

From Section 8: God Is Faithful to the Finish

"I praise the Lord, who counsels me, even at night my heart instructs me; I will keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him in my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." –Psalm 16:7-11, NIV

Unshaken by Life's Trials

"Keep me safe Lord! Show me the way to go! I can't see anything show me the way to go help me don't know how I'm ever going to do this!" This was my frantic cry to God one night on my way up Wintergreen Mountain. For several years, Mark and I owned a mountaintop house up at the top of this ski resort. The views looking out over the Central Virginia countryside were beautiful, especially in the fall when all the leaves put on all their colorful autumn wardrobe.

I never outgrew the little quiver of excitement as I turned into the resort entrance. On beautiful, curvy roads you rose two thousand feet in about fifteen minutes. The views were spectacular. Occasionally, we'd spot a bear and her cubs in the woods or had to slow down to let a clutch of wild turkeys cross the road. It was tempting to keep looking off at the scenic valley views or into the woods for bears, it better not be for more than a moment. With steep drop-offs on one side and deep rain gulches on the other, you needed to keep your eyes to the road to not wind up in either!

But on the night of my prayer, this usually favorite part of the trip was an absolute nightmare. Weather had moved in and the mountain was covered in clouds. And while this dense fog in the daytime certainly made driving difficult, at night, it made it nearly impossible. I toggled my car lights from high beams to low beams to fog lights, trying to improve my visibility, but that made hardly any difference. I could see nothing beyond the hood of my car. What could I do? How could I safely navigate all those curves? How could I keep some driving off into a ditch or even worse over the side one of the steep sides of the mountain? And on top of the difficult, practical problem with the drive, I was panicking. I was shaking. I cried out to God and He answered my prayers. "Lord, help me calm down. Help me get home," I pleaded. And He heard me.

He gave me words from David, written thousands of years earlier to soak into my soul and calm my fears: "You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. Psalm 139:6-7, 11-12, NIV This road was not dark to God. He could help me home. Hadn't I seen Him bring me through other, seemingly impossible situations. He was with me then. I could count on Him to help me now.

He gave me practical help, too. The thought came to me: "You can't see what's in front of you, but you can see what is right below your feet! Open up your door and drive as you look down at the yellow lines. Even if you can only go 1 mile an hour, if you keep your eyes on those lines, you will know where the curves are and won't go off the road."

So, that's what I did and little by little I made my way up mountain's. How grateful I was for those yellow lines! How many times had I groaned my impatience as the Wintergreen road crew made me wait as they blocked a section of that only road in and out of the resort with their regular re-painting of those lines? And now, those little, yellow lines had gone before me and made my trip home possible.

Near the top, I could faintly see blobs of taillights of another car in front of me. How nice it was to have someone else on the road ahead of me, instead of in the dark all by myself! It didn't solve my whole problem, but it did give me a sense of where the road bent ahead of me. This was especially helpful when that car turned right onto the street where our house was located. I was wondering how I was going to find that turn! I was so grateful for the help.

I slowly made my way down this final stretch of curves and hills down to our driveway. With no streetlights, I would have completely missed it, except for the blur of cheerful light that shone out from the house. I let out a sigh as I shut off the car engine! I hoped I would never have to do that again! I was certainly going to warn Mark and the kids to stay away from driving on that mountain on a foggy night!

I stumbled my way up the stairs and through the door of that welcoming, lit-up house. I was still shaking from the experience, but I was not shaken. And now the panic had turned to thrill as the adventure was over and I was safely home. Now I couldn't wait to tell my story to Mark and the others of God's rescue and the incalculable worth of little yellow lines!

David's Beautiful Finale of Faith

Now, I am certain that David never drove a car up Wintergreen Mountain. And as far as we know, David probably never even rode a camel through a sandstorm at night, which perhaps would be the Middle Eastern equivalent to my adventure.

But one thing I do know: David knew many body-shaking, even life-threatening events, far worse than anything I experienced on Wintergreen Mountain or any other day of my life. And yet, even still, David was never shaken.

That is exactly what he is testifying here in the beautiful finale of Psalm 16 in verses 7-11:

"I praise the Lord, who counsels me, even at night my heart instructs me; I will keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him in my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." –Psalm 16:7-11, NIV

David is providing us with an Old Testament version of this beautiful New Testament promise:

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." 2 Peter 1:3

No matter what David faced, he found God to be enough for what needed. David fixes his eyes upon God. He is confident that in knowing God and being God's child, that God will give him everything he needs for his current situation and every other situation that waits for him around the bend. Everything he needs, in terms of wisdom. And everything he needs, in terms of perseverance. "With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

Perhaps it is these verses most of all which is why I love this Psalm so much. The confidence that no matter what life brings and no matter how much we are shaking, that God holds us and it all in His

hands. With Him at our right hand—that is, as our helper—we cannot be shaken. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever. He will carry us through and all the way home. We are secure.

Let's look at five ways God encourages us, strengthens us, and brings us home to Himself, unshaken.

UNSHAKEN: ASKING GOD FOR HELP

"LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy... Answer me quickly, LORD; my spirit fails... Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life. Psalm 143:1,7-8, NIV

"What should I do? Where do I find what I need to do it?" That sums up much of what we seek counsel for. We frequently go to others for answers, and that's good. But the best place to start is by asking God.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." –James 1:5, NIV

God promises the wisdom we need to know His will as well as the strength (and other resources) we need to do it... but He loves to be asked. And in our asking, God not only answer us, but He also uses our very asking to grow us and change us. He reminds us of our daily dependence upon Him. He reminds us that He is God and King over this world. He reminds us that He is our Father. He cares! He gives us eyes to see His loving gifts when we ask for them first. And He grows our confidence in Him that He will continue to help us all the way home to heaven.

Why is important for us to remember to pray to God, as pastors' wives? Here are three great reasons:

1. It is a great way to encourage others.

A godly seminary professor made a habit of stopping and praying right away when someone shared a need or concern. It had a great impact upon me, and I have followed his example to this day. It was an encouragement that we belong to the living God and He wants us to go first to Him, our Father, with our needs. And somehow, taking the time to pray right then, rather than the usual "Ok, I'll remember to pray for you" is so much more meaningful to the person sharing their need. And it makes a link between them and me that grows as they come back and share how God has answered our prayers. This is a wonderful and simple way to show love to the members of your church.

2. It gives us hope in impossible situations.

Our emotions are wonderful gifts from God and when they are working in our favor they help fuel our prayers. But, they are nothing to count on! Pray whether you feel like it or not! God doesn't value our prayers by the emotional heat of our heart but by their accordance with His will! Forge ahead even on dull days!

I have come to use times when I don't feel like praying as wonderful times of defiant prayer. What do I mean by that? I don't mean defiant against God, but defiant against my feelings.

Do I feel in despair about a situation? Then I am praising God for His sovereignty over the situation and His complete ability to do whatever needs to be done. I thank Him for His perfect timing in the situation and am asking Him to work powerfully in it, according to His good and perfect will.

Does God feel far away? Then I am praising God for His Holy Spirit that dwells inside of me, comforting me and giving me strength and wisdom, even when I don't feel like it. I am thanking Him that He is near, and I am asking Him to comfort me with His presence.

By these deviant prayers, God helps me to persevere and pray in the hardest, most unlikely times. The peace and joy He has brought me during these prayers have become some of the sweetest experiences in pray I have ever had.

Don't wait to feel your need for God's strength to help you through your day or for God to prepare you for situations that lie ahead. The truth is that you need it, whether you feel like it or not! On the other hand, your problem may not be struggling with feeling your need for God's strength but struggling with feeling that God will provide for your needs in the situations of the day ahead. Perhaps your husband has a night full of committee meetings, and you are faced with caring for all the children alone that evening—including your young teenage girl who is going through a difficult patch of mouthiness and attitude. You've really been struggling with addressing her heart issues and behavior with a firm, loving, patient attitude with her instead of anger. It always seems to be particularly bad when your husband is absent. Will this be another evening of failure? You feel like no one can help you or your daughter. God certainly hasn't seemed to help you overcome your daughter's issues or yours. You wonder what good it does to pray. Don't care how you feel! Keep on praying! God may have not answered your prayers in your timing or your technique, but He is at work! Don't give up!

Unending budget problems. Tensions among staff. False accusations of church members. Writer's block on Saturday night. Squabbles over music style. A few disgruntled prominent members leave the church. Young sheep keep losing their struggle with destructive, besetting sin. Members who feel unloved or uncared for....and on and on. Sometimes the struggles and sin of the saints weigh our husbands down to deep discouragement. Yet it is these very same difficulties that provide opportunities for those beautiful, defiant prayers to God. God uses them to help us keep on praying for God to work out His will in each of these situations and to encourage our husbands to persevere through difficult ministry times.

Choosing to pray defiantly against our feelings and the pessimistic outlook of a situation can be a great way to help others in the church to persevere through trying circumstances in their lives, too. As they see us respond to our situations this way, they are encouraged to do so in their situations. And, when others in your church share their troubles with you, you can show not just compassion and sympathy or offer advice. You can pray defiantly with them about them. Now hear me, I am not saying that you down play the suffering they are going through as you talk with them and pray with them. To the contrary! You are acknowledging how difficult or even impossible their circumstances might be, but how much greater God is and how absolutely able He is to meet their needs in them.

We can ask God to help us pray today to work in our hearts and prepare us by His Spirit for the times that are ahead. We do not know what lies ahead in our husband's ministry that will tempt us to respond in sinful ways. We don't know what ways God will call us to serve. But He does. He can equip us today for what lies ahead. And when trials come, we can know that God has already been at work, preparing us for them.

We can ask God to help us to pray for our husband's ministry. If it is a dry ministry time, we can ask God to help our husbands to keep persevering in prayer for fruit and joy. If it is a bountiful ministry time, we can ask Him to help our husbands to keep on praying, remembering that He is the source of all the good fruit that our husband's ministry is experiencing.

3. It builds unity with our husband and others in the church.

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20, NIV

Asking God for wisdom isn't just for us alone in our prayer closets. It's for us, with our husband, and us,

with the church. Praying together is an extremely powerful unifier! God's Holy Spirit uses it to change us and knit our hearts together, as well as give us the counsel we need as a church.

If you have ever been to CHBC, you will probably be surprised by how much we pray as a congregation. Prayer of praise, prayer of confession, prayer of Thanksgiving and supplication every Sunday morning. Long prayer meeting every Sunday evening. Elders taking an hour to pray for the congregation at the start of every elders' meeting. That is because our pastors are convinced that God loved to be asked and has woven His good plans for us into our prayers. And those prayers have, indeed, been answered not only with the needed wisdom or strength, but with unity among us as a body.

This all sounds wonderful, but it can be very awkward getting a congregation used to a little dribble of prayer for good but physical things like Sister Bessie's hip replacement surgery, to begin to spend more time in prayer for things for the spiritual health of the church. Pray for your husband to be able to lead the church through the growing pains of longer prayer for the good of the whole church. It will be of great blessing to them and to him as he begins to see an increased unity and hunger for spiritual growth.

UNSHAKEN: SPEAKING GOD'S TRUTH

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God." -- Psalm 42:11

I first heard of this concept of preaching to yourself through D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' book, *Spiritual Depression*. It's a great book and I heartily recommend it. But whether you have heard that precise term or not, you have certainly seen in Scripture. Here it is in Romans:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." --Romans 12:2, ESV

Our minds are renewed through God's Word and in the process, He counsels us and even gives us strength to fight against what the world would counsel us to do. God certainly will use the preaching of His Word on Sundays or through small group Bible studies and even in our conversations with each other, but there is no one on-hand as much as you to preach truth to yourself!

"Send out your light in your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill into your dwelling! Then I will go to the altar God, to God by exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the Lord, O God, my God. -- Psalm 43:3

Capture Your Emotions

One of the most important reasons to preach truth to yourself as a pastors' wife is to capture your emotions. Our heart is the seat of our emotions and desires. These are good gifts from God that reflect His own passionate heart for the good of His people and His own glory.

But unlike God, our emotions and desires have been affected by sin. This means our hearts still feel very passionate about things, but it can often be the wrong passion about the wrong thing. I can testify that sometimes the passions of my heart are like the San Andreas Fault in California: charged with energy, sometimes stable, but liable to shift when I least expect it, wreaking havoc in my heart and even spilling out onto others. And the problem with passion uncontrolled, is that we either refuse to hear or cannot hear God's wise counsel on the situation, let alone find strength to do what we know God wants us to do.

But God helps us, as we preach truth to ourselves.

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11, NIV

This is great news! We may be unable to bring our hearts to obey God, but God, through His Word, and by the work of His Holy Spirit, can.

#1 Ask God to reveal the sinful passions of your heart that you might know them. Before you read God's Word, ask the Holy Spirit to use it to penetrate the recesses of your heart.

Use God's Word as a prescription to pray for what should be there, but isn't, or what is there but shouldn't be.

- Is your heart cold to God? Prescribe for your heart Scriptures like Psalm 51:12:

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

- Is your heart empty of forgiveness in the face of someone's sin against you or your husband? You might prescribe Colossians 3:13:

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

- Do you feel faithless in light of difficulties you or your husband are currently facing? You might prescribe Psalm 42:5-6, that I mentioned above:

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."

Like any prescription, you will need to take it repeatedly over many days, for God to use it to transform your heart. God didn't intend His Word to work like an Insta-drug, but that doesn't mean it's not working. His Word never goes out void. It always accomplishes His purposes. Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to work in your heart, replacing the emptiness of your heart with the riches of His truth.

#2 As God reveals areas of out-of-control passion, use God's Word to inscribe your heart with His perfect boundaries.

Sometimes too much passion rather than lack of passion is the problem. This time we are overwhelmed with the fervor of our desires for these wrong things. God's Word tells us that self-control is a gift of the Spirit. This time, find Scripture that speak to desires that are out of control and pray that God's Spirit would bring the gift of self-control to those specific areas.

Are you overwhelmed with anxiety? Dwell on Isaiah 41:10:

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Does anger rage in your heart against someone? Ask God to help you live out Ephesians 4:25-32: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin." Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold... Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Do you struggle with a critical or gossipy tongue? Ask God tame your tongue with Ephesians 4:29:

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up.”

Are you overwhelmed with guilt? Remind yourself of what Christ has done with Romans 8:1:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

Meditate upon God's Word and ask the Holy Spirit to change your heart and life as only He can do. God is faithful. He can and will help you, in His perfect way and His perfect timing.

As pastors' wives it is especially important that we regularly ask God to search both our own hearts and our husbands' for the building up of sin against each other or against the members in our church. Under-shepherds spend much of their time caring for weak or angry sheep. This is to be expected, but it also can be very, very wearing.

Hearing the countless struggles with sin, painful trials, or sharp criticism of member after member can leave our husbands and us empty of hope and good courage. It is hard for us as their wives to see them weary, discouraged and even wrongly treated. Only God and His Word can give our husbands wisdom to counsel the sheep, wisdom to keep on hoping, and strength to do both, each day and all the way home.

The same is true for the out-of-control passions we may feel in response to ministry demands or members' actions. One of the passions I have found hardest to keep under control as a pastor's wife is one of sinful anger towards members who have wronged or unjustly accused my husband. Sometimes this anger lingers on even after my husband and the person have reconciled. Only by take Scriptures like Ephesians 4:25-27, 31-32 (listed above), and asking God over and over to transform my heart by them have I found relief. Praise God for His powerful Word!

UNSHAKEN: RECALLING GOD'S WORKS

We see David drawing from what he's learned in past experience remembering how God what he's learned about God and his good plans from past experience.

“I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.”
-- Psalm 143:5

On Wintergreen Mountain, I remembered how God had helped me before in difficult situations and that that gave me hope that He would and could help me in my current situation. He wasn't instructing me with specific answers this way. He was counseling me by remembering who He always is: If He was faithful before, I can trust Him to be faithful now.

David, in Psalm 143, is doing the same thing. He is not letting his current discouraging situation cloud his heart with hopelessness and faithlessness. Forgetfulness is one of Satan's best tools against God's people. If we can forget who God is and what He is done, then we can be more easily tempted to turn away from God. God seems so far away when our paths are dark.

It is so important for us as pastors' wives to keep a catalog of God's faithfulness to our husbands, our church, our family and ourselves. Instead of being like Job's wife with her “Curse God and die” response to calamity, we shout out our proofs of God's faithfulness to our husbands. While much of our time here

at CHBC has been wonderful, there have been a few very dark days when even Mark was discouraged.) That's saying a lot because he is such an optimist!) It was wonderful to sit down next to him and remind HIM (usually it's the other way around), of God's past faithfulness and how we could apply those with complete confidence as hope for His future faithfulness.

At the end of the day, take time to reflect upon how God has shown His faithfulness to you in giving you strength and preparing you for all that He had in store for you. This can be anything from a prayer before you go to bed to a conversation with your husband and family about it over dinner to an entry in your journal or space on your calendar.

Ask your husband how he saw God's faithfulness to him in his ministry during the day and thank God for all He did. Taking time to be grateful is not only right and good and pleases God, but it helps us to have a truer perspective on even the hardest day. Remembering with gratitude is one of the most powerful weapons God gives us to see Him better and to even change our hearts in the light of His goodness. Even by adding a brief time of reflecting upon God's faithfulness to your dinner time conversation, you can encourage others in their faith and can encourage them to reflect upon God's faithfulness to them each day, too.

These are not just great ways for us to grow in gratitude for God's good gifts each day, but are powerful reminders that our God is faithful and will be faithful to tell us what He wants us to do and give us the strength to do it, all the way home.

There is an old hymn called "Count Your Blessings" that is similar to this idea.

Count Your Blessings

1 When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Refrain:

Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God hath done;
Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.

2 Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by. [Refrain]

3 When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high. [Refrain]

4 So, amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end. [Refrain]

--Author: Johnson Oatman

UNSHAKEN: SEEING SIGNS OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Remembering past faithfulness is taking your mind and panning backwards through your life. Looking for signs of God's sovereignty is setting a time-lapse camera on what is going on around you today. It is another part of God counseling us about His faithfulness that helps us go on trusting Him to give us everything we need for our current situation and all the home to heaven with Him.

In the Wintergreen story, it was cherishing the yellow lines that He used to basically saved my life that night. Someone had laid down those lines earlier, with not a thought of me or my need. Yet there they were that foggy night to keep me on the road and to get me home.

It can be as simple as reminding yourself that God made the sun rise yet again and has given you life. It can be noticing good things He is doing today in those around you. It is thinking about what you have that helps you through your current situation and remembering when that was put in place. When things seem so out of control, I love to disprove my perspective this way.

Naomi and the barley harvest is another great reminder for us. Naomi told her friends to rename her Marah (bitterness) because of all the terrible things that happened to her in Moab. She was sure God had abandoned her. But she only need look around and see the barley harvest. God had been growing that barley long before she arrived in Bethlehem. He allowed it grow thick and tall and ready for the sickle at just the time she and Ruth came. God guided Ruth to Boaz's fields and the rest is history. Not only is Naomi NOT abandoned, but she becomes great grandmother to King David and a future child in her line would be Jesus, Himself!

With God, there's always a barley harvest around us. And it will not be just to encourage our husbands and us today, but to continue to bear fruit for His church into the future.

This can be especially encouraging for pastors trying to make good changes in their church but facing much opposition. It can be so hard to know when to move forward and when to be patient. What if they make the wrong decision? Will they harm the very church they long to restore to greater health? To remember that God has called them to this church and that He is at work for the good of His church, can help them keep going. They are not alone! This is God's work and they are only a part of what He will use to accomplish all that He wants to accomplish.

The wonderful thing about a God who is sovereign is that there He has such perfect timing. There is an old song that says, "God is never there when you want Him to be, but He's always right on time." And so He always is!

UNSHAKEN: CLINGING TO GOD, MOMENT BY MOMENT

We see David asking for light on his path, right where he is Psalm 23:1,2,4; Psalm 37:23-24

That foggy night going up Wintergreen Mountain, I didn't enjoy the usual visibility I was accustomed to. I was forced to open my car door and look at what was right below my feet so that I could safely drive my car the next few yards. But the point is, I still had what I needed to do what I needed to do and to get safely home, even if it was by feeling my utter weakness.

David's song provides us with a wonderful picture of God's counsel for our lives. There are times when He helps us to see clearly, even way up the road. But even when the seemingly impossible, much "foggier" conditions, He still gives us what we need to make out the path at our feet. We can always trust God to

counsel, to instruct us. He makes known the path of life to us, mile or inch at a time, as is best. He can do that because he made the road. He put the lines on the middle-of-the-road and the lines on the side of the road and he gives us eyes to see that there is a path that he is directing us along. He counsels us with what we need in the way we need for His good purposes and fills us with what we need to persevere all the way home.

Number one, and most importantly: this life is about knowing God and enjoying Him forever he intends to use everything in this life to help us do that. He intends to use everything from our greatest gifts and most beautiful godliness down to our deepest weaknesses and biggest struggles to grow us closer to Him so that we might know Him and enjoy him more—even our struggles with anxiety.

And this is eternal life to know you... John 17:3

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

The bigger our weakness, the more we must go to Him. Sometimes I think we act like God minds this. Like He wants to help us to grow up and be independent. While this is true with parents and their children. This is not true of God with His children. We were meant to grow up INTO greater knowledge of Him, dependence upon Him and enjoyment of Him.

He loves for us to be constantly coming to Him, whether it is for strength or forgiveness or rescue or faith. He made us to come to Him. And as we come to Him, He gives us what we need, whether its wisdom to know what to do, or the strength to do what He wants us to do.

As the “weatherman,” God could always keep the clouds away and give us long sight, but He doesn’t. Not because He’s unkind, but because He isn’t just counseling us, He is instructing us through life. And as He instructs, He constructs us. Since the Fall, humans have been trying to throw off God’s rule for independence. God kindly shows us our need for Him and beckons us back to Him through our neediness. Our daily dependence upon Him is the cord of love that draws us into closer fellowship with Him.

From John 15:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser...Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

We might like to receive counsel and strength for the year or the month, the week or even the day. But God gives it to us in the dose He knows is best for what He calls us to and is creating in us. He will give your husband what he needs to lead the church well. He will give him what he needs to keep on loving the sheep even when they bite back. He will give you what you need to support your husband. And if it is by thimble-full instead of boatload, that wisdom and grace, know that it is Him drawing you near with cords of love.

God set up this world in such a way that we would daily declare our dependence upon Him, and thereby daily grow our closeness to Him, and see more and more aspects of His goodness. And THAT He uses to bring great glory to Himself, and great enjoyment to us. The heavens may declare the glory of the Lord every day in their way, but God has made our needy little lives inextricably intertwined with His great self, so that not only we might enjoy His fellowship but make even (and maybe especially) the darkest night simply a backdrop for a spectacular firework display of His faithfulness and His good workings, in

this world, in our lives, and in the lives of others. David was right: apart from God we have no good thing. The closer we are to Him, the more we know that is true.

We might like God to come to our rescue and bring us immediate victory or one time fixes all, like making the Jerico walls come tumbling down with just a shout. But the truth is, I am made to go back to God over and over for His help. My need for Him is to fill my dry, desolate life with His sufficiency over and over, like receiving daily manna to survive in the wilderness. Does all of our needs seem like annoying clamor to God? No, they do not! This is what He made us for. To be dependent on Him. This is what He loves.

Great frequency might feel only like great weakness. And is certainly shows great weakness but when you go and get real food frequently. It cannot help but grow you.

Sometimes something scares me so much because it looks so big, I think there's no way I can do it. I love to avoid things like this. But God in his kindness many times gives me times when I cannot avoid it.

This was especially true when I was going through my cancer treatment, in 2014, and through repeated complete paralysis in 2025. I had no choice but to go through it. It was so frightening. And even though sometimes the fear was so overwhelming, I learned to go back to the Lord over and over again for the next moment's relief. He not only bore me through it, but He grew me through it, too. He certainly taught me that when things look really big, I need to break them down into very, very small pieces. Then, to look to Him to carry me through each of those tiny pieces, and in the process, get through to the end.

I saw Him always give me strength, but it often came by dropper full instead of boatload. Why? I think because sinfully, receiving help by the boatload makes me feel more independent of Him. And somehow, in my distorted spiritual heart, that feels safer than having to be so very dependent, moment by moment, upon Him. How kind God is! How He treats us gently through our weaknesses! How He is always faithful to provide for us in our weakness and bring us along to Himself, drop by drop.

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." --Lamentations 3:22-24

UNSHAKEN: ALL THE WAY HOME

There was no happier sight for me than the lights of our house that foggy night at Wintergreen. My fight with the road and the darkness and the fog was over. All that was left were those wonderful feelings of being safely home and gratitude to God for helping me get there, every step of the way. I could not wait to celebrate and share what He had done for me.

David might have been "in the dark" as to where to find his next safe step, but he was confident that God would always provide what was needed. In verse 8 David says: "I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken." "At my right hand" means always there to help.

But then did you notice in verse 11 that David says, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." "At God's right hand" means to be given a place of honor and blessing.

David knew that God would help him every day of his life, giving him the wisdom and strength to do all that God wanted him to do, until the day God would take him home to enjoy the pleasures of being with God in perfect fellowship forever.

What David knew in part, we know so much more fully. We know the story of the Savior who came, lived, died and rose again. He has gone ahead of us and longs for us to be with Him and see Him in His glory. And not only see Him in His glory, but actually for us to be glorified by Him. Free from sin, suffering and death at last. Perfect in fellowship with Him and with His bride, the whole Church. Then, we will at last really be what David could only imagine with eyes of faith: "the glorious ones in the land in whom is all of his (and our) delight." (Psalm 16:3)

What wonderful three things will be included in that fullness of pleasures at his right hand does Psalm 16 say? Full growth. Full glory. Full relief. The battles will be over. The victory won. And the swords will be beaten into plowshares because there will never be another war again.

God will never stop helping me until I am formed into the image of his Son. Part of that forming will take place here on earth. But that beautiful rest. That root system that keeps sprouting up dandelions will be torn out completely when we go to be with him. The battle is fierce, but the victory is won.

Really, this whole song is listening in to David asking the Lord to counsel him and carry him all through life and all the way home. David is praying to the Lord. David is preaching to himself about the Lord. David is remembering what the Lord has done. David is remembering God's goodness and seeing His sovereignty in all the things the Lord has put in his life and the things he's protected him from. David sees the Lord has given him companions to help him.

And because of all this, he is confident that God will help him know what to do and will give him the strength to do it—not only in his current situation and every day of his whole life. David will not be abandoned. His soul and his body will rest secure all the days of his life. And as David says in a similar passage from Psalm 23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Why is Psalm 16 in God's Word? Because the Lord didn't mean it just to be a song of David's own, beautiful inheritance. God meant it to be a song of ours, too. The same God who led David through every day of his life, from brightest day with cup overflowing to the darkest valley of the shadow of death itself, also promises to be with us, our husbands, and all His people.

He will help our husbands know how to lead and love His people. He will give them strength to love them long and hard. And God will help us to support them in these roles, too. For surely God's goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives. And surely God will not only bring us safely into His house forever but use us to bring many others to that house, as well. And together, we will praise God and celebrate how He brought each of us through the storms of life and safely home with Him.

A dear friend, Kasey Gurley, and I adopted a phrase that I think David would have approved of: "Because of who God is, there are only two kinds of days: good days and good fighting days. And who can say which is the better: the easy days we enjoy or the hard days in which we grow?"

Carry on, sister! Fight the good fight! Love even when it is hard. Delight in God's people and delight in God and His plans! God is so good and heaven is coming. Your husband and you are working in the mines of eternity. The treasures will far outweigh any difficulty we will ever face. They are far more beautiful than anything we can imagine.

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." --Revelation 21:3-4

He Gives More Grace

1. He gives more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He gives more when the increase,
To added affliction, He multiplies mercy.
To multiplied trials, His peace.

2. When we have exhausted our store of endurance
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
His giving is only begun

Refrain

He gives more grace every morning
His strength to give every day
And His love will carry us through the night
To the dawn of His glorious day

3. Fear not that your need shall exceed His provision
Our God ever yearns His resources to share
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing
You and Your glory will bear

4. His love has no limits, His grace has no measure
His power is boundless, we know not it's end
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He gives and gives again

Words: Annie Johnsom Flint

Music, Verse Adaptions and Refrain: Constance Dever