

## TRANSFORMED BY TRUST

### "Don't Waste Your Sorrows"

Several years ago, I read a book entitled *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*. Even though I don't remember a lot of what was in the book, the title has always stuck with me. It is a good reminder that we **can** waste our sorrows – and, in fact, I'm sure there have been times when I **have** wasted my sorrows!

Ever notice that it's not hard to trust (as we have defined it) when things are going great! No, trust is hard when things AREN'T going great! Why?

When hard times come -

- a chronic health condition
- a serious illness
- unemployment or some other financial crises
- family or marriage difficulties
- a difficult relationship
- a rebellious child
- a stressful work situation
- the aftermath of a terrible accident
- or some deep personal pain that hardly anyone knows about

The questions begin: If God is **love** and **good** all the time and if God loves me, then **why**? We find it hard to understand what God is doing and our weary souls cry, "Enough! When is this ever going to end? I'm so tired of this – and I see no end in sight – I just wish this would all go away!"

Furthermore, we become confused. Jesus taught us to pray – *Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil* – which means – spare us the bad things that might happen to us. This request states what we already know about ourselves: We can't stand up under much pressure and we don't like suffering. But, in spite of our prayers, we still have trials – bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. Everyone has trials and troubles – no one exempt.

So – we have to see that any trial or evil that comes upon us has a special function in God's plan for us . . .

Dallas Willard in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, states: *We should understand that God will usually spare us from trials, especially if we are living in the Lord's Prayer. And we should also understand that, **when trials are permitted, it only means that He has something better in mind for us than freedom from trials.** . . . God who loves to spare his children and who will always do it upon request unless he has something better in mind, which he rarely does.*

He goes on to say:

*We often project upon God the sadistic tendencies that are present in humans – that some actually enjoy the suffering of others . . . One of our worst thoughts about God is that he too enjoys human suffering . . .*

But, the fact remains that we do live in world where we do have trouble. Rather than preventing it, which is often not possible because of free choice, God uses the inevitable suffering in his own way.

We need to give up **illusion** of a problem-free life which is an unrealistic expectation. Jesus said that in this world you **will** have trouble. So we **expect** problems, sorrows, hard times knowing that God has a purpose in everyone of them. He redeems each one – he buys them back and gives them a purpose.

Generally, God redeems our sorrows by using them to make us *mature, complete, not lacking in anything – strong in character and ready for anything*. He always works for our good and has our best interests at heart. But this is not an automatic process. Our response is all important and that is where **TRUST** comes in.

Before we talk about our **specific response** to hard times and what the Psalms teach us about a **trusting life**, let's remind ourselves of some truths about trials that will comfort and encourage us. When trials come:

- God will not allow them to become so great or heavy as to **harm/destroy us**. **1 Cor. 10:13** – *But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.*
- He will not allow any trial into our life that he, then, is not able to work **good from it** – even the result of someone's else's sin or behavior. (Romans 8:28)
- We never, ever go it alone. He is always with us. **Psalm 23** - *Even if I walk through the valley of deep shadows or darkness, you are with me.*

Jesus promises never to leave us or abandon us. Better still, he is our "**burden-bearer**" as we **cast roll off our anxieties** onto him. How do we cast our cares onto him? I have asked Jesus that very question and it seemed that he said: *Name your fears and lift them to me*. As I did that, he sometimes seemed to say, *Let it go for this is not your responsibility*. If I was uncertain about a decision or how something was going to turn out, I heard him assure me that he already knew and had prepared me for the outcome.

If we listen, Jesus always says the thing that lifts our burden from our shoulder to his. His yoke is easy and the burden light – **because he is carrying the load**.

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We now come to our third question --

Question 3: **How do I trust?**

What does the trust relationship look like? What is my part? How do I cooperate with what God is doing? What do the **Psalms** teach us about trust – and HOW to do it? How do we NOT waste our sorrows?

There are 4 activities I want to mention that will help in the process of trusting. I've made them rhyme so that they can be more easily remembered.

They are: 1) **Intent on Lament**, 2) **Gratitude changes Attitude**, 3) **Believe before you Receive**, and 4) **Late? Still Wait!**

### **How do we trust?**

#### **Intent on Lament**

The first step to trust is often **lament** and the Psalmist were great at this! Lament is a *passionate expression of grief and sorrow or a cry of sorrow or grief.*

#### **Ps. 142 and 143**

*I cry out to the Lord . . . I pour out my complaint to him . . . I tell all my trouble . . . Listen to my cry. . . I am in desperate need . . . Set me free from my prison . . . My spirit is faint, my heart is dismayed . . . I spread out my hands to you . . . Preserve my life . . . Silence my enemies . . . Destroy my foes . . .*

When sorrow **hits**, we want to **vent!** And we can! We can vent our frustration, anger, sorrow, pity and disappointment. We can say what we are feeling and thinking We can ask *Why?* The Psalmist gives us permission to pour out our **heart** –our **soul** – our **complaint**. We need hold nothing back! We can say it all – the good, the bad, the ugly!

I love it that God knows we NEED to do this! We really can LAMENT – say anything – really let it out. Oh, but wait, there is a catch!

*I cry aloud **to the Lord**; I lift up my voice **to the Lord**  
I pour out my complaint **before him**  
**Before him** I tell all my trouble*

All laments in the Psalms are made **to God**.

Why?

- God can take anything you give him – others can't.
- If we lament to others, we open ourselves to wrong answers.  
If we lament to God, we'll hear his answers
- If we vent to others instead of to God – we will miss what God has to say to us.

When we studied the Psalms of Lament in our Bible study, we reminded ourselves of this principle by saying: **Take it to the throne – not the phone!**

Lament is important – don't skip this – don't be pious, "religious." When we are **real** - God can **really** meet us.

### **How is lament trusting?**

#### **Hebrews 11:6**

*And without faith (trust) it is impossible to please God, because anyone who **comes to him** must **believe that he exists** and that he **rewards those who earnestly seek him.***

Lament pleases God – because it is an **expression of trust**:

- 1) We are coming to him
- 2) We believe that he exists (by coming to him)
- 3) We believe that he will reward us for coming (lament is sincerely seeking)

**Trust** pleases God because it brings us to him and **lament** please God because it also brings us to him. As long as we **involve God – leave him in the process** – we are trusting. Going to someone else – or figuring it out yourself – is not trust. If we turn to God – even in questioning, anger, fear, disappointment or confusion – we are seeking him – and his will **reward our coming**. God doesn't require that we come with a good attitude. He just wants us to come. We are to check "in" – not check "out."

In order to trust, we must be **Intent on Lament!**

**How do we trust?**

### **Gratitude Changes Attitude**

Our biggest temptation in sorrows and trials is to **complain** – to **ourselves** and **others**. Often, we don't even realize we do it.

Complain means to *express dissatisfaction or annoyance about circumstances or situations*. Complaining is a huge **trust buster**. Complaining has a **negative** effect on **us** and **others** and is **offensive** to God. Complaining is an **attitude problem**.

Complaining focuses on what you **don't have**, while ignoring what you **do have**. This is what the serpent got Eve to do in the Garden. She ignored the abundance of good things she **did** have and instead focused on the **one thing** she couldn't have. Complaining is from the PIT!

In **Psalm 73:2** –Asaph says:

*But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. **For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.***

He begins to complain –

*They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills . . . **yada, yada, yada** . . .*

Complaining is like a poison – it infects us and others with bitterness, resentment and arrogance. Trust dies in it's presence. Complaining is particularly offensive to God. When we complain to others, we are saying that **we** could run things better than **he** can. We imply that he is mismanaging things. When we grumble, we **casually despise his sovereignty**.

Can you imagine how complaining makes God feel? In effect, we are telling him that he doesn't know what he is doing, that he has made a mistake, that he doesn't really love us and that he doesn't have our best interest at heart. Complaining is just plain disrespectful – to God and it is a stumbling block to others.

Asaph continues in **Psalm 73:21-22**

*When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was **senseless and ignorant**; I was a **brute beast before you**.*

There is no room for any kind of complaining in the trusting relationship. I often find myself complaining about the "small stuff" – frustrations, annoyances, pet peeves – and especially the **weather!**

We were in Hawaii not too long ago, experiencing some very un-Hawaiian-like weather – about which I was freely complaining. However, the weather became a spiritual analogy for me and God used it to speak to me about my attitude in general. I use a devotional book titled *Jesus Calling* and one this particular day I read (commenting on **Psalm 118:24**):

*This is the day I have made. Rejoice and be glad in it. Begin the day with open hands of faith, ready to receive all that I am pouring into this brief portion of your life. **Be careful not to complain about anything, even the weather**, since I am the Author of your circumstances. The best way to handle unwanted situations is to thank me for them. This act of faith frees you from resentment and frees Me to work My ways into the situation, so that good emerges from it.*

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The solution to **complaining** is **thanksgiving . . . and Gratitude changes Attitude.**

Thanksgiving is the best expression of TRUST that we have. It blesses God and it blesses us. A grateful heart protects us from negative thinking. It allows us to see the abundance of God and allows God to hear and answer our prayers. When we express gratitude, we begin to see things from God's perspective and it opens the door of God's treasures. Thanksgiving affirms that God **is good all the time!**

Again from my devotional book:

*Trust and thankfulness will get you safely through this day. **Trust** protects you from worrying and obsessing. **Thankfulness** keeps you from criticizing and complaining, **those sister sins** that so easily entangle you.*

*Keeping you eyes on Me is the same thing as **trusting me**. It is a free choice that you must make thousands of times daily. The more you choose to trust me, the easier it becomes and thought patterns of trust become etched on your brain. . . .*

**Ps. 50:23**

He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, **and he prepares the way** so that **I may show him the salvation of God.**" This same verse in *The Message* reads: *It's the praising life that honors me. As soon as you set your foot on the Way, I'll show you my salvation.*

Gratitude changes attitude as it expresses trust which opens the door for God to work!

## **How do we trust?** **Believe Before You Receive**

Believing before you receive is what makes trust, trust!

### **Hebrews 11:1**

*What is faith? It is the **confident assurance** that what we **hope for is going to happen**. It is the evidence of things we cannot **yet see**.*

### **Psalms 5:3**

*In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in **expectation**.*

How do we **believe we are going to receive, before** we actually receive it? Is it just a mental game? Is there any **action** involved? How do we **show God** we are trusting – his promise and his character – even **before** we receive what He has promised?

The best way I can illustrate this is to share with you how God taught me to do this –

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A few years ago, I was learning to trust in an area of my life that was causing a lot of anxiety at the time – writing deadlines for a Bible study curriculum I was writing. I was getting ready to go on a trip – and a particular lesson was not written yet. Instead of giving into anxiety, I had a conversation with Jesus about the situation:

From my journal . . .

Jesus, I'm disappointed that I don't have a clear sense of what to do with the lesson I am writing. Yesterday, you gave me how I was to approach the lesson – and I know that was from you – but I didn't want to go on this trip with this lesson undone. I wanted to go and enjoy my family without a deadline hanging over me.

*First, you haven't left yet. There is still time. You haven't learned yet that I don't see and operate in time as you do. Time is nothing to me. I'm not in it or limited by it. In the Spirit there is no time. I can give you something in a flash! Trust me on this. Place this in my hands for safe keeping. Give me the lesson now. Can you do that? Will you place it in my hands?*

Yes, Lord, you are right. I've been carrying this and it's too heavy for me. Here it is. Take it. I place it in your hands. It belongs to you – not me. I will not carry it today. It is not my responsibility.

*Thank you! Each lesson has to be given to me. I will give it back when the time is right. Don't worry about deadlines. You made up that schedule. Can you give me the schedule too – and let me make up the schedule? Can you trust me to give you the lessons on time? Don't I know better than you?*

Yes, Jesus, you are right. This is a self imposed schedule. I now hand that to you too. I trust you – and I believe you will provide at just the right time.

*I'm gong to use all this to teach you many things. I want you to trust me no matter what. I want you to really give up control of these things. Do you see how your schedule and expectations was affecting everything?*

*Stay close to me – listen and learn. I don't want **what** you do for me determining **how** you feel about me. That cannot be the basis of our relationship. YOU are more important than what you DO. For too long you have defined yourself and your life by how well your work goes. I don't want this to be the basis of our relationship any longer. I want our love to flow freely between each other regardless of your schedule.*

*I know when each lesson is due. Can you trust me to give them to you on time? Can you wait with expectation and anticipation? I want you to see this time constraint lifting off you. Do you feel the lightness? The freedom? Enjoy today to the fullest. The lesson is not longer your responsibility.*

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The next day, I was sitting in airport waiting to leave – and the lesson was still not written. As I prayed and listened, I sensed Jesus asking me what I had learned and what I was seeing in the situation.

From my journal . . .

It is one thing to trust you and turn over my lessons and schedule, but another thing completely to live and act and feel as if you really had supplied my need, even though it hasn't yet. When I truly give something to you and believe that you will fulfill your promise, from that moment on I am to act, feel, make decisions and live as if it is already given and written – even though it is not on paper yet!

It seems to me that this is what Abraham did in Romans 4.

Jesus asked me what I would be **doing, thinking** and **feeling** right now **IF** the lesson had been written before I left . . .

My answer . . .

I would be rejoicing today – singing your praises, thanking you, marveling at your love and power. My spirit would have been as light as a feather – I would be going on my trip with a light heart ready to enjoy family – going as if I truly had nothing on my plate this week and I could give myself completely to them and live in the present moment.

So – this is how I should be acting and feeling (even though the lesson isn't written) **BECAUSE** you promised that me that I would get it done in time. So, it's as good as written! **My reaction to you and your promise should be the same as if the promise was already fulfilled.** *Real faith says there is not difference between your PROMISE that something would happen and the actuality of the thing happening.*

**Romans 4:17** - As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed— the God who gives life to the dead **and calls things that are not as though they were.**

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When God gives us a promise – we **believe** and **act** as though the promise is a reality. We can even thank God for what he will do. This demonstrates trust; it is **believing before we receive!**

**How do we trust?  
Late? Still Wait!**

**Psalms 27:14**

*Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.*

**Psalms 33:20**

*We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.*

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**Psalms 38:15**

*I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God.*

**Psalms 40:1**

*I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

What are we waiting for? Usually we wait for God to act – to show up – to get us out of the trial or suffering we are in. We want him to do something – anything!

When I am in a trial – I understand all the dynamics of God working for my good, etc., but I just want the whole thing to be over as soon as possible! When we think God is not acting, we become hurt, tired and weary.

The Psalmist teaches us to wait patiently and actively – to keep on, keeping on and not to complain (to ourselves and others). As we wait, we trust – trust what God is doing, trust that there is a reason, trust that what is happening will be worked for good and acknowledging that God is God and we are not.

There is a reason for our waiting. The poem *Wait* by Russell Kelfer expresses some of the reasons why we wait:

*Desperately, helplessly, longingly, I cried;  
Quietly, patiently, lovingly, God replied.  
I pled and I wept for a clue to my fate...  
and the Master so gently said, "Wait."  
"Wait? you say wait?" my indignant reply.  
"Lord, I need answers, I need to know why!"  
Is your hand shortened? Or have you not heard?  
By faith I have asked, and I'm claiming your Word.*

*My future and all to which I relate  
hangs in the balance and you tell me to Wait?"  
I'm needing a 'yes', a go-ahead sign.  
Or even a 'no,' to which I'll resign.  
You promised, dear Lord, that if we believe,  
We need but to ask, and we shall receive.  
Lord, I've been asking, and this is my cry:  
I'm weary of asking! I need a reply.  
Then quietly, softly, I learned of my fate  
as my Master replied again, "Wait."*

*So I slumped in my chair, defeated and taut,  
and grumbled to God, "So, I'm waiting...for what?"*

*He seemed then to kneel, and His eyes met with mine...  
and He tenderly said, "I could give you a sign.  
I could shake the heavens and darken the sun.  
I could raise the dead and cause mountains to run.*

*I could give all you seek and pleased you would be.  
You'd have what you want, but you wouldn't know Me.  
You'd not know the depth of My love for each saint.  
You'd not know the power that I give to the faint.  
You'd not learn to see through clouds of despair;  
you'd not learn to trust just by knowing I'm there.  
You'd not know the joy of resting in Me  
When darkness and silence are all you can see.*

*You'd never experience the fullness of love  
When the peace of My spirit descends like a dove.  
You would know that I give, and I save, for a start,  
But you'd not know the depth of the beat of My heart.  
The glow of My comfort late into the night,  
The faith that I give when you walk without sight.  
The depth that's beyond getting just what you ask  
From an infinite God who makes what you have last.*

*You'd never know should your pain quickly flee,  
What it means that My grace is sufficient for thee.  
Yes, your dearest dreams overnight would come true,  
But oh, the loss if I lost what I'm doing in you.  
So, be silent, my child, and in time you will see  
That the greatest of gifts is to truly know me.  
And though oft My answers seem terribly late,  
My most precious answer of all is still "WAIT".*

In his book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, author Peter Scazzero, says:  
*(Learning to wait) breaks some thing deep within us – the driving, grasping, fearful self-will that must produce, that must make something happen, that must get it done for God (just in case he doesn't).*

**Abraham** learned to wait (after taking things into his own hands) and was **transformed** into the **Father of Faith** for all history.

**Moses** learned to wait – After murdering a man and failing to deliver his people, he spent the next 40 years waiting. In the desert God **transformed** him into the most humblest man on the face of the earth.

**David** learned to wait – After a stunning victory over Goliath and his anointing as King – he waited in the desert, running for his life. In the wilderness, God **transformed** him into a man after his own heart.

**Hannah** learned to wait – After years of infertility, unanswered prayers and mocking from the second wife of her husband, God answered her. Her years of pain and grief **transformed** her into the godly mother of Samuel who would, in turn, **transform** a nation.

**Jesus** learned to wait – in obscurity and silence, both as lowly carpenter and in the wilderness. Out of the wilderness, he emerged in the power of the Spirit.

We can trust God to do the same for us – as we wait patiently for him to **transform** us . . .  
*Learning to wait breaks some thing deep within us – the driving, grasping, fearful self-will that must produce, that must make something happen, that must get it done for God (just in case he doesn't).*

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**How do we trust?** We trust by learning:

- to be **Intent on Lament**;
- that **Gratitude changes Attitude**
- to **Believe before we Receive**, and
- to **Wait – even if it seems Late!**

Question 4: **What can we expect if we live in this trusting dependent relationship?**

As we trust – we will come to **KNOW** God. This is our **ultimate purpose** – it is what we were created for – to know and be intimate with God. This knowing is what was lost in the Garden – and it is what Jesus came to restore.

**Know** – *to be involved in an intimate, growing relationship*

Jesus - *Now this is eternal life (the life that never ends!) – that they may **know you**, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"*

Paul's greatest desire is that he would **know** Christ. **Philippians 3:10:**

*[For my determined purpose is]*

*that I may know Him*

*[that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding*

*the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]*

Do you hear the longing in his voice?

When we trust – we **will** know God. **Trust** and **knowing** are two sides of the same coin – and the **coin** is LOVE. To **know him** is why God created us. We were created to have a loving, intimate relationship with our Creator. We will not find joy, satisfaction or significance in any other way or in any other relationship.

Trust + Know = Love Relationship

## **What can we expect if we live in this trusting dependent relationship?**

**You will be shaped and formed into the image of Christ – becoming** mature, complete and ready for anything.

I just read an address that may well be John Stott's last public sermon. (He is 86 years old and has "officially" retired.) In this sermon, he asked the question, "What is God's purpose for His people?" After mentioning several possible answers to this question – this is what he said:

*"I want to share with you where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth and it is – **God wants His people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God.** . . .*

He goes on:

***Suffering** is part of God's process of making us like Christ. Whether we suffer from a disappointment, a frustration or some other painful tragedy, we need to try to see this in the light of **Romans 8:28-29**. According to Romans 8:28, God is always working for the good of his people, and according to Romans 8:29, this good purpose is to make us like Christ.*

God's overarching purpose is to bring all his children to **Christlikeness**. And he will stop at nothing to accomplish this – Even if it means us experiencing **painful training** – because Christlikeness is that important – it has eternal consequences – for us and others.

We often think of Christ-likeness as a **personal benefit**. If I was more like Christ, I would be joyful, fulfilled, spiritually successful, mature, complete – not lacking in anything!

But our Christlikeness is **really for others** – Can you imagine the impact of marriages, families, churches filled with Christ-like people? Can you imagine the impact on our world – if most Christians were Christ-like?

It has been observed that evangelism often fails because **we don't look like the Christ we are proclaiming**.

Our FATHER will stop at nothing to shape and form us into the image of Jesus – for our sakes – and for others. Trusting God in the hard times is so important to this process!