



**HOW DO YOU PRAY IN LIFE'S
TOUGHEST SEASONS?**

On the wall of a half bathroom in the Wisconsin house where I lived was a bright orange poster. No artwork; no graphics; no pictures; no minute details. It contained only a collection of vivid yellow words. The vibrant phrasing was ever so suitable for those days when nothing in life seemed to be going the way I wanted it:

*A prayer to be said
When the world has gotten you down
And you feel rotten
And you're too doggone tired to pray
And you're in a big hurry,
And, besides, you're mad at everybody...*

help!

Don't you agree that there are days like that? When all you have the strength to say to God is: "Help!" You're much too breathlessly winded to explain everything that's unraveling. There is absolutely no time to be painstakingly thorough in telling God the details. Some calamity is only seconds away from the tip of your nose.

Besides, doesn't God already know what's going on? Doesn't He know how exhausted you are with life's tiny grievances? He must know how perplexed you are by things that have suddenly spun out of control. Surely, He has taken note of how exhaustingly careful you've been to resist the urge to panic.

Tom had been a friend of mine for a number of years when he found himself facing a series of difficult situations. His wife was ill; his job was ending; their financial situation was becoming increasingly precarious. He sent me a short message: *please pray for me*. Instinctively, I replied that I would; however, when I started to pray, I realized that I wasn't certain what to ask. Healing for his wife, of course. But what else? Strength for him, grace to help their situation, financial resources to allow them to make ends meet?

When the tough times come, the most significant thing we can do is pray. However, we know that there are times when the words of our prayers seem difficult to form and when God seems silent. There is no immediate answer; no sudden comfort. Did God hear you?

As a pastor's wife for over forty years, I know that people acknowledge a crisis of faith when they doubt that God will intervene in their affairs. I call it having a "Job moment," just like the Old Testament patriarch. You thought you had it all together, when suddenly, a shift occurs and it's as if the entire universe has spun out of control.

I read recently the words of an author who stated, "I've been studying the subject of prayer for years, and there are many questions that I cannot answer—nor can anybody else. I'm not discouraged by what I *don't* know about prayer because I'm too encouraged by what I *do* know about prayer."

Prayer is about so much more than asking God to fix whatever is troubling us or granting us the things we need. Prayer is not a method for us to escape suffering. Instead, we can follow Jesus' example. In the Garden, with the cross in His immediate future, Luke tells us what Jesus did.

*⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them,
knelt down and prayed,*

*⁴² "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me;
yet not my will, but yours be done."*

Luke 22:41-42 New International Version

As a result of that prayer, the Father sent the help He needed:

*⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him
and strengthened him.*

Luke 22:43 New International Version

God has given us the gift of challenges which strengthen us. We can come boldly, place our pain on the altar; and all we need to say to God is “help!”

And so, after praying for Tom’s wife’s healing, the simple prayer I offered for my friend was this: “Lord, help Tom to be strong and to live, even now, to Your glory.”

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