

# ***Finding Strength through Faith***

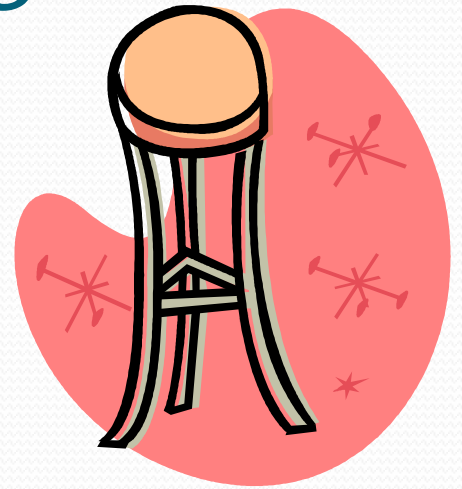
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# “In this world you will have tribulation...”

- No one ever said that life would be a cake walk....
- In fact, Scripture warns us:
  - Disease will afflict us;
  - Death will make widows and orphans;
  - Famine, floods and earthquakes will cause devastation.
- But remember, “... *be of good cheer for I have overcome the world.*” (John 16:33)

# Keeping your life in balance living with a chronic illness...

- Your body is like a 3-legged stool....
  - **Physical leg**
  - **Emotional leg**
  - **Spiritual leg**
  - You need to maintain all 3 to stay in balance.
- If one becomes weak...
  - Physical: Doctors, meds, PT, etc. can help
  - Emotional: Family, friends, counsellors can help
  - Spiritual: Most important. Making it stronger is what we will be talking about today.



# Keeping the right perspective...

- Dealing with chronic illness shortens your focus to the “here and now.” So, we need the **right** perspective, but how do we do that?

- Here is our life line:



- To what should we compare?

- Hint: *God has planted **eternity** in the hearts of all men.*

- So here is our life line compared to eternity:



- Our focus on our problems of today pales in comparison to what still lies ahead of us in eternity.

- But... eternity has 2 different addresses!
- We had no choice in our gender or our families, but we do have a choice in where we can spend eternity..... and the choice is ours.
- Goal: To change our focus... Our tribulations today are insignificant compared to what is waiting for us in eternity.

# My Story...

- This was my office.....
- Then... .the diagnosis;
- Five stages of grief:
  - **Denial:** “It must be a mistake!”
  - **Anger:** People often blame God...
    - “What did I do to deserve this?” or “Why me, God?”
    - Better question: “Why not you?”
  - **Bargaining:** “God, if you’ll just take this away, I’ll (fill in the blank).”
    - What we don’t hear is God whispering, “I have plans for you.”
    - The more I bargained, the more I started hearing, “Accept it.”
  - **Depression:** Much more likely to occur when you leave God out of the equation.
  - **Acceptance:** This is where God wants you to be.
    - Acceptance is not the same as resignation.



# More on Acceptance....

- Acceptance becomes easier when you realize that God **allows** us to have our disease because **He has a plan for us** to use it for HIS purpose.
  - Rom 8:28...
  - We can make all of the plans we want, BUT...
  - God is in control, not us;
  - He orders our steps
- Not sure of His plans for you? Try **looking at things from His perspective...**
  - Work to be a **walking example** of His grace through our acceptance of His will.
  - Show others that **He supplies the strength** that we need on a daily basis (He wants to be the oxygen of our life).
  - Every day we are given **opportunities to share our story with others**; that message can help them **and** bring joy to your life!

# *It Starts in your Mind...*

- Acceptance is directly related to our **attitude**.... And that begins with your mindset.
- You can't stop thinking negative thoughts by trying harder to not think them.
- You have the power to to choose what you focus on.
- Two people in the same circumstances can have 2 completely different experiences.
- As an example.....

# *Excerpts from a Dog's Diary...*

- 8:00 a.m.—Dog food! My favorite thing!
- 9:30 a.m.—A car ride! My favorite thing!
- 10:30 a.m.—Got rubbed and petted! My favorite thing!
- 12 p.m.—Played in the yard! My favorite thing!
- 2:00 p.m.—Got a cookie! My favorite thing!
- 4 :00 p.m.—Took a nap! My favorite thing!
- 7:00 p.m.—Got to play ball! My favorite thing!
- 10:00 p.m.- Sleeping on the bed! My favorite thing!



# Excerpts from a Cat's Diary...

- "Day 983 of my captivity. My captors continue to taunt me with bizarre little dangling objects. I continue to swat them away with no success. The only thing that keeps me going is my dream of escape."
- Same circumstances... 2 totally different attitudes.
- What is your attitude?
- John Milton: ***"The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, or a hell of heaven."***

# *It's All About the Attitude!*

- What is our attitude? Where is our focus when we suffer loss?
  - We have 2 choices:
- We can choose to be **bitter** ☹️
  - This happens when we focus on what we have lost;
  - It can sour our attitude and can lead to anger issues;
  - Or worse.....it can lead to depression.
- Or we can choose to be **better** 😊
  - How? Focus on what we DO have (loving spouse and family, supportive friends, good doctors, etc.)
  - Develop an **attitude of gratitude!** Make a “**Gratitude List**”
  - Ask God to heal our heart; let others see His work on the inside;
  - How you are on the inside is of far greater value than what's going on with you on the outside.

# *Enhance your perspective...*

- Read about others who have had to overcome much worse challenges:
  - **Joni Eareckson Tada**—quadriplegic at 19; now an acclaimed artist; author of 50 books; popular speaker around the world.
  - **Amy Charmichael**—a missionary in India who spent the last 20 years of her life bedridden, but who continued her missionary work.
  - **Nick Vujicic**—Australian born with only stumps for arms and legs. Can now write, use a computer, comb his own hair, brush his teeth, answer the phone and shave on his own. Travels the world as a motivational speaker.

# *Strengthening the Spiritual Leg...*

- When you are hurting, seek Godly counsel.
  - Avoid the pity pot. Look for advice and support from people who have a “God” perspective, not a worldly one.
- Look for ways that **you** can become a positive influence on others.
- Be intentional about **staying in touch with God**:
  - Make **prayer a regular habit**; prayers move God to change the world!
  - Find a Bible-based church; but don't only depend on “secondhand spirituality” (from the preacher!)
  - Establish a “**Quiet/Devotional time**” in your daily routine.
    - Consider it “tithing” the first part of each day;
    - Make sure it includes actual quiet time... you can't listen for His voice if you're doing all of the talking!

# The Power of Prayer...

- *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God.”*  
(Phil 4:6)
- Remember this... **Prayer in the face of suffering leads to new spiritual territory.**
- If you have an urge to pray it's because **God is calling you.**
- Prayer is a good way to take the focus off of us and put it on God.
- Change your attitude about prayer:
  - Make it less of an activity and more of an awareness of God.
  - While stopped at a light; waiting in line; walking to your next meeting.
- Count your blessings each day... and then be thankful!

# Getting Outside of Ourselves...

- A great way to take your mind off of your own problems is by helping others.
- Inward focus → Pity Pot → Depression ☹️
- Outward focus → Helps Others → Improves your attitude! 😊
  - Great opportunity to help: Support Groups (KIT's)
- ***“In this life we cannot do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” (Mother Teresa)***
  - Example: **Listening...** to others who are hurting; you can actually find comfort in another person's story.
- And don't hesitate to **share your story** with others...
  - God is your partner; He provides your **strength and hope.**
  - **Your story might inspire someone who one day might have to deal with their own pain or suffering!**
  - Remember: Fellowship with others helps our faith to flourish!

# God's Plan for You...

- **Allow Him to be in control!**
  - God wants us to **depend on Him** so that He can supply us with the **strength** that we need on a daily basis.
- With His strength and provision, you can add **joy and peace** into your life, and possibly even change someone else's life.
- Make a difference at home...
  - Start within your own circle of influence—your story of receiving the strength you need from God will touch others.
  - Remember: **you only need to touch one life to make a difference in this world...and you may not even know it!**
  - Drop a stone...

# Closing Thoughts...

- Faith means **believing and trusting** God for the future;
- Faith is **like a muscle...** it needs to be exercised to grow;
- Draw your strength from God **each day**:
  - Remember that He is using us as a **living example** of His grace and mercy.
- **Keep your eyes on eternity**; not the problems of today.
- Disease and suffering are part of our world... So is getting older.
  - It's how we deal with them that will determine our future....
- ...and remember, a season of suffering is a small price to pay for a clear view of God!





**Thank  
You!**