



What Should I Do
When Life is Falling Apart?

I sit at the counter, tears streaming down my face. I scream into my empty house,

“God, how could you do this to me? Don't you love me? I've been faithful. Doesn't that count for something? Why don't you fix this?!”

I finish my tantrum with God, and sink into self-pity. I decide that God has never done anything for me. That God answers other people's prayers but not mine. That everything in my life is awful. That God doesn't care about my pain. And that my suffering is meaningless.

Of course, these are the lies of Satan. I wish I didn't listen to them, know them by heart, repeat them almost instinctively. **I wish in the heat of battle, when life is falling apart, my first response would be grace-filled. Patient. Christ-like.**

I close my eyes and breathe deeply. I need to heed Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones' advice: *to stop listening to myself, and start talking to myself.* To remind myself of the truth.

On the back of an envelope, I jot down what I need to say to myself. Seven things I need to do.

■ Remember that Jesus loves me.

Unconditionally, relentlessly, passionately. The cross is a blazing reminder of His love. Nothing can separate me from it. Jesus is always **for** me. He sympathizes with me in my weakness. He understands my suffering. He weeps with me in my pain. He will never fail me or forsake me. He strengthens me when I'm weak. He calls me by name. He constantly intercedes for me.

These are not merely intellectual truths. They are practical realities. *Jesus knows what is hard, witnesses every heartache I endure, discerns the fears I can't even voice.* He is with me as I sob. He waits for me to embrace Him. He holds me in my pain.

■ Pray.

I need His help, His perspective, His comfort. *I cannot handle suffering by just knowing it is best for me; I need an encounter with the living God.* And when I draw near to God, He draws near to me.

When I feel desperate, my prayers are not long or eloquent. Sometimes groans, gasped out between sobs. Sometimes simple cries of, "help me Jesus." Sometimes just silence before Him. I know the key is not to turn away. Not to stew in my anger. Not to numb the pain elsewhere.

This isn't easy. I feel entitled to my bitterness. I want to be mad at God – not draw near to Him. But as I pray, God meets me in tender ways.

■ *Open the Bible.*

This is not an academic book, written about people with perfect lives. *The Bible was written by men who were brutally honest about their suffering.* For me, the Psalms, Job and Isaiah are balm to my soul. They mentor me, modeling that it's acceptable to lament. To voice my frustration. To express my raw emotions. For only when I am authentic, can I truly experience God's comfort.

Like prayer, I often initially resist the Bible. But as I open its pages, I realize the living God is speaking life to me through it.

■ *Remind myself that I am not alone in my suffering.*

In addition to the Trinity, I am surrounded by a glorious cloud of witnesses. As Gehazi saw into the spiritual realm, he and Elisha were encircled by angels sitting on chariots of fire. The unseen world.

This world is real. And ever watching. Watching to see whether God is my treasure. Whether I will still praise Him as my body deteriorates. Whether He is more valuable than my health, my family and even my life.

■ *Set my mind on heaven.*

This world is not my home and it is passing away. It will be over in the blink of an eye. And then real life will begin. *God has eternity to make up for any suffering in this life.* In heaven there will be no more tears or death or crying or pain.

■ Remember that God's ways are higher than my ways.

God is doing something bigger with my life than I can possibly see. I need to trust Him. Trust that He is good and wants the best for me. Trust that one day this will all make sense. Trust that my suffering is not meaningless; it will not be wasted.

■ Remember that this life is all about God.

I was created to make much of God. If my suffering well honors God, then it is a privilege. As I orient my life around Him, everything else falls into perspective.

Reminding myself of these truths revives me. *God loves me fiercely, cares for me tenderly, has purpose in my pain, and will reward me one day when I see Him face-to-face.*

I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 4:16-18:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.