

Propel to Hope: When Life Hurts Like Hell

Introduction: My Times in Living Hell

At various times in my life I have been through tough times; most of us have.

Of those times, four stand out as above and beyond my ability to survive on my own strength. Many well-intentioned Christians gave me sage (and often correct) advice, but they didn't have a clue as to the depth of my wounds - whether physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. Their words rang so hollow I thought: *"You can't possibly understand where I'm at."*

I say this because I want you to know that I have been there - maybe not exactly where you are right now, or where a hurting loved one is right now - but I want you to know that I relate to what you or they are going through.

So, with no further ado, let me tell you a little bit about those times "When life hurt like Hell":

Most recent of the four painful seasons followed a horrific boating accident on September 8th 2002 in which I was shredded by the propeller and my left leg nearly cut off. The near-death experience and desperate struggle for survival are covered in great detail in my local ebook Award winning book: "Dead Man Rising: From a Watery Grave to an Incredible Life" (©2012, Propel Publishing).

Numerous times I called out to God in horrible pain (doctors told me I was the ten on the scale of 1-10). I don't claim to know *your* level of pain and physical pain is merely one type of pain. I said prayers with a newfound intensity.

Several scriptures came to mind during my initial and long-term recovery (as of this writing, I am still permanently disabled due to pain and other issues). These scriptures are quoted in this book. Some of those and others are what I call "Power Scriptures." The power scriptures are for the worst times of all. They might mean the difference between your survival and giving up all hope. There is a listing of these "Power Scriptures are marked with a bold **P** and listed in Appendix A.

A second category of helpful Scriptures are the Christian Identity Scriptures, marked with a bold **I** and also listed in Appendix A. Many of our struggles come from an incorrect view of ourselves as the children of God. Understanding your Christian Identity is a key to experiencing the fullness of joy that is ours even in the darkest of times.

As time goes on, you will learn to identify the spiritual issues that are confronting you. Take time to check out Appendix A for the various categories of scriptures to help you through these specific spiritual struggles so that you can quickly refer to them when needed.

My hopes and prayers were answered in ways I never even thought of at the time. Following the boating accident, my enjoyable career was interrupted. Along the way however, I found out what really matters. Incredible as it seems and although I still suffer from horrible pain; I don't wish the boat accident never happened. In many ways, my life is more fulfilling now than ever!

Other troubles:

When I was a small boy of ten, I needed to get my bike out of the garage. The only access was the double-wide garage door which was blocked at the time by my older sisters' twenty year-old clunker green and gray Pontiac sedan with tailfins. No one would move the car for me. I decided to do it myself.

I knew ten year-olds weren't supposed to move cars, but I'd seen it a hundred times. Unfortunately, the car lurched sideways instead of straight back as I thought it would. David, a four year-old neighbor, and the closest thing I had to a little brother, was hit and killed.

Various officials showed up day after endless day asking me questions about the accident, burning it into my scarred soul. Bullies at school called me "murderer" and "killer." Killer seemed to fit.

David's parents forgave me. Mom and dad said Jesus forgave me. I did not forgive myself. After all, I was a killer.

Lots of people told me "God loves you." "*But if God loves me, why did He let this happen?*" More on that question in a minute.

When I was still a fairly new, born-again Christian, our family physician suspected my nearly three year old son Kevin, might have Cystic Fibrosis, an eventually deadly disease. Then Kevin was diagnosed with an advanced case of RSV, a deadly lung infection for a *healthy* person. His doctors gave us no reason to hope. Kevin was quarantined behind sheets of plastic, strapped to his hospital bed. He watched other small children playing in the hallway with their new Christmas toys as his condition worsened. He was regularly poked with needles; his eyes pleading *make them stop, daddy*. I was so mad at God! "*How could you give us this beautiful baby boy and then take him away from us?*"

Perhaps you're asking "Why?" or "God, how could you?" today. They're valid questions. There are answers. Many people will tell you not to think like that. Those people are wrong. Omniscient God already *knows* you think like that. Be thankful that God wants an honest relationship with you.

Even so, I have three cautions for you about questions like this: First, beware of falling into the sin and the bottomless pit of self-pity. Secondly; God is still God. We can approach Him as his children and ask, but remember, He is the King of all creation: Ask respectfully.

Finally, search for the answers to these and other questions with a willingness to accept the truth. John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free,” is a fact of life. At first, you may not like God’s truth, but that does not change the fact(s) of His truth. In time, if you approach these questions with the attitude that God knows best, you will agree with His answers to “Why?” and much more.

The fourth hell of my life was my divorce. My mentor, Gene Thompson, was the most mature Christian man I have ever known. Gene once told me he didn’t think he was doing any good for me because he didn’t see any results in a timely fashion. But just knowing how greatly he cared for me helped me tremendously. Gene helped me stay the Christian course, maintain my sanity and get my life back on track.

A friend recommended a book on Christian identity. I learned that I was not a “killer,” I went beyond being just a sinner saved by grace. Rather, when I became a Christian, I became a new creation altogether. Yes, remnants of my pre-christian identity, my “old man,” caused problems (they still do), but he is indeed the *former* man. I am a new creation of Christ’s. I am God’s child.

The identity scriptures that verify these truths of the bible are some of the most vital survival scriptures quoted in this book. I heartily recommend that you study who you are in Christ as a foundation to not only overcoming this time in your life, but for the rest of your life.

It is my sincere desire and hope that this book will enable you to see the truth of God’s word in a way that will touch and heal your pain while calling you into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

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Help me Jesus! Power Scriptures 1 & 2

Scripture References:

P Rom 8:26-27 We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. NIV

P Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. NIV

Cut nearly in half by a boat's propeller, dying and with no strength left, I prayed the most effective prayer of my life: "Help me Jesus!"

Normally, I'm a bit of a control freak and would have a ten-point plan for God to follow. It was the gift of God that I prayed such a simple prayer.

Not knowing what to pray – or not having the strength – is not a problem in the hands of our loving father. Thankfully, His Holy Spirit petitions Him on our behalf. God knows what you need better than you do.

There is an honest humility when we pray in desperation.

What a wonderful God and savior we have that he puts us where we need to be in order to see that we need *Him* to be in control. God is a loving father who wants the best for us and He *is* in control.

Prayer Model: I'm desperate for you Lord. I hurt so bad I don't even know what to do or what to ask you for. I admit that sometimes I'm even mad at you and wonder if you love me, but that is just how I feel. I know feelings are not what counts and I should rely on your word. I thank you for who you are. I leave myself totally in your loving hands. Help me Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditation: God is always in control.

The Goodness of God

Power Scripture 3

Scripture Reference(s):

Ps 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. NIV

P Jer 33:11 "Give thanks to the LORD Almighty, for the LORD is good; his love endures forever." NIV

As tempting as it is to fall into despair over your circumstances; never doubt the goodness of God. When my near-three year old son lay at death's door, I was mad at God: "How could you give us this beautiful little boy only to take him away?" Yet in my heart, I knew God was good. I asked for wisdom and knew from Proverbs 1:7a that "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge." I went on to look up fear of the lord in my concordance and it led me to Gen 22:12; "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." It was a spear through my heart that night at his hospital bed. God gave him a miraculous recovery and used the time to teach me a valuable lesson: that my son ultimately belongs to God.

God is the very definition of good: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Rom 5:88 NIV. You and I rejected God and still he sent his son to die for us! I couldn't let my own son die for any reason, not even God's and yet, God sent his son to die a horrible, torturous death to save me and you. Perhaps a man would rush into a burning building to save a crying child, but how about someone that rejected that man openly and hurtfully. Yet that is what Jesus did for us. We would not know love if not for the examples of the Father and Jesus.

Prayer Model: Heavenly Father, I come to you today with praise even though I am hurting. I know that you are good. I know that when you created all things *they* were good. But sin entered the world, and that is why I'm suffering today. I thank you and praise you for my life and that I have your word to sustain me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditation: God is good. God is love.

A Child of God

Power Scripture 4. Identity Scripture 1

Scripture Reference(s):

P John 1:12-13 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV

I Eph 1:4-5 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. NIV

Oh how I miss my earthly father (you too, mom)! What wonderful love he gave to me and his family! For all that, he was flawed as I am flawed as a father. Yet our heavenly father is a perfect father!

All expectant parents hope for a healthy child they can love and that will love them in return. God knew us – with all our faults and that we would reject Him – before the foundations of the earth were laid! He chose us despite our imperfections.

The world may look down on you due to your circumstances, your appearance, your disabilities and so much more. But your heavenly Father who knows everything there is to know about you not only accepts you, he loves you to the point of the death of his only son!

Not only has the Father's love saved us, his children, but in Mark 10:14 he points to the children of this world for an example of how we ought to live: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. NIV

Prayer Model: I thank you God that I am your child. I praise you that you are a perfect Father, full of love and goodness for me, your child. I thank you that you will never turn me away; that nothing I can do will ever change your love for me. You love me as your child because of who you are. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditation: I am God's child. God is my perfect, loving father.

The Help You Need

Power Scripture 5

Scripture reference(s):

P Heb 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. NIV

Eph 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. NIV

When a small child is having a tender moment with their father, have you noticed their tendency to ask him for something? “Daddy, can I have...?” It is only natural for them to look to their father for support. Similarly, it is only natural for you to go to your Heavenly Father for mercy and grace through this time of hardship. As a loving father, He will deliver.

Jesus said “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” Matt 7:10-12 NIV.

However, God might determine that you need to go through this time in order to become the fullness of who He created you to be. His answer may not be yours. Are you committed to *His* will for your life?

Job said “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; “ Job 13:15, NIV. Eventually, Job’s life was restored tenfold, but at the time, he lost everything.

Go to your heavenly father, ask for and accept his perfect answer for you, cradled in his perfect affection for you, guided by his perfect wisdom and knowledge.

Prayer Model: Lord, I come to you now in my time of desperate need. I believe you are the God of all creation. You are all powerful and all knowing. You are love and in faith in your love for me, I come to you knowing that you will give to me the help that I so desperately need. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Meditation: God will give me the help I *truly* need.

In Jesus' Strength Power Scriptures 6 & 7

Scripture Reference(s):

P Phil 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength. NIV
2 Cor 12:7-10 there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.

P For when I am weak, then I am strong. NIV

One of the greatest wisdoms a man can think is "I can't do it." What a great spiritual truth this is!

The beginnings of the answer to 'Why God?' are found in these scriptures. Like Paul, you may have a thorn in the flesh: perhaps an illness or an injury that is seemingly too painful to endure. Ask God to take it away – and He may; but He might not. We can't know His full will. Yet we trust in Him. He has a purpose for this time in your life. His grace is sufficient for you. His power is perfected in your weakness. Your dependence upon Him to get you through this time will be seen by those around you and bring glory to His name.

Notice that Paul places no limits upon what God can do through you. "I can do everything..." The qualifier here is that it is only through Jesus Christ that you can do everything. Are you trying to make it through this on your own power? You cannot. You were not made to endure all things. You were made to depend upon God. So go with your design, humbly admit your inability to make it on your own; lean on the creator – your Heavenly Father – bathe yourself in His grace and see and know the power of God in your life that others may praise God.

Prayer Model: Lord God, I just can't seem to make it today. I have no strength left to fight - not to mention survive. Lord, I humbly ask you to help me to receive the strength of Jesus so that I can make it through this time of trial and bring glory to your name. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditation: Even at my weakest, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

God's Purposes Power Scriptures 8 & 9

Scripture Reference(s):

P Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. NIV

P Jer 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. NIV

Often – but not always – our troubles are of our own making. There are consequences for our thoughts and actions. Just as there are physical laws of the universe which we cannot ignore, such as gravity; there are also spiritual laws that have grave consequences when violated. If no fault of yours comes to mind, prayerfully consider the possibility of your current circumstances being your own fault.

Sometimes our suffering is at the hands of others who have done us wrong. Other times, as in Job's case, we are attacked by none other than Satan himself. Our part to play is to follow the example of Christ. Get angry if you must, but in your anger, do not sin. Holding a grudge against fellow human beings will only hurt you – not the party that injured you. Forgiveness is not only for them, it is for you.

Whatever the cause of your current pain, know that the Lord your God, your Heavenly Father, allows trials into our lives to suit His purposes. God's purpose is quite simple: He wants to make us into the image of His son Jesus. Jesus went through incredibly tough times, most notably his torture and death on the cross. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed." 1 Peter 4:12-13 NIV

Prayer Model: Lord, I thank you that you have already forgiven me for when I ask "Why?" I know you will give me what I need to make it through this time. I promise to search my own thoughts and actions to truly determine what part I played in these troubles, if any. I trust that at a time of your choosing; you will show me your purposes for allowing this trial in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditation: God is using this trial for my good; building my hope and my future.

Rest

Scripture reference(s):

P Matt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
NIV

One of the ways that God gives strength to us is through the blessed gift of sleep. If your trials are impacting your sleep, they will soon be impacting your health (if they aren't already). Another result of lack of proper bodily rest is fuzzy thinking, which can worsen your view of the difficulties you are facing, turning them into nightmarish proportions they are not worthy of.

The same is true in the spiritual realm, without resting in Jesus; you will not be restored to your spiritual best – which is precisely what you need to make it through this time.

Jesus' request is simple: "Come to me."

So the question arises: Are you truly resting in Jesus Christ? Are you sharing your burdens with him or are you holding on to them tightly, smothering in self-pity? How foolishly I clung to avoidable pain in my own life. What are *you* clinging to?

Some suffering comes our way that is not of our own making nor is the resolution of the situation within our power. But how we look at the struggle and how we choose to face it (alone or with God) is up to us. This is a choice you must make. God will not make it for you. He gives you free will, and that includes the choice of *unnecessary* suffering while rejecting the rest He freely gives.

Prayer Model: Lord, all of this stress and worry are wearing me down. Please bear this load for me when you in your wisdom judge that it is too harsh for me. I haven't slept regularly in so long I can't remember. Please give me peace – your peace. It's not that I'm giving up, I just need a break. Thank you Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditation: Jesus gives me rest from all my troubles.

*Please note that this book will be updated periodically at larryskahill.com
It is my goal to eventually have a thirty day devotional for the worst of times.*

Blessings in Christ,
Larry Skahill



Larry Skahill is a “recovering rocket scientist,” father of four, award-winning author/speaker and Professional Life Coach who lives on the beautiful Central Coast of California where he pursues his passions of spearfishing, writing and life coaching.

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