

finding

HELP

when
you're
hurting

CHIP INGRAM

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by Chip Ingram

Finding Help When You're Hurting
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Introduction



We all struggle. We live in a fallen world where good things happen to bad people... and bad things happen to good people. We make choices that we know are wrong, and we suffer the consequences. People we love, at times, do things that hurt us. Life, though filled with joy and purpose, is also filled with sorrow, disappointment, temptation, and times of deep pain.

God does not promise that our lives will not have problems. What He promises is to be there with us in the midst of our problems. Scripture says that His Word goes forth and does not return without accomplishing the purpose He has for it. In the midst of our deepest hurts and needs, one of the great gifts of the eternal God is His personal words of comfort and encouragement and strength in our times of deepest need.

This booklet highlights six of the most common struggles that we all face. I've shared specific times when I've struggled, along with the passages that God has used to speak into my life. I pray, as you read these passages in your time of need, that the God of all comfort, who longs to be gracious to you, will speak to your heart as well.

When You're Grieving



The phone call came in the middle of the afternoon. I was on a flight a few hours later, wondering what could have gone so wrong, so quickly. I arrived in Durham, North Carolina, and went straight to the hospital. All the doors were locked, and it was nearly 11 p.m. before I walked into the room where my mother lay, affixed to tubes and monitors of every fashion. As I saw her swollen body, I honestly wondered if I would have recognized her, had her name not been on the door.

For nine agonizing days, we watched her body put up a fight. The hours blurred together as we talked with doctors, paced in waiting rooms, and agonized over what medical steps God would have us take.

My mom had checked into Duke Medical Center with an overnight bag to get a second opinion on a very rare blood disease. She never left. It was one of the most difficult, painful times I've ever experienced.

Grief is our emotional response to losing something that's important to us. We feel pain when something that matters is gone. Over the years, I've lost things, lost dreams, lost jobs, lost people, and lost hope. In the midst of these times, even as I was losing my own mother, God's Word has reminded me that I will never lose Him.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the



shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

PSALM 23:1-6

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

JOHN 14:1-3

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

JOHN 16:33

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.

PSALM 116:13

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God

will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Therefore encourage each other with these words.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

A Prayer for When You're Grieving:

“Father, help me to know that you understand my pain. Help me to remember, right now, that you lost your Son, and You know the pain of separation.

God, please wrap your arms around me, and hold me in ways that only You can. Oh God, I hurt so deeply. Please be with me, and manifest your presence in ways like I've never known.”



When You're Depressed

The first time it happened, I didn't know what it was. I was sitting in a McDonalds, staring into a cup of coffee, feeling numb all over. I was involved in Christian ministry, and (to my surprise) God was using my life. Why did I feel so lousy? Why was everything so bad? Why did I feel like such a jerk? Why did thoughts of "giving up" flood my mind? What was happening to me; was I going crazy? Depression was stalking my soul, and I was overwhelmed by negative emotion like never before.

Since that time, depression has visited me on multiple occasions, and I've done battle with it on many fields.

I've learned that there are a variety of causes for depression; physical, emotional, and spiritual circumstances can affect us greatly. But on that day, and from time to time since, I simply had "the regular blues," that low, sinking feeling that life is just plain ugly.

On those days, few things are as powerful as the **perspective** that God's Word gives us in regards to our lives and our circumstances. When we're depressed, we have big problems and a small God; when our view of God is larger, then our problems shrink. Here are a few passages that help me gain perspective and overcome depression.

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits who forgives all your sins and heals all

your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in



his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

PSALM 103

Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”

PSALM 50:14-15

I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. Selah

You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired:

“Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?” Selah

Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?

You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descen-

dants of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. The clouds poured down water, the skies resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.

Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

PSALM 77

A Prayer for When You're Depressed:

“Lord, I know that I’ve lost perspective, and I don’t seem to be able to get it back. Help me to remember who You are, and how big You are, today. Remind me that You are sovereign, that You are Lord, that You have all of life in control, and that includes me and all my circumstances. Lord, give me the will to fight and break through this depression today, and trust You with all my heart.”



When You're Lonely



The night air was cool as I stared at the third-floor window of her dorm building. We had broken up just a few months before, not because we'd had a big fight, but because it was clear God was not leading us both in the same direction. She was beautiful, kind, compassionate, and the first person I ever loved with the belief that one day, we'd be married. Now, months later, I found myself sitting on a hillside, looking at the window where the light emitted from her drawn drapes. I cried. I was a grown man, and yet I cried. The ache in my heart hurt so bad, I thought no one could ever understand what I was going through. Loneliness was deeper and harder than I had ever imagined.

Loneliness is one of the most excruciating pains in all the world. I've been lonely when no one was around, and felt nearly as lonely in the midst of a huge crowd. Loneliness is the ache of feeling that no one really understands you, and that no one really cares. In my times of greatest loneliness, from that evening on the hillside to days crowded with people and events, God has spoken to me through these passages and reminded me of His healing presence, and the fathomless depth of His understanding toward me.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

...God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

HEBREWS 13:5B

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

PSALM 139:7-10

"...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. "

MATTHEW 28:20B

A Prayer for When You're Lonely:

"Dear Father, I am much alone today. I don't feel like anyone understands, or anyone really cares. I thank You, today, that even when I can't feel it, You understand, and You care. Please help me, in the midst of my pain, and grant me the grace to find someone who may be more lonely than I am, that I might help. Help me not to drown in self-pity, but to lay hold of the One who promised to never leave or forsake me."



When You're Frightened



The biopsy report came back indicating problems. The doctor wanted to run a second test on my wife. So began the longest weekend I can remember, before or since. The possibility of *cancer* and my wife's name sharing the same sentence was more than I could bear, and I fought the anxiety and the fears that were swelling up inside. What would I do without Theresa? What if the second test proved there was a problem? Oh God, I'm scared!

The next four days seemed like an eternity, as I faced my fear head on. By the grace of God, the doctor's second report returned negative, and our fears were erased as suddenly as they'd begun. But we were changed. We had shared an experience that brought us face to face with a nightmare, and thrust us toward greater dependency on God.

Fear is the absence of trust in a sovereign God. It's Peter taking his eyes off the Lord, and focusing them on the size of the waves and the fierceness of the wind. My fears, at times, have so overwhelmed me that I've been paralyzed. Throughout my life there have been times when I've been afraid to speak up, afraid to move ahead, afraid to do what I knew was right. At other times, my fear has caused me to live with a constant sense of confusion, or doom. God wants to remind you and me that He is bigger than our fear. In fact, perfect love casts out fear.

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.

ISAIAH 41:10

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High

will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling even the LORD, who is my refuge then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

PSALM 91:1-16

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

ISAIAH 26:3-4



And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

I JOHN 4:16-19

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

PSALMS 46:1-11

A Prayer for When You're Afraid:

“Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, I choose to thank you today that You are more powerful than all the obstacles in my life. I confess to You that I am much afraid, but I ask that You will not allow my fear to paralyze me. Lord, I know that You understand that I am afraid, but I also know that Your perfect love casts out all fear. Lord Jesus, help me to fix my eyes on You, and not the waves of my circumstances. Grant me the grace to take one step of faith, regardless of how I feel, knowing that You will be there.”



When You Feel Guilty



I wish I could say it's been a long time since I felt this way, but it's simply not true. Last Thursday night, we had a church elders' meeting in which I felt compelled to share something that God had revealed to me just earlier that day. Before eight other men, I began to confess a very deep-seated issue that I was totally unaware of until a private, searching time of prayer that morning. It was ugly to confess to my brothers the level of self-deception and spiritual pride that had subtly covered my heart, one layer at a time. My prayer life in the last week had been sporadic, my activity had been frenetic, and my dependency on God had been minimal. God revealed to me that I was doing the work of the ministry in the energy of the flesh, and that it grieved Him.

Few things are as painful to deal with as when we experience the real guilt of real sin. It's one thing to "slip up" a little, here and there, and know that we need to modify our behavior or attitude. But it's another thing when we realize that we have deeply sinned, and grieved the heart of God. At those times, it is paramount that we believe that God will really forgive us, and understand the depth of what happened at the cross on our behalf. In times when I have felt so ashamed for the sin that I have committed, I have often struggled to emotionally experience His forgiveness, even though I know, intellectually, that Christ died for my sin. Here again, God's truth makes the difference.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,

whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

PSALM 32:1-7

If the LORD delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm...

PSALM 37:23

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. "Put me in remembrance; let us argue our case together, state your {cause,} that you may be proved right.

ISAIAH 43:25-26 (NAS)



(This prayer was written by King David after he sinned with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered).

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righ-

teous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

PSALM 51:1-19

A Prayer for When You Feel Guilty:

“Father, thank You that even when I don’t “feel” like I’m forgiven, I can stand on the facts and the truth of Your Word that when I confess my sin, You are faithful and just to forgive me my sin, and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Grant me the grace not to believe in my feelings, but to act on the basis of Your truth, and receive the unmerited grace and forgiveness you have offered. Help me not to wallow in self pity, and believe the lie that I need to forgive myself, but take you at Your word, accept Christ’s work on the cross in my place and return to the battle empowered with Your strength.”



When You're Discouraged



Journal entry: April 5, 1999.

(After hosting seven Easter musicals, preaching six Easter services, and coming back from overseas ministry)

I am really discouraged, Lord. Life just seems lousy. The digital clock by my bed reads 4:12 a.m. I haven't slept much, I'm unmotivated, and I don't want to get up. The day is filled with a list beyond what I will ever accomplish, and what I do doesn't seem to make any difference, anyway. I am aware that I am getting older. I feel tired, ticked off, and unappreciated. Oh God, please help me, I know these aren't the right thoughts, but I just feel like quitting.

Discouragement is the loss of courage. When it happens in my life, I feel like all the energy has gone out of my body and my will becomes limp and weak. My mind begins to drift into thoughts that say "what's the use?" or "it won't matter what I do anyway, so why care?" But the fact is, discouragement is a state of mind, and must be battled with all of our hearts. It is normal and natural to feel discouraged when we're tired, undergoing spiritual opposition, or simply feel overwhelmed. But God calls us to break through our discouragement and trust Him. The following verses have often helped shake me out of my feelings of discouragement.

I lift up my eyes to the hills; where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip; he who watches

over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

PSALM 121:1-8

Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

JOSHUA 1:7-9

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

ROMANS 6:3-4



He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. "For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's; upon them he has set the world.

He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness. "It is not by strength that one prevails..."

I SAMUEL 2:8-9

A Prayer for When You're Discouraged:

"Lord, I feel like giving up. I know You understand that, and I ask You now to give me the strength in my inner person to do what I need to do, instead of what I feel like doing. Grant me the power and the grace to act on what I know is right. Give me the courage and the will to fight today. Help me to remember that the moment I take the first step out of my despair, you will empower and support me."



CHIP INGRAM

is the President and Teaching Pastor for Living on the Edge, an international teaching and discipleship ministry. His passion is to help everyday Christians actually "live like Christians" by raising the bar of discipleship. A pastor for over 20 years, Chip has a unique ability to communicate truth and win-
somerly challenge people to live out their faith. Chip is author of 9 books, including *Good to Great in God's Eyes*, *Effective Parenting in a Defective World*, *God, As He Longs to For You to See Him*, *Holy Ambition and Love*, *Sex and Lasting Relationships*. Chip and his wife, Theresa, have four children and six grandchildren.

finding **HELP** when you're hurting

Even single Christians struggle. In our fallen world, there is sickness, surprise, disappointment, and sorrow. Indeed, the Bible says, "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). But the beautiful thing is, God promises personal, supernatural comfort, encouragement, strength, and even joy when we face our greatest odds.

In this unique booklet, Chip provides personal stories involving his own midnight crises, battles with despair, bouts with loneliness and paralyzing fear, grievance over guilt, and feelings of helplessness. And he does it all with powerful Scriptures and heartfelt prayers that will help you through life's worst storms.

TOPICS include:

- When You're Grieving
- When You're Depressed
- When You're Lonely
- When You're Frightened
- When You're Feeling Guilty
- When You're Discouraged

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