

**2/16/06**

**Encouragement for Today**

“Expressions of Joy”

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**Key Verse:**

Isaiah 51:11, “Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness of joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” (KJV)

**Devotion:**

Have you ever wondered what good could come out of a bad situation? Two years ago my neighbor asked herself that question when she was bitten by a Recluse spider on the leg. Being a diabetic, the spider’s poison attacked the weakest part of her body, her eyes. Through four surgeries, doctors were able to freeze Kathy’s eye loss so that she doesn’t have to live completely in the dark. As of now, she can still see shapes and figures, but can no longer drive.

At first, Kathy went through all sorts of emotions...anger, fear, and betrayal. She questioned God’s love and protection. She wondered “why me,” and felt sorry for herself most of the time. Her husband, on the other hand, was very supportive and full of faith. “We’ll get through this. You’ll see,” he said daily in response to her depression.

His confidence in God surprised Kathy. For over 15 years Kathy had been going to church alone, and for 15 years she had been praying for Don. He fell away from church several years ago and has never returned. Now in the face of suffering, it appeared that Don had more faith than she did. Kathy decided to hang up her woes and trust God. While she didn’t understand why God had allowed her pain, Kathy chose to believe in the promise of Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

What happens next often follows when we decide to trust God instead of our circumstances. Our situation seems to worsen, or so it appears from our perspective.

Kathy’s job at the church was suddenly terminated. Crushed and disappointed, she also felt that she could no longer worship at her church. “I don’t know how much more I can take, Lord, but I trust You,” was Kathy’s heart cry.

It was also the heart cry of Job. Although his world was falling apart at the mercy of God, Job believed that the Lord had his best interest at heart. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” was Job’s testimony. (Job 15:13) We must remember that God’s ways are more advanced than ours and He is faithful in every circumstance no matter what it looks like from our standpoint.

It didn’t take long for Kathy to find a new church family. At her old church, Kathy did more working than worshiping. At her new church, she didn’t have any responsibilities but to sit at the feet of Jesus.

Since she couldn’t drive, Don would take her and pick her up every Sunday. On the ride home, Kathy would share about how nice the service was and how loving the people were. One Sunday morning, Kathy noticed that Don was all dressed up.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“Well, you’re always taking about how great church is, so I thought I would go with you today.” Don replied. And so he did.

Not only did Don go to church that day, but he returned to the Lord, was baptized, and became a member of God's forever family.

Suddenly, it all became clear for Kathy. "My suffering was nothing like what Christ suffered for my salvation, but I would go through all my pain again knowing now that God was using it to bring my sweet husband to Him," Kathy testified with great joy.

"I have prayed for years for God to bring my husband back to church; instead, He brought us both back. Though my vision is fading, my faith has increased and my heart is full of praise!"

Sometimes it's hard to see the love of God at work in our lives – guiding, protecting, and comforting us. Nevertheless, it's true. God is love.

The Lord never promised that our journey would be easy. In fact, He told us that we would encounter much suffering on earth. What He did promise was to be faithful in using every situation for good. Not just any good, but the kind of good that puts joy in our hearts and praise on our lips. We will look back like Kathy and be able to say, "Ah, it was all worth it. For look what the Lord has done!"

### **My Prayer for Today**

Dear Lord, there are times in my life when my circumstances are blurred and I can't see what's ahead. Give me the faith I need to trust You in the dark, even when all else seems to be working against me. For I believe that You have my best interest at heart...always. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

### **Application Steps:**

Memorize the five Power Verses so that the next time you find yourself in the dark you can stand on His promises and gain strength to endure until the sun shines again.

### **Reflection Points:**

Are you allowing your situation to make you bitter or better?

Are you trusting God or despising Him for your trouble?

Do you believe God is working on your behalf, or is out to get you?

Which is true of God's character? God is love...God is out to get you?

In what ways can you see God at work in the midst of your circumstance?

### **Power Verses:**

II Corinthians 4:8,9, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." (NAS)

Philippians 1:6, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." (NAS)

II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (NKJ)

Psalms 31:24, "Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart, All you who hope in the Lord." (NKJ)

Psalm 138:7, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me." (NAS)

**Additional Resources:**

What Happens When Women Walk in Faith, by Lysa TerKeurst

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_whatHappens.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_whatHappens.htm)

Searching for God's Treasures in Everyday Life (audio set), by Renee Swope

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_searching.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_searching.htm)

Radically Obedient, Radically Blessed, by Lysa TerKeurst

[http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources\\_radicallyObedient.htm](http://proverbs31.gospelcom.net/newresources_radicallyObedient.htm)