

March/April 2012

Faint Cries

The world is moving at such a fast pace. Days quickly turn into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years. As a small child, time moved at a snails pace. Birthdays took forever to come.

Do you ever feel like you are standing still going nowhere while the world buzzes around you? People may give you a quick glance and then move on. Your insides are screaming out, "*Notice me. I'm hurting.*" But your cries are muffled in their ears. Some have tuned you out not knowing what to do with your emotional pain. They feel helpless so they do nothing.

Our heart is covered with bandages that are not effectively stopping the bleeding wounds. We feel like even if the bandages were on the outside, people still would not feel comfortable enough to reach out to try to help. At times, the people seem repulsed by the sight of us as if we had an contagious disease.

The lack of connection creates immense loneliness. We hear in sermons that we were designed for relationship, but what relationship can we trust. We long for

relationship to fill the void. We cautiously take a baby step out into the unknown but retract into our isolated world at the first sign of judgment. The world seems so unsafe no matter where we turn for relief.

Those we have loved in the past have betrayed, been unfaithful, and abusive. Words have been twisted and distorted. Intents judged and assumptions made. Cases have been built against you. Injustice has ruled and dreams have been shattered and lost. Emotions are raw. Even a breath of air in your direction hurts.



Tears fall like the rain in spring. The heart breaks more as reality is faced. You have tried to let others know but have been shut down by religious statements made.

- ◆ You need to pray more.
- ◆ Are you reading your Bible enough?
- ◆ How often are you going to church?
- ◆ Where's your faith?
- ◆ You need to forgive and forget the past.
- ◆ Don't you know that you are just sharing in Christ's suffering.
- ◆ All you need is Jesus.

You begin to feel like no one else feels this way. Somehow you are damaged goods tossed aside. The despair grows deeper and envelops you like a thick fog. The way out seems unattainable. As you lift your guard to protect yourself, the loneliness takes hold. You wonder if

a “toxic” relationship is better than no relationship at all.

The shadows of life’s difficulties of past and present never leaves whether the sun is shining or not. It is something you cannot shake off or explain to others. In the midst of hopelessness, you begin to hear the faint cries of others. The cries become louder as you tune your ears to hear.

Although smiling from their seats within the church, your eyes focus on what you hear as you see the hurt behind the mask others wear. There are others just like you sitting silently afraid to make known the wounds they buried deep inside. You begin to realize that you are not truly alone in your wounded state.

- ◆ Can God heal a broken heart?
 - ◆ Can God restore?
 - ◆ Does God have a plan and future for me?
 - ◆ Will God reveal his purpose in me?
 - ◆ Are there others that can walk with me in my journey?
- ◆ Does God hear the cries?
 - ◆ Does God care?
 - ◆ Does he see the depth of the pain and loneliness?
 - ◆ Will he send others to help?
 - ◆ Is it safe to unmask the emotional pain?
 - ◆ Will anyone understand my situation?
 - ◆ Will anyone listen without judgment?
 - ◆ Can I trust the pastors and leaders of the church with my pain?

These questions permeate our thoughts. In some ways we want answers, but we may be afraid to hear the answers. Fear of judgment and criticism keeps us in our silent state, but our Creator already knows our thoughts. The Lord desires to answer each one of our questions by pointing us to scripture.

*“The **righteous cry out**, and the **LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**”* Psalm 34:17-18

Not only does the Lord hear you, but he provides hope and healing for your wounds. In Psalm 143:3, *“He **heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**”*

God sees our broken heart, our shattered dreams, and hears our cries. Hopelessness and loneliness will fade as we draw close to him and comfort settles in. His loving embrace in the shelter of his arms will diminish the fears we have



stored inside. The void is filled and purpose is given. As we are comforted so we are to comfort others. Everyday we are surrounded by the cries of lonely, brokenhearted people.

Are we listening, seeing, and reaching out or do we choose to remain in our comfort zone isolated and lonely?

By Paula Silva

Foggy Hope

“Hope, like the gleaming taper’s light, Adorns and cheers our way; And still, as darker grows the night, Emits a brighter ray.”
Oliver Goldsmith

Thick, dark fog covers everything, even hope. When things seem hopeless, it’s hard to find a reason to get up in the morning. “Why? I can’t see any reason to work my way out of the fog, Lord. Why?” The question stirs one out of sleep and is the last impression on the heart as sleep comforts a sad soul.

Hope dictates the grand future awaits. Dr. Henry Cloud, in a recent sermon, says hope isn’t dependent on your future--it’s dependent on your past. If hard situations have been worked out in the past, hope will survive tough situations in the future. But what happens when the feeling that hope doesn’t exist occurs? Can you hope and feel hopeless? Let’s look at the past to determine our future.

Travel all the way back to the exodus of the Israelites. When they first left Egypt, the Israelites could not see the next destination. A thick fog covered their future. “By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.” (Exodus



13:21) Follow the fog? That doesn’t seem like good advice. Walk where you can’t see? That’s odd. That’s what God asked.

When the people got to the Red Sea and Moses helped part the waters, the fog that was making it hard to see the future went behind them. The people feared the Egyptians. But God put the wall of fog between them and the enemy. “Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them.

The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither would hear the other all night long.” (Exodus 14:19-20). The very thing that led them now protected them. The enemy was confused in the fog

while it gave Israel a brief glimmer into what future they were walking into.

Three thoughts come to mind:

1. Do you see fog covering your future? Do you feel hopeless? Know sometimes God uses fog to guide us.
2. Do you see fog behind you? Not sure what just happened? Know sometimes God uses fog to hide us from potential enemies.
3. Do you see fog covering your future? Not sure if there’s reason to keep going? Know sometimes God reminds us of what he’s done in the past. It will be the most challenging time, but pick one thing to praise him for tonight. Remember one good thing that he did for you today. Or remember one thing in your past that helps you remember He’s got your future. Do it once a day, and see the haziness rise.

Hopelessness is not a fun place to be, and God doesn’t intend for us to travel there. It takes time, but God doesn’t make us wait for nothing. Keep an eye on the future with full support of the past. You’ll ask questions less and less, and gain more and more hope in its place. I hope your travels go well.

By Mollie Bond

Let's Get Practical

My battery died. I had been on the phone with a friend for so long that I had no power left. We discussed out similar circumstances. I cried. The tissue box emptied a long time ago. Now I looked for my phone charger, carrying my roll of toilet paper and trash can with me. I leaned over the side of the bed to reach the cord, and my friend asked, "Have you drunk any water of the last few hours? I bet you are so dehydrated." Just like my cell phone battery, I had no juice left. I ran on empty.

Let's get practical. Life has to still work, the kids still have to get to school, and the car doesn't fill itself with gas. So what happens when life hurts? What happens when you're running on empty? How do you stay practical? Let's use run-down Elijah as our example.

1. **Sleep.** The prophet Elijah slumped and told God he was running on empty. He was not only physically tired from running 60 miles, but emotionally and spiritually tired. "...He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, LORD,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" (1 Kings 19:4b). Here's the key: "Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep." (1 Kings 19:5). God doesn't expect perfect; He knows the limitations of the body he created. God allowed the sad prophet to sleep.
2. **Find a friend.** An angel attended to Elijah and asked him to take care of himself. "All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat'" (1 Kings 19:5b). Even if the person may not have lived through your situation, find a friend. Support groups are also good starting ground. Being accountable, even for things like eating and sleeping, is okay.
3. **Eat.** "He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again" (1 Kings 19:6). Elijah ate bread. During my stint with depression, I ate a lot of fruit salad, a cheap and easy-to-prepare dish. Eating healthy is important. Then, take a multi-vitamin. It sounds odd, but while crying until 3 am, your body needs the energy. Eat, but take a multivitamin with lunch.
4. **Drink fluids.** Water, preferably. Elijah had a whole jug of water provided for him. I took on a "rule," for every soda or coffee I drank, I had the same amount in water.
5. **Exercise.** This is hard. However, if we keep following what Elijah did to rejuvenate his battery, it's the final step. "...Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights..." (1 Kings 19:8b). So Elijah liked to workout. I'm lucky to get in a mile... if someone is chasing me. However, some manageable ways of getting in exercise include parking your car far away, taking the stairs, or stretching in the morning. Start small. Also notice Elijah did his exercise after sleeping and eating. I'm sure God planned his day that way for a reason.
6. **Work on you.** You can't change others, but you can change your sleep patterns, what you eat, and what you drink. You can change you. One day at a time, one moment at a time, it's how you respond to life that counts. So how do you do that practically? Follow Elijah's example.

It's important to take care of you. Taking small practical steps will affect your future. Sleep, meet with a friend, eat, drink, and exercise. Charge your battery.

By Mollie Bond



Dating Relationships ~ Normal?

It's *normal* in a dating relationship to . . .

- ☺ Refuse a date without feeling guilty.
- ☺ End a relationship.
- ☺ Have an equal relationship.
- ☺ Have friends other than your dating partner.
- ☺ Participate in activities that do not include your partner.
- ☺ Disagree.
- ☺ Have your own thoughts and feelings and be able to express them without fear or repercussion.
- ☺ Say "no" to physical closeness.
- ☺ Say "I love you" without having sex.
- ☺ Change your mind at any time.
- ☺ Be treated with respect.
- ☺ Be encouraged in your talents and abilities.
- ☺ Be supportive of each other's endeavors.
- ☺ Be part of the decision making.
- ☺ Be able to resolve conflicts..
- ☺ Be honest without fear of retaliation.
- ☺ Be caring and kind.
- ☺ Be free to make decisions

It's *not normal* in a dating relationship for your partner to . . .

- ☹ Check your cell phone or email without your permission.
- ☹ Constantly put you down.
- ☹ Call you names
- ☹ Act extremely jealous or insecure.
- ☹ Have an explosive temper.
- ☹ Demand to know where you are and who you are with all the time.
- ☹ Isolate you from your family or friends.
- ☹ Exhibit extreme mood swings.
- ☹ Be possessive.
- ☹ Tell you that you want to do something.
- ☹ Keep you from doing activities that you enjoy
- ☹ Tell you to keep things secret
- ☹ Tell you to lie to family and friends about where you were or what you were doing
- ☹ Shame you into doing something that is wrong or you feel uncomfortable doing
- ☹ Manipulate into or force you to have sex
- ☹ Tell you how to dress and what to wear
- ☹ Make all the decisions

Thoughts to Ponder

The Crown Of Life: The Spirit Of Glory

By Simone F. Wilson

I am blessed because

I have endured rejection, humiliation, loneliness, and abuse.

And The Spirit of Glory is resting upon me.

I will receive The Crown Of Life that my Father has promised me.

I rejoice . . . I'm happy because my Daddy He made me different.

I walk funny . . . I talk strange

But that's ok cause it's all part of who I am.

I'm special to Him and He has a plan designed specifically for me.

He knows my hurts and has bottled up my tears.

He even knows all about my fears.

People may try to stop me and even try to block me.

But God JEHOVAH SHAMMAH ... HE IS WITH ME.



Words that Heal

Psalm 25:15-17 (NIV)

My eyes are ever on the LORD,
for only he will release my feet from the snare.

Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
Relieve the troubles of my heart
and free me from my anguish.

Domestic Violence Training for Churches/Groups/Organizations

Topics:

- What is Domestic Violence?—A Closer Look at Verbal, Emotional, Sexual, Physical, and Spiritual Abuse
- Characteristics of an Abuser/Why Does He Do That?
- Recognizing a Victim of Domestic Violence
- Why Women Stay or Leave/Developing a Safety Plan
- How Does Domestic Violence Affect the Family Especially Children
- Teen Dating Violence
- What Can the Church Do?
- Do's and Don'ts of Counseling
- Signs that the Abuser Has Changed
- Church Safety Plan/Risks
- Becoming an Anchor in the Storm/How to Help Someone in an Abusive Relationship

Development of Domestic Violence Program in Churches

- Do's and Don'ts of Counseling Victims and Abusers
- Development of Domestic Violence Policies and Procedures for Churches
- Step By Step Approach for Churches to Address the Issue of Domestic Violence
- Training for support group leaders

Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **New board members** with expertise in fund-raising, marketing, and the law
- **TEEN FOCUS team** to develop the teen program
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **20 Attendees** at our Partners in the Journey March training
- **Pastors' wives** who are being abused are finding

hope.

- **Development** of TEEN FOCUS workshops
- **Exhibitor** at Ignite Youth

Prayer Requests:

- **Pray for our TEEN FOCUS team** as they develop our teen program
- **Pray for a facility** for our FOCUS Women's Center. It would enable us to expand our services
- **Pray for funds** to hire much needed staff

- **Pray for board members** as they make critical decisions regarding the direction of the ministry
- **Pray for women and families** who contact our FOCUS Women's Center.
- **Pray for pastors' wives** that are being abused.
- **Pray for individuals, churches, and businesses** to commit to **monthly giving**.
- **Pray for all the FOCUS support**

group leaders

- **Pray for houses** in IL, to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- **Pray for churches** to understand the gravity of domestic violence and will develop appropriate responses.



Upcoming Events

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The mission of FOCUS Ministries is to provide a safe place for teens, women, and families who experience domestic violence and abusive relationships to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 c3 organization funded by contributions and grants. **If you would like to help us minister to hurting people through our educational materials, support groups, counseling, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or online at www.focusministries1.org.** A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

FOCUS Ministries (and all individuals affiliated therewith) disclaims any personal liability for information presented within this newsletter or in seminars, workshops, and support group meetings. You should always consult a professional for medical, psychological, legal, financial, or biblical advice.

- **March 30-31, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **June 29-30, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **September 10, 2012—DV Training,** ECFA, Wheaton, IL
- **September 28-29, 2012—Partners in the Journey:** Train the Trainer FOCUS (Support Group Leaders Training), Oakbrook Terrace, IL

The FOCUS team is available to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars, workshops, DV training or other speaking engagements.

contactus@focusministries1.org

O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT

Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries



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