all hope and probably would have ended up dead or in some

form of ruin. David goes after the Amalekites and he finds them "spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah." The Amalekites were partying and David took them totally by surprise and wiped them out. He not only recovered everything that was taken from his men and himself, their wives, their children, anything worth stealing in their camp before they burned it with fire, but David got all the spoil from all their previous murderous raids on his enemies the Philistines. He actually ended up better off than before the raid. His wives and children and all his men had a new found respect for him, and he was enriched with the spoil taken from the Philistines. Not only that, but within a short time the current king of Israel, Saul, was killed in battle. David took Saul's place as king of Israel. I believe this was the devils last ditch attempt to wipe David off the face of the earth before he could become Israel's greatest king.

I want that kind of faith, the kind of faith that made David great.

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When everything in this earthly realm fails you, learn to encourage yourself in the Lord.

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When I understood this, Psalm 27, that David wrote, made so much sense to me.

Psalm 27

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

²When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

³Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

⁴One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

⁵For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

⁶And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

⁸When thou said, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

⁹Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

¹⁰When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

¹¹Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

¹²Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

¹³I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

¹⁴Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

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Many times through the years, if I was in a discouraging situation, I would say out loud, "I will not faint Lord, because I believe I will see your goodness in the land of the living." (Psalm 27: 13)

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