


4. IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD TIMES

A silhouette of a person in a prayerful pose, with their head tilted back and hands clasped, set against a dramatic sunset sky with orange and red hues. The person is positioned in the lower center of the frame, looking up towards the horizon.

*God doesn't want us to worry
about anything. Nothing, nada,
zip, zero.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

IN GOOD TIMES AND IN BAD TIMES

Psalms 46:1: "God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble."

What are your needs today?

There are three pivotal things that most people's minds are on right now:

- Will we survive financially?
- Are we going to get sick?
- Is this the beginning of the end? And if so, do we have the assurance of salvation?

The truth is that this pandemic and whatever it brings, is completely and utterly out of our control. Up to this point in life you may have been able to fix the things you struggled with. But not this time. This time it is different. It is completely above our human abilities and we all feel it. This time it is more severe and frightening. Right now you may feel helpless and you may even worry because you cannot control the outcome of things this time. This pandemic is above you. It is bigger than you. It is not something small you can fix yourself.

Let me tell you something about this uncertainty you find yourself in, this uncontrollable situation you find yourself in. This is exactly where God wants you to be. Helpless, weak, dependent on Him and looking for a Saviour who will step in and save you. He says: "When you are weak, I am strong," Although you worry, God does not want you to worry about anything. Nothing, nada, zip.zero. In Philippians 4:6-7 we read: "Do not worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking Him with a thankful heart."

**BECOMING DEPENDANT ON GOD
INSTEAD OF TRYING TO FIX LIFE
AND ITS PROBLEMS YOURSELF IS
WHAT IS NEEDED.**

And God's peace which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus."

The Bible tells us that we should not worry. We should take our troubles to the Lord, trusting Him that He will take care of them the best way He can. But we worry and we sometimes worry even better than what we trust. I bet you that you are worried about something right now. You might be asking the questions: "What is going to happen if this lockdown in our country continues? What if the economy falls? What if my work can't pay me because they have to cut down on salaries? They may start retrenching personnel and what if I am one of those who will be retrenched? What if I am the breadwinner, or what if the provider within our house gets sick, maybe even dies? What if they cannot even afford the essential personnel in companies and then those who thought their jobs were secure, no longer have a job? What if I am not ready? What if I am already without a job, with no money and about to lose everything that I've worked for so far?"

I'd like to tell you that we should be careful not to worry too much, because God is our provider, even in times of trouble. Psalms 23 has a beautiful passage that says: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Some translations says: "I will lack nothing." I repeat, God does not want us to worry about the things we need. He does not want us to worry about anything. Worry is not unreasonable, but it is unnatural. Nature does not worry. Jesus says in Matthew 6:30 and 31: "Look at the birds of the air; look at the lilies of the field; look at the grass of the field. Do not worry where your food will come from or where your drink will come from or what you will wear." Jesus asks whether we are not more than our clothes.

**WORRY IS NOT UNREASONABLE,
BUT IT IS UNNATURAL. NATURE
DOES NOT WORRY**

Look at the grass that is here today and gone tomorrow. Are we not more important than these things, the birds and the grass and the flowers?

Jesus says: "Oh, you of little faith." We need to stop worrying. We need to realise that God has promised to take care of our needs. Philippians 4:19 says: "He will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory." If you are worn out with worry right now, God says to you in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto Me all you who are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Not worrying means that we need to learn how to trust in God. How to have faith. God has real peace. A peace the Bible says, that surpasses all understanding, knowing that He is taking care of our needs. He has a thousand ways to take care of those needs, ways that we know nothing about. We need to exercise that faith now during this trying time.

The time of the world we find ourselves in is a bit of a dry run. What I mean with this is that I believe God is preparing us for even harder times that are to come. I do not want to discourage you. I do not want to put you in a place of despair, but the Bible does tell us the last days before the appearing of Jesus Christ on the clouds of heaven, will be stressful. It will be a time like never before and men's hearts will fail them for fear. I do not believe that we are right at the end, but I do believe we are close. I believe the signs are there that Jesus will come soon. I believe if we use this time properly, God will help us to prepare. God will help us to build faith and trust in Him, so that when the really hard times come, we will not doubt.

We need to exercise our faith. A whole generation of Israelites died in the wilderness and never entered into the land which was promised them, because of their lack of faith.

**IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR PEACE.
GOD HAS REAL PEACE FOR YOU.**

When they reached the border of Canaan, they scouted the land and they saw the giants. God said: "Go in and fight, go in faith, I will fight for you." But they said: "God, we cannot do it. The giants are too big for us. The giants are too big for You."

In your life, and in mine, there is nothing too big for God. Fighting giants can be scary yes, but faith is sometimes going to ask us to do scary things. Faith takes courage. It takes guts to blindly step out saying: "I cannot see the future or the solutions to the problems I am facing right now, but I will trust God, irrespectively."

There is a story told of a man who was a mountaineer. He liked climbing mountains and face rocks. He was a bit of a daring man. He liked climbing many of the face rocks without equipment and gear. One day he went to climb the Aconcagua mountain range in South America. This was a very treacherous mountain range and the advice to any climber was that they should never climb alone. They should always start climbing early in the morning, so that they could reach the summit before dark and set up camp in order to be safe.

This man however wanted to prove to the world how great he was and decided to climb the mountain alone. He also decided that he was not going to listen to the advice of starting early in the morning – he was going to start after he had his breakfast. So, he started off his journey climbing this mountain. As you know, mountaineers usually have safety equipment that they climb with.

Little pegs and ropes they tie around themselves and as they climb up the mountain, they find little crevices within the wall of the mountain to put these pegs into.

**YES LIFE CAN BE SCARY, BUT
SOMETIMES FAITH IS GOING TO
ASK YOU TO DO SCARY THINGS.**

If they do slip or fall, these pegs will stop their fall along the way. This man was climbing and he was doing pretty well. He was quite chuffed with himself because he was a good mountaineer. His journey went well and it started getting dark. He was close to the top of the mountain, but he was not there yet. By the time he reached the top of the mountain, it was completely dark. He was climbing the mountain during the time of the year that was very cold, with frost and snow. As he reached the top, he put his hand on top of the summit. He was so glad that he reached the top that he relaxed for a moment.

The top had frozen because of the dew of the evening. In that relaxation, his hand slipped and he started to fall. He was falling and black blotches were going past him. He could not see where he was. He was shouting and screaming and the pegs were pulling out one by one. One by one, over and over, they were pulling out. Eventually he felt the sharp pull in the middle of his body. The safety rope and one of the pegs that were tight enough, stopped him from falling further. In his distress he reached for his bag, only to find that his bag and his climbing equipment had been lost in the fall.

And there he hung, suspended in the middle of nowhere, not knowing whether he was going to make it. He could not climb further because he didn't have his gear anymore. He could try and climb on his own, but he might not even make it to the top of the mountain. It was very cold. He might even die of frostbite or hyperthermia before he reached the top again.

In his distress, hanging there in the middle of nowhere, he called out to God and shouted: "God!" God's voice came back in the dark saying: "What would you have Me do my child?"

**ARE YOU HANGING SUSPENDED ON
THE ROPES OF LIFE, CRYING OUT
TO GOD TO SAVE YOU?**

He answered: "Well God, obviously I want You to save me."
God asked him: "Would you do anything I tell you in order for Me to save your life?"

The man replied: "Clearly God, I will do anything. You know what is best for me. Just tell me what to do and I will do it."
(The man didn't know how far he was from the top, or how far he was from the bottom. He couldn't see a thing.)

God answered him from out of the dark night and said to him: "You have a small pocket knife inside the sock of your boot. Take it out."

The man took out the knife, and then God told him: "Now, what I want you to do is to take that knife and cut the rope."
[Would you cut the rope if you couldn't see the bottom or the top? If you didn't know how far you were going to fall and God tells you to cut the rope, would you?

The next morning rescue teams realised that the man had not arrived at the camp base by the time he should have and they went out looking for him. The rescue team found this man hanging suspended only a metre above the ground. Frozen to death. He did not cut the rope.

Are you willing to trust God even when you can't see the future? Even when the future looks dark and bleak? Even when it seems what God asks you to do might put your life in danger? Are you willing to step out in faith trusting Him, cutting the rope? Your giants in life may be terrifying, but you have to fight the urge of allowing the fear to overwhelm you.

When you are going through difficult financial times, fight the urge to go and borrow money. It is scary not to know where your food is going to come from, but God says, "Cut the rope, trust Me."

**CAN YOU TRUST GOD EVEN IF
YOU CANT SEE THE FUTURE? ARE
YOU WILLING TO TRUST GID EVEN
WHEN YOUR FUTURE LOOKS
BLEAK?**

Proverbs 3:5 and 6 state: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths." Do not trust everything you think you know about this pandemic and how to survive it. Even if there is well-researched evidence, don't trust your own understanding about the times that we live in. Go to God. Pray to Him and tell Him what you need and then trust Him. I challenge you to make God your entire dependence. Put your whole being, soul, body and spirit into the Lord's hands.

How will we trust? The verse tells us to trust with all our heart and in all our ways. In other words, in all circumstances, whether big or small, trust God. We struggle for the very reason that we get so self-sufficient. We get ourselves out of jams, instead of allowing it to run its course and to do what it is supposed to do within us to develop our faith and trust. By not trusting God, we short-circuit the opportunity for growth and faith through active trust in God in real situations. We rob ourselves of a real chance to experience God's intervention and powerful hand to step in on our behalf. We fail to go to Him first and to trust Him. We trust in ourselves or we are quick to call on others. Many of us have friends who are smarter or richer than us and if we are not careful, they will become a crutch for us. They may have connections and when we end up against the wall, we often go to them because we know they can get us through it. We need to be careful not to trust in ourselves or to trust in man. Rather put God first and trust in Him.

There is a sad biblical story in the book of 2nd Chronicles chapter 16, which tells of King Asa. He was faithful to God for 38 years of his life.

**BY NOT TRUSTING GOD, WE
SHORT-CIRCUIT THE OPPORTUNITY
FOR GROWTH AND FAITH
THROUGH ACTIVE TRUST IN GOD
IN REAL SITUATIONS.**

He faithfully sought God and in all his ways he would go to God and ask God for advice. God gave his kingdom peace. But King Asa became confident in his welfare and started to think and plan on his own. The Bible tells us that in the thirty-ninth year of King Asa's reign, he was afflicted with a foot disease. This disease was very severe. Even in his illness, Asa did not seek God. Instead, he went to physicians. God warned him against that independent trust in himself and other men. He was to rather trust God with his health.

God had helped him in conquering many nations around him but in the last two years of his life, he went to others to help him fight his battles. It says he formed an alliance with Ben-hadad, the king of Syria in Damascus. Asa used all the silver and gold that was left in the temple as monetary bribes. He convinced Ben-hadad to break his peace treaty with King Baasha of Israel and to invade the Northern Kingdom. Then the prophet Hanani came and admonished Asa. He told him he should not have relied on the king of Syria and opposed divine help by defeating Baasha. The sad part is that Asa rejected the words of the prophet and he threw Hanani in jail. Two years later, King Asa's reign ended and he died. The terribleness of the story is that King Asa trusted God all his life, but in the last years he gave up that trust. He went to people, more than he went to God. If you were God, what would you do?

If you promised a friend you would be there for her whenever she was in need of money, clothes, food or someone to talk to, just to find out your friend has been living off welfare and didn't come to you for help, how would you feel? What if you reassured your friend each time that you would help her, and each time you would find her somewhere else asking for help, begging on the street? Perhaps even selling her body for money to make a way. Using every possible way to survive, except laying claim to your offer. How would you feel?

**BECAREFUL OF INDEPENDANT
TRUST IN SELF. GOD CALLS US TO
COMPLETE TRUST IN HIM.**

This is often what we do to God. We go to everybody else before we go to Him. Jesus says: "I am the way, the truth and the life." You are not the way. Others are not the way. Wealth and security and jobs are not the way. Jesus says, "I am the way."

Many of us struggle with trust. We really are unbelieving believers. It sounds contradictory. Unbelieving believers are people who know of God, but don't know God personally. They are people who have not had a real deep experience with God. Unbelieving believers can tell you that God created the heaven and the earth, but they can't tell you what He has done for them personally, because they haven't given Him a chance to manifest His power on their behalf. They pray for deliverance, but before He can answer, they make a plan themselves or run to somebody else to solve their problems. They rob God of an opportunity to show His love, care and protection. They also rob themselves of the opportunity to experience God coming through for them at number 99, because they were impatient, because they lack the experiences that grow faith.

You have to believe in the Word, in the power of the promises of the Word. Do you believe that God sent His only Son? If so, then you should also believe He will supply all your needs and that He will take care of you. It makes no sense that you would trust God with your eternal salvation, but you don't trust Him with your car payments, or with your health.

The Bible tells us that our bread and water will be sure. God does not always provide for us in the way we expect. Look at the story in the Bible of Elijah during the drought. God cared for him.

**DON'T ROB YOURSELF OF THE
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE
GOD COMING THROUGH FOR YOU
AT NUMBER 99, BECAUSE OF YOUR
IMPATIENCE.**

Crows brought him food while he lived in the wild next to a stream. He was God's prophet and one would think that God would take better care of him. The Bible tells us not only did God care for him in that way, but when the brook ran dry, God sent him to a widow who had nothing. She was about to share her last piece of bread with her son and then die. God said to Elijah: "Tell the widow that she must give you her last piece of bread."

Would you do it? Would you ask somebody who was starving themselves, for the last piece of bread? Do you have enough faith in God that He will take care of them as well as you after that? For me, I'd rather go hungry. I'd rather go pick up some roots or scraps out of a dustbin to take care of myself, than do that which God asks me, because it's difficult. We are very self-sufficient. I know we call this self-dependence. We are self-dependent, other-dependent, but we struggle to be God-dependent. This is because we do not really know God. We haven't had a living experience of the invitation: "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

How awesome would it be if you could say: "I cut the rope and He caught me? He came through for me. I had faith. It was scary and dark. I couldn't see, but I stepped out in faith. I cut the rope."

You won't know until you've tried. You have to put God to the test. Do you really believe that all power in heaven and earth belongs to Him? Do you really believe that the Son of God died and rose again for you? Do you really believe there is a Name you can call on that is above every other name? That He will open the storehouse of heaven and pour out blessings on you and that you do not have enough room to receive it?

**CUT THE ROPE AND ALLOW GOD
TO CATCH YOU. HAVE FAITH
WHEN IT'S SCARY AND DARK.
STEPPED OUT IN FAITH AND CUT THE
ROPE.**

'For those who know the unchanging and reliable nature of God's promises, we show dishonour to God when we lay our burdens upon mortal men.' We should not be like King Asa.

Psalms 20:7 says: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses: but we trust in the Name of the Lord our God." Examine yourself today. Who holds your trust? Timothy writes in 2 Timothy 3:5: "Some have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." Don't be like that. Put God first in your life. Don't just make room for Him or call on Him when you are exhausted and you have no other options.

Do we trust God enough when He is silent? When it is scary? When He hasn't given us all the details of how He is going to come through for us, we need to take courage. Our unknown is known to God. Our rescue is already there before the day of trouble comes. Our Saviour has already paid the price to set us free. Our healing is already there, because by His stripes we are healed. Our answer is just on the other side of fear. He knows how it is going to work out even if we don't.

Hebrews 13:5 gives a beautiful promise. God says: "I will never leave you and I will never forsake you." Trust God in the good times, as well as the bad times. Trust God now so that you can trust Him later.

**FOR THOSE WHO KNOW THE
UNCHANGING AND RELIABLE
NATURE OF GOD'S PROMISES, WE
SHOW DISHONOUR TO GOD WHEN
WE LAY OUR BURDENS UPON
MORTAL MEN.**

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*Northern Conference, Pastoral Counselling Department
Revive, Refresh, Restore
flemingn@nc.adventist.org
Cell: +27836584296
Author: Nandi Fleming
Editors: Kobus & Adele Beukes*