

I Will *Bless* the Lord

Even when my thoughts trouble me.

IT HAD BEEN A GRUELING YEAR. Relational strain from outside of our immediate family threatened the life within it. I felt as though my heart was bread dough kneaded by a baker, but I was missing the reward of a heavenly-scented sourdough loaf, which would be worth the pressure and the intense heat. All my emotions and thoughts felt overworked and exhausted. I was tired of sifting through conversations, exhausted by examining motives, and at the end of the day, I still wasn't experiencing the breakthrough my soul so eagerly yearned for. I pleaded with the Lord again and again, crying out, "Search my heart, Lord. I'm willing to face the hard things! What else can I do?" I had labored in prayer, fought the battle of surrendering my heart to the Lord, and yet still nothing seemed to change; the relational strain was as challenging as ever.

With every question my husband and I thought to ask, and after seeking much counsel — professional and pastoral — each led to a dead end with the same response, "It's out of your control; you've done what you can." One might think this advice would bring relief, but hopelessness sets in when you realize there isn't much else you can do. Keep the door of our heart open, but until humility and effort are continually evident in the situation, a significant pause is the only option.

How Long, Lord?

With every significant occasion coming and going and no relational healing being achieved, I felt unbearably sad and stuck. I needed a lifeline, something to help me break out of the place of pain that seemed to engulf my heart.

The rawness of that season felt like walking through the grief of death with no actual closure.

by **Adrienne Camp**

I needed a lifeline, something to help me break out of the place of pain that seemed to engulf my heart.

Things that generally came with ease felt like trudging through mud with weighted boots and a hundred-pound backpack on. I just wanted to melt into my couch, hidden in a blanket, with a warm cup of tea or coffee in my hand, and clock out. But the days when I indulged myself in that didn't bring peace; they just left me feeling guilty at the thought of letting my family down. I didn't want the experiences of the past to hinder what I have today. I didn't want to neglect the promise of a beautiful future in what God has given me in the life and friendship of my children and my sweet husband. I wanted to be present for them and not so absorbed in fighting for life in my heart that I missed out on theirs.

Looking back, the ache I experienced was akin to passing kidney stones. Graphic and bizarre, I know! It felt as if painful stones had entered my system, some too small to notice, while others were larger and more difficult to pass. Rejection, anger, loss, sadness, acceptance — the cycle of each interaction, or lack thereof. It seemed that after a while the process became familiar, and I had to patiently let myself experience the gamut of emotions until they made their way out of my system.

Again and again. I knew that no matter what happened, the place that would help me survive and be my lifeline was at His feet.

Cry Out to the Lord

Despite the waves of sorrow pounding at the door of my heart, I knew I had to keep returning to the Lord. Again and again. I knew that no matter what happened, the place that would help me survive and be my lifeline was at His feet.

Fast forward a few years and not much has changed in some ways. It's the same old cycle of relational brokenness. Same patterns, same excuses. Different variations of the story have been told — new narratives stretching further from the actual truth. Restoration seemingly spinning far beyond my reach, despite the deepest longing and the tears.

But through it all the Psalms have become the song of my heart and medicine for the ache in my soul.

The authenticity of each stanza gives me the honesty and boldness to express every ounce of what I feel to Jesus. I've learned to become more confident in His ever-faithful presence and His ability to handle the plethora of emotions and thoughts running rampant in my heart. I've found the comfort of the Holy Spirit in my sorrow.

Through my grief, I've learned to pray and sing songs of lament and cries of trust — begging God to act or to open my eyes to the ways His presence and power is working in places unknown to me.

I've felt Him gently leading me toward bathing my heart and mind in gratitude. Practices of thanksgiving now frame more and more of my days. I've learned to eagerly exchange my grief for a healing kiss from a kind Father — the One who will never leave me, never give up on me, who loves me despite my failings, shortcomings, or misguided motives.

I soak up verses about thanksgiving and praise and rest in the nearness of God, the breath in my lungs and the sun consistently rising to remind me that His mercies are new every morning.

I've hidden in my heart the gifts of truth that I found in Scripture that hem me in and have become my defense.

"I will bless the LORD who counsels me— even at night when my thoughts trouble me. I always let the LORD guide me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Ps. 16:7-8).

As for Me Life Through the Lens of the Psalms

by Adrienne Camp

From songs of praise to cries of lament and everything in-between, the book of Psalms captures the wide range of emotions in life. The psalmists paint a picture of a relationship with God that is filled with delays, disappointments, surprises, and triumphs. Through it all, their words model an incredible resolve to keep their eyes on God. Instead of being swallowed up by the darkness of their emotions and circumstances, they persevered in grabbing hold of God's unfailing love and faithfulness.

In this 7-session Bible study, author and singer Adrienne Camp invites you to join her on a journey through the book of Psalms. Gain a deeper understanding of who God is and be encouraged to hold on to Him no matter what is happening around you. Let the psalms become the prayers you carry with you into every moment of every day, so that you, too, can say with confidence, "As for me, I will worship and serve the Lord no matter what."

As for Me is available at lifeway.com.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIANNA BROYLES

Above every ache and yearning of my heart, I realized God had provided Himself to me. He would be enough.

I experienced the bonding of hearts who have walked similar roads and whose companionship has been a refreshing drink of water, providing the strength to keep going another mile.

I treasure the gift of fixing my eyes on Jesus and looking for the coming of my King, who promises a day when justice will flow like a river and every wrong will be made right. He has made a promise, and I wholeheartedly trust that what He says He will do.

Where the enemy seemed to be trying to gain territory in my heart, as I pressed into God, I learned the greatest treasure of Him being all I need. The gems hidden in the hardness of the rock became the most valuable to me. Without these difficulties, I wouldn't have found the immeasurable gift of the nearness of Jesus.

Someone once said, "Joy is not having everything we think we want but choosing to be satisfied with what God has already provided."

In All Things

Above every ache and yearning of my heart, I realized God had provided Himself to me. He would be enough. I want to say, "Simply Jesus," but there was nothing simple about it. It was deep, rich, and profound. I began to learn to sit in silence and listen; listen for where the Father was speaking. I started coming to Him, expecting Him to meet me as I worshiped, prayed, and meditated on Scripture, looking to Him and for Him in all things. He beckons us to Himself.

Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-30).

As we learn to live for God in the midst of a society in rebellion against Him, let's be resolved to hold on to His loving-kindness all the days of our lives. I understand what David meant when he expressed in Psalm 23 that his cup overflows. God fills our cups to overflowing, even in the most challenging times of our lives. He satisfies our hearts with good things and doesn't need our world to be perfect to do so.

I will always treasure the seasons when Jesus shows me who He is. □

Adrienne Camp grew up in South Africa and moved to America to pursue music at 19. She is married to fellow musician Jeremy Camp, whom she met on tour in 2002 and married in 2003. They have two daughters, Bella and Arie, and one son, Egan. She is passionate about her family and about sharing God's love all over the world. Her greatest desire is to know Him and make Him known.