

the Encourager[®]

Hope for Those Who Hurt

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Seeing Clearly

*Enlarging Our Perspective
When We Hurt*

A PUBLICATION OF DAVE DRAVECKY'S OUTREACH OF HOPE

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CLEARS AND ...
WE'LL SEE IT ALL
... AS CLEARLY AS
GOD SEES US!

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12
(THE MESSAGE)

WELCOME

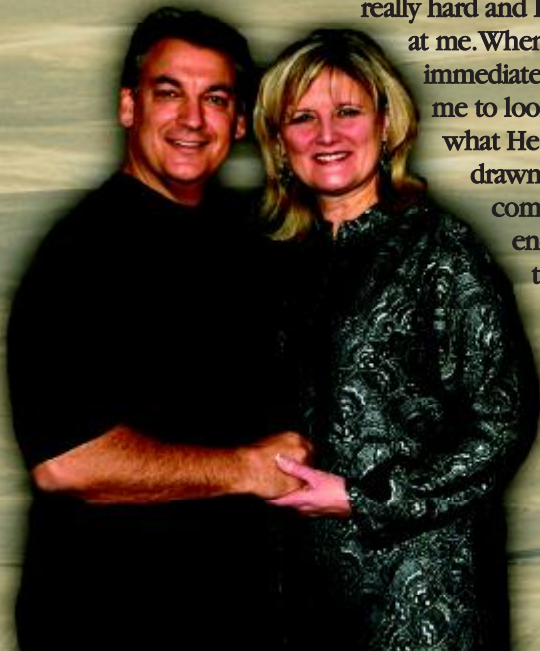
Dear Friends,

Keeping a healthy perspective during difficult times is a challenge—one that is complicated by the fact that our perspective on how life should work isn't perfect. As the pressure of dealing with adversity builds, many of us experience a perspective meltdown. When that happens, we need to sort things out and learn to see from a better point of view.

As I went through that process and have watched others go through it, I've come to realize how short-sighted our human perspective is. We can't see the whole picture, but we live as if the little piece we see is all there is! In contrast, God sees the whole picture from beginning through eternity. As we turn to Him and learn to see our trials through His eyes, we can find hope and strength to endure whatever life throws our way. So my prayer for this issue of *The Encourager* is that it will open your eyes to God's perspective so that you, too, can discover the hope that comes from viewing life from an eternal perspective.

I know it's not easy to change perspective. I am so grateful that God didn't give up on me as I struggled to learn to see my suffering as He sees it rather than through my own eyes. He kept providing just what I needed to nudge me to where I could begin to see His eternal perspective. Then, just when it seemed that I could finally see clearly—BOOM! Something would happen and I would lose sight of it again.

But God never gave up on me. One of the really cool things I've learned about Him is that even when I lose sight of His eternal perspective, He still loves me. When I take my eyes off Him and become fixated on this journey because it's really hard and I'm hurting, He doesn't wag His finger at me. When I get stuck and can't see beyond my immediate circumstances, He keeps encouraging me to look to Him because He wants me to see what He can see. And as I look for Him, I am drawn closer to His heart where I find comfort, understanding and strength to endure the journey. My eyes are opened to see and embrace the bigger perspective that is all about Him and spending eternity with Him.



Dave



BATTLEFIELD PERSPECTIVE

Two D-Day veterans were interviewed for a program commemorating the 61st anniversary of the famous World War II battle. The first veteran was a Marine who fought the battle on the ground, on Omaha beach. The other was an Army reconnaissance pilot. He fought the battle in the air, high above the seashore.

The Marine described the scene on the sand that day as right out of the movie, “Saving Private Ryan.” Men were dropping all around him. It looked hopeless. He began to despair and said to himself, *We’re going to lose. I can’t believe it. We’re going to lose.*

“That’s how I felt in the heat of the battle that day,” he told the interviewer.

The pilot, however, described a completely different scene. He told the interviewer that he could see everything that was going on, including the number of troops on the ground and where they were headed. “I got so excited,” he explained, “because I could see the overall battle. I remember saying out loud, ‘We’re gonna win! We’re gonna win!’”

These two men were engaged in the same battle, for the same cause, on the same day. But they had two very different perspectives on the conflict and its probable outcome. When we’re in the heat of the battle, surrounded by overwhelming circumstances, like the Marine on Omaha beach, we also can feel hopeless and near defeat. That’s when we need to see our situation from a different perspective. We need a reconnaissance perspective—and God is more than happy to provide it.



**WE NEED A RECONNAISSANCE PERSPECTIVE—
AND GOD IS MORE THAN HAPPY TO PROVIDE IT.**

Adapted from
Leadership That Works
by Leith Anderson
as retold in a sermon
by Matt Heard.
Used by permission.

LONGING FOR A CONVERSATION WITH GOD

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?
...Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death.*

Psalm 13:1-2

Sound familiar? King David's desperate cry to God is echoed by many of us who lose perspective in the midst of our suffering. God may seem far away, we may feel forgotten by Him, and we may feel as if we will die from the overwhelming grief in our hearts.

Where do we turn for help when we're in that condition? King David's relationship with God was such that when he lost perspective and found himself confused, lonely and hurt, he started talking with God about it. The prophet Elijah once found himself in such a bad place (1 Kings 19:1-18) that he said, "I have had enough, LORD. Take my life." And wretched, impoverished, grieving Job said that if he could talk to God, he "would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say" (Job 23:4-5)!

When we're overwhelmed by pain, when our circumstances scream, "This makes no sense!" many of us want the same thing—a conversation or a one-on-one Q & A with God. When we're hurting and have lost perspective, we want relief. If we can't escape the pain, we at least want some kind of an explanation. When we have to endure what seems unendurable, we want the comfort of knowing that God sees and cares and still holds our future in His able hands.

God responded to David, Job and Elijah—not necessarily in the way they expected or what they would have liked to hear—but His response gave them a new perspective. So what about us? What if we could have a one-on-one conversation with God? What if we could ask our Creator some of our most troublesome questions? How might He respond?

On the next few pages we ask some of the questions we frequently ask of God when we are suffering and our perspective fails us. For God's response, we went to the Bible, the Word of God, to see if He had already addressed those questions for us. We think what we found will amaze you, comfort you, encourage you and open your eyes to a new perspective that will help you endure and find peace in whatever circumstances you face.

ARE YOU STILL THERE GOD?

THE CRY OF A HEART IN NEED OF PERSPECTIVE

God, do you know that I am suffering? I keep praying for healing, for relief, for answers, for some sign that You hear me. But my prayers don't seem to make any difference. Sometimes it feels as if You're not even there. Have You forgotten about me? Do You still love me? Where are You, God?

You don't seem to be doing anything at all about my pain. I can't sense Your presence. I can't see You working in the midst of this situation. I can't feel Your compassion or comfort. What I'm going through is painful enough, but when I lose sight of You, it is more than I can bear. I used to rejoice in Your love for me and believed You would always be with me, but now I'm not so sure about those things. Where are You, God?

GOD RESPONDS THROUGH HIS WORD

My precious child, I love you more than your heart can fathom or contain.¹ I am Your Father² and Creator.³ I call out to you from the heavens, from the mountaintops, from the great expanse of the seas.⁴ My heart longs for you.⁵

"I Am Love."⁶ Everything in your life that is good has come from My heart of love.⁷ From the morning sunrise to the warm bed in which you lie at night, it all comes from Me.⁸ When you wonder where I am, look at the beautiful sky overhead.⁹ Look at My Word, the love letter I sent you.¹⁰ Look at My cross.¹¹ Look ahead to the home I have prepared for you in heaven¹² and consider the immense love behind all that I have provided.¹³

No one loves you more than I do.¹⁴ I love you so much that I gave My life for you.¹⁵ You are My beloved child. You are the work of My hands,¹⁶ the recipient of My great love and affection.¹⁷ Just as a mother cannot forget her nursing child, the child she has borne, so I could never forget you. I have written your name on My hand.¹⁸

I have gone to extraordinary lengths to prove My love for you,¹⁹ and I continue to prove it in a multitude of ways each day.²⁰ I know your thoughts before they find voice.²¹ I know when you sit and when you rise.²² I number every strand of hair on your head²³ and have collected and counted every single tear you have shed.²⁴ Your very life and breath;²⁵ the ability to love; the blessing of children, family and friends; the beauty of My creation; the gift of laughter; the power to choose—these all are My gifts to you. Each one is a manifestation of My immense love.²⁶

How can you say that I don't see your troubles, that your suffering is hidden from Me? I am the Lord, the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth.²⁷ My love for you is immeasurable. It is as high as the heavens are above the earth.²⁸ When you lose sight of me, lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? I bring out the starry host one by one and call each by name.²⁹ How, then, could I lose even one of My children?³⁰

I am intimately familiar with suffering³¹ so I understand agony, sorrow, oppression and loneliness.³² I understand your pain.³³ That is why I send messengers of help, encouragement and love to you.³⁴ They are an expression of Me, of My love for you.³⁵ Just because you cannot feel or discern My love for you does not mean it is not there.³⁶ I know your pain has blinded you to My power and My love. Feelings can cause you to lose perspective.³⁷ That is why I gave you My Word. It is truth. It is reality.³⁸ Embrace it, it will help you find the right perspective about Me.³⁹

NOTES

1-5: ¹Ephesians 3:16-19; Psalm 36:5. ²Isaiah 64:8. ³Psalms 139:13. ⁴Psalms 19:1-4; Romans 1:20. ⁵Isaiah 49:15-16; Matthew 23:37.

6-13: ⁶1 John 4:8. ⁷James 1:17. ⁸Psalms 33:5. ⁹Romans 1:20. ¹⁰2 Timothy 3:16. ¹¹Romans 5:5-8; Galatians 2:20.

¹²John 14:2-3. ¹³Acts 14:16-17; James 1:17.

14-18: ¹⁴Isaiah 49:15-16. ¹⁵John 3:16; Revelation 5:9. ¹⁶Psalms 139:13. ¹⁷1 John 3:1. ¹⁸Isaiah 49:15-16.

19-26: ¹⁹Romans 8:32; Psalm 40:5. ²⁰James 1:17. ²¹Psalms 139:2, 4. ²²Psalms 139:2. ²³Matthew 10:30. ²⁴Psalms 56:8.

²⁵Acts 17:25-28. ²⁶James 1:17.

27-30: ²⁷Isaiah 40:27-28. ²⁸Psalms 103:11. ²⁹Isaiah 40:26. ³⁰Isaiah 49:15.

31-39: ³¹Isaiah 53:3. ³²Matthew 27. ³³Isaiah 53. ³⁴2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 7:6-7. ³⁵1 John 4:7; James 1:17. ³⁶2 Corinthians 5:7.

³⁷Psalms 22:1-2. ³⁸Matthew 5:18. ³⁹John 20:31.

NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE YOU
FROM MY LOVE.
NOT DEATH OR LIFE, OR ANGELS OR DEMONS,
NOT FEARS OR WORRIES
OR EVEN THE POWERS OF HELL ITSELF.
NOTHING CAN KEEP MY LOVE AWAY FROM YOU.
YOU ARE MY BELOVED, MY CHILD.
NOTHING IN ALL OF CREATION
WILL EVER BE ABLE TO SEPARATE YOU
FROM MY LOVE.

ROMANS 8:38-39
(PARAPHRASE)

CAN I BE HONEST WITH YOU, GOD?

THE CRY OF A QUESTIONING HEART

God, if I share with You what's on my heart, will You listen? Will You be there to help me? Or will You be angry with me if I ask the hard questions? I need to know if my efforts to talk with You make a difference. Is it okay if I'm really honest with You, God?

GOD RESPONDS THROUGH HIS WORD

I am delighted in you and am pleased when you seek Me, especially when you come to Me in earnest.¹ Your honesty and questions stem in part from your desire to understand, to see clearly, to gain perspective, to find truth, to find Me.²

I want you to find Me, to desire My fellowship above all else. So keep asking. Keep seeking. Keep knocking on the door.³ Seek Me with all of your heart and soul.⁴ Desire Me more than wealth.⁵ You will not be disappointed. You will find far more than answers. You will find more than fulfillment. You will find more than peace. You will find true joy and purpose and meaning.⁶ You will find rest⁷ and the strength⁸ you need to endure the trials of this life.⁹ Above all, you will find Me.¹⁰

As you pour out your heart, your questions and your confusion to Me, I will give you My perspective, just as I did for My weary servant Elijah in

the cave on Mount Horeb.¹¹ I will reveal to you things you cannot see and could not know.¹² I will speak to you through My Word.¹³ I will give you wisdom through My other children.¹⁴ I will help you see purpose where now you see only pain.¹⁵ I will do all of these things for you because I love you.¹⁶

I know you do not understand. I know that your perspective is clouded by the limitations of your earthly nature.¹⁷ So trust in Me with all of your heart. Do not lean on your understanding. It is not enough. In everything you do, look for Me, listen for Me, keep talking to Me. I will keep you on the right path.¹⁸

NOTES

1-2: ¹Matthew 22:37-39. ²Psalms 51:6; 61:1-5; 119:169.

3-10: ³Matthew 7:7-8. ⁴Deuteronomy 4:29; 6:5. ⁵Psalms 19:9-11. ⁶Psalms 16. ⁷Matthew 11:28-30. ⁸Isaiah 40:29. ⁹Psalms 105:4. ¹⁰Jeremiah 29:13.

11-16: ¹¹1 Kings 19:8-18. ¹²John 14:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 John 2:27. ¹³Hebrews 4:12; Luke 24:32; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 10:17. ¹⁴Exodus 18:13-23; Proverbs 15:22. ¹⁵Romans 8:28. ¹⁶Matthew 7:9-11.

17-18: ¹⁷Psalms 103:13-14. ¹⁸Proverbs 3:5-6.

GOD, WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING?

THE CRY OF A SEARCHING HEART

God, You have the power to make my suffering go away, so why don't You? How can You stand by and appear to do nothing? I never expected to suffer like this. I never imagined that You would allow things to get this out of hand. Why doesn't my pain move You to action?

GOD RESPONDS THROUGH HIS WORD

My dear child, just as you did not always understand your parents' actions, so you will not always understand Mine.¹ Did your earthly parents give you everything you desired? Or did they withhold certain gifts and blessings until they knew you were ready for them? Did they allow you to do whatever you wished? Or did they place boundaries upon you so that you would learn discipline and grow in character and maturity? Did they allow you to stay in preschool forever? Or did they encourage you to learn new skills, grow in understanding and never settle for less than your best? Did they give you your inheritance when you were still a child? Or did they prepare you to be a good manager of the gifts and heritage you would one day receive?²

Please remember, My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.³ I see all things clearly, but you see through a glass dimly. One day soon, you will see clearly.⁴ Until that day, trust Me.⁵

Just as you trusted that your parents loved you and did everything with your best interests at heart, please trust Me,⁶ even when your situation makes no sense to you.⁷ Though your parents aren't perfect, they tried to be good parents, to raise you as best they knew how. Don't you think the God who conceived you in love will treat you even better?⁸

One way to grow in your knowledge and trust in Me is to read the love letter I sent you.⁹ It holds the answers to many of your questions.¹⁰ It will shed light on the path before you,¹¹ revive you in your suffering,¹² and give you insight,¹³ encouragement and hope.¹⁴ Even more, it will reveal Who I Am. You will see My character, My power, My holiness and My heart.¹⁵

My precious child, your heart will be restless until You find Me. I am the Answer.¹⁶ The more you seek Me and know Me, the more you will trust Me and the less you will struggle to understand Me.¹⁷

NOTES

1-2: ¹Ecclesiastes 11:5. ²Based on Hebrews 12:7-11; John 15:1-2; Matthew 7:9-11; Roman 5:1-5.

3-5: ³Isaiah 55:8-9. ⁴Ecclesiastes 3:1-14; 1 Corinthians 13:12. ⁵Proverbs 3:5-6.

6-8: ⁶Hebrews 12:7-10. ⁷Proverbs 3:5-6. ⁸Matthew 7:9-11.

9-15: ⁹Romans 10:17; Psalm 119:15. ¹⁰Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:16. ¹¹Psalm 119:105. ¹²Psalm 119:50. ¹³Psalm 119:169.

¹⁴Romans 15:4. ¹⁵2 Timothy 3:16; John 5:39; Psalm 119:9-11.

16-17: ¹⁶John 1:1-14; John 14:6. ¹⁷Matthew 11:28-30.

CAN I HOPE FOR GOOD TO COME FROM THIS?

THE CRY OF A HEART SEARCHING FOR HOPE

Okay, God. If You're not going to make my suffering go away, can You at least cause something good to come from it? And if it is part of Your plan to bring some good from my pain, can You give me a glimpse of what that good might be? Can You give me something good to hang on to, some hope to hold out for?

GOD RESPONDS THROUGH HIS WORD

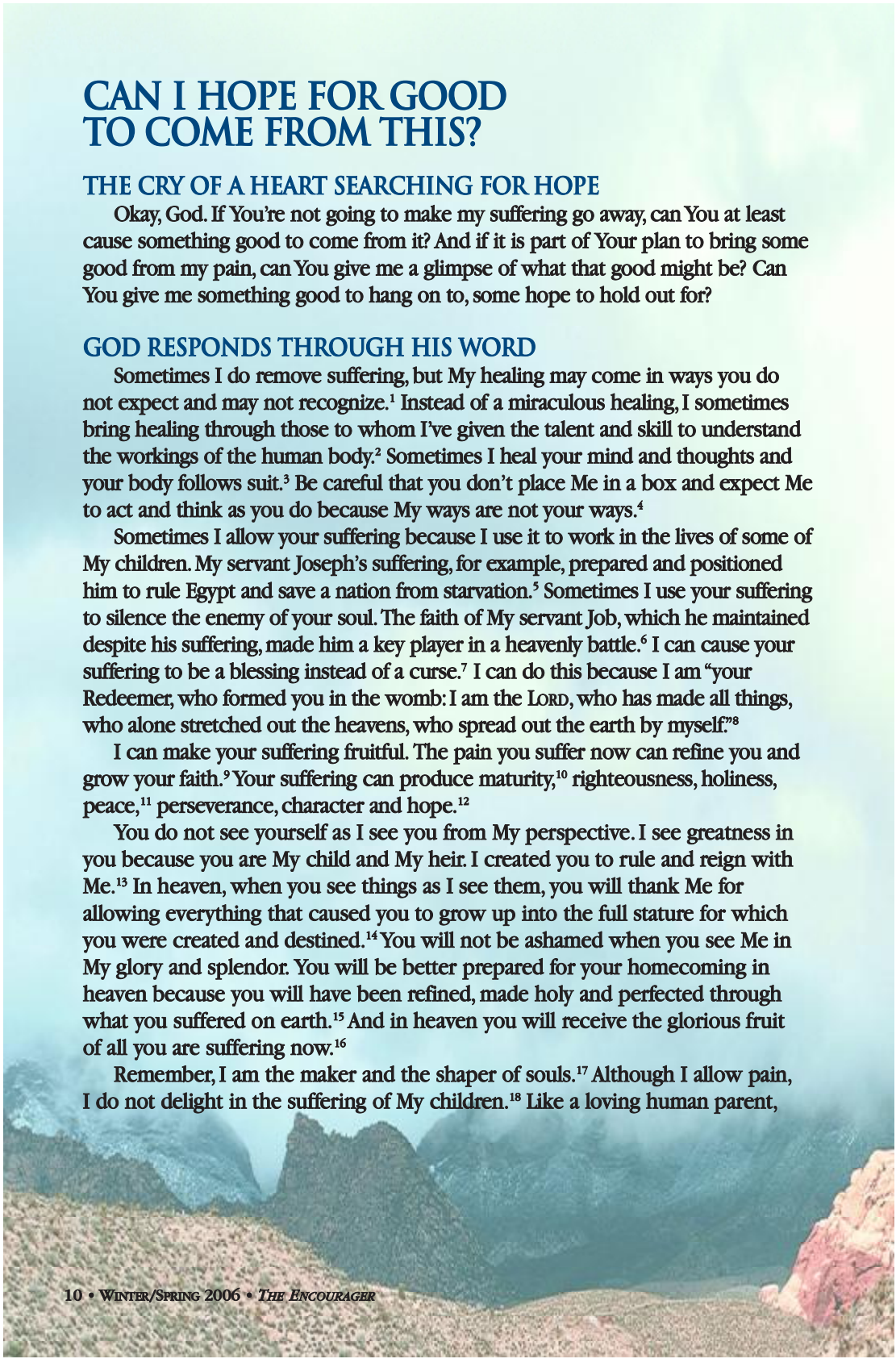
Sometimes I do remove suffering, but My healing may come in ways you do not expect and may not recognize.¹ Instead of a miraculous healing, I sometimes bring healing through those to whom I've given the talent and skill to understand the workings of the human body.² Sometimes I heal your mind and thoughts and your body follows suit.³ Be careful that you don't place Me in a box and expect Me to act and think as you do because My ways are not your ways.⁴

Sometimes I allow your suffering because I use it to work in the lives of some of My children. My servant Joseph's suffering, for example, prepared and positioned him to rule Egypt and save a nation from starvation.⁵ Sometimes I use your suffering to silence the enemy of your soul. The faith of My servant Job, which he maintained despite his suffering, made him a key player in a heavenly battle.⁶ I can cause your suffering to be a blessing instead of a curse.⁷ I can do this because I am "your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself."⁸

I can make your suffering fruitful. The pain you suffer now can refine you and grow your faith.⁹ Your suffering can produce maturity,¹⁰ righteousness, holiness, peace,¹¹ perseverance, character and hope.¹²

You do not see yourself as I see you from My perspective. I see greatness in you because you are My child and My heir. I created you to rule and reign with Me.¹³ In heaven, when you see things as I see them, you will thank Me for allowing everything that caused you to grow up into the full stature for which you were created and destined.¹⁴ You will not be ashamed when you see Me in My glory and splendor. You will be better prepared for your homecoming in heaven because you will have been refined, made holy and perfected through what you suffered on earth.¹⁵ And in heaven you will receive the glorious fruit of all you are suffering now.¹⁶

Remember, I am the maker and the shaper of souls.¹⁷ Although I allow pain, I do not delight in the suffering of My children.¹⁸ Like a loving human parent,



I weep when My children suffer.¹⁹ I long to comfort My children until the pain passes.²⁰ Yet at times you run from Me instead of clinging to Me. You get angry because you don't understand.²¹ You don't understand because you don't trust Me. You don't trust Me because you don't know Me.²²

I don't expect you to understand the mystery of suffering,²³ but I do want you to trust Me.²⁴ Am I not trustworthy? Look at My Word.²⁵ Look at My cross.²⁶ Look at Me.²⁷ Come to Me²⁸ for I tend my flock like a good shepherd.²⁹ "I carry the lambs in My arms, close to My heart,"³⁰ especially the ones who are wounded.³¹

NOTES

- 1-4: ¹Isaiah 55:8-9; ²Jeremiah 8:22; ³Proverbs 4:20-23; James 5:16. ⁴Isaiah 55:8-9.
5-8: ⁵Genesis 45:7-9; ⁶Job 1-2; ⁷Genesis 45:5-9; ⁸Isaiah 45:3; ⁹Jeremiah 29:11; ¹⁰Romans 8:28-29; ¹¹2 Corinthians 1:3-5; ¹²1 Peter 4:12-13; ¹³Philippians 4:12-15. ¹⁴Isaiah 44:24.
9-12: ¹⁵1 Peter 1:6-7; ¹⁶James 1:2-4; ¹⁷Hebrews 12:10-11. ¹⁸Romans 5:3-5.
13-16: ¹⁹Revelation 1:5-6; 3:21; 5:10; 22:1-5; ²⁰1 Corinthians 6:2; ²¹Romans 8:17, 18, 28-30. ²²1 Peter 4:1-3, 5:10. ²³Romans 8:18; ²⁴2 Corinthians 4:17. ²⁵17-22: ²⁶Psalms 139:13-16; ²⁷Isaiah 42:3; ²⁸Lamentations 3:22-23; ²⁹Ezekiel 18:30-32; ³⁰James 2:13; ³¹Matthew 14:14. ³²Isaiah 49:15-16; ³³Judges 10:15-16; ³⁴John 11:33-36. ³⁵Psalms 34:18; ³⁶Isaiah 49:15-16. ³⁷Isaiah 29:16. ³⁸Psalms 32:10; ³⁹Proverbs 3:5-6; ⁴⁰Isaiah 50:10; ⁴¹Philippians 3:7-8; ⁴²2 Timothy 1:12. ⁴³23-31: ⁴⁴Job 42:1-6; ⁴⁵1 Corinthians 13:12. ⁴⁶Proverbs 3:5; ⁴⁷Isaiah 26:4, 50:10. ⁴⁸Psalms 119:89; ⁴⁹2 Timothy 3:16; ⁵⁰John 20:31; ⁵¹Romans 15:4. ⁵²Philippians 2:5-11. ⁵³Hebrews 12:2-3. ⁵⁴Matthew 11:28-30; ⁵⁵2 Timothy 2:3-4. ⁵⁶John 10:11, 27-29. ⁵⁷Isaiah 40:11. ⁵⁸Psalms 34:18.

AN UNEXPECTED HOPE

I cannot thank you enough for your prayers on behalf of my mom for her Parkinsons. I recently returned home after visiting her, and I have to tell you about God's unexpected blessings I experienced while there.

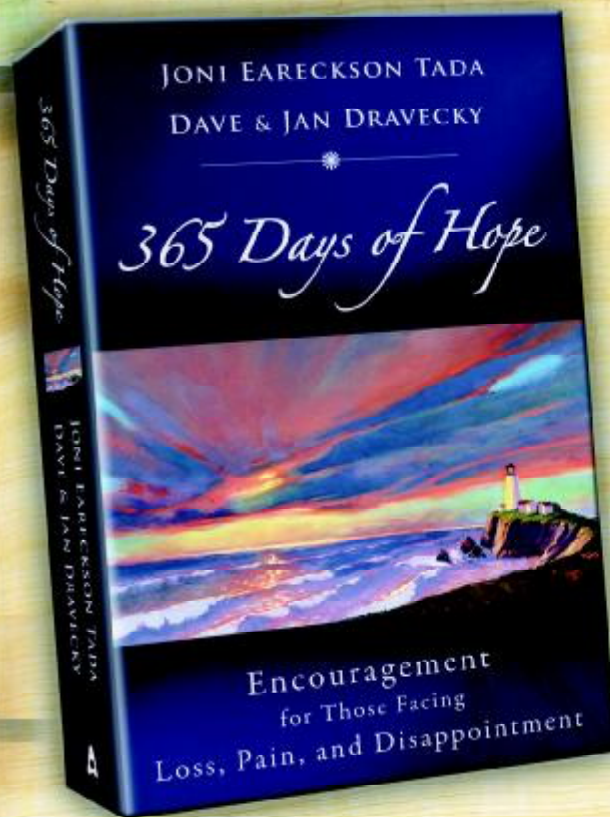
So many of us have been praying for mom to walk again and to regain intelligible speech. When I arrived, I was disappointed and concerned to see that both conditions had gotten worse. What I did not expect to see, however, was the strength of her spiritual condition.

My mom has great hope in God, and although she was still struggling physically, I saw the strength of her spiritual condition shine through time and time again. I witnessed in her a stamina, strength, determination and life energy that I had not seen before. Both she and dad, who at age 83 is her full-time caregiver, have been growing in their relationship and knowledge of the Lord in a remarkable way. So in spite of the difficulties they are facing every day, they have been a real source of spiritual strength to me!

I am so amazed that while we have been praying for mom to walk and talk that God has been so gracious and given us a glimpse of His perspective. We look at a situation and see the physical, so we ask God to deal with what we see—the logical, the obvious, really the trivial. But when God looks at a situation, He sees what we do not. He is in the business of looking into the deep, inner recesses of the soul, which is a far greater priority because He's getting us ready for another unseen reality—our homecoming with Him in heaven.

VICTORIA MAXFIELD

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FOR THE JOURNEY

Wisdom

A LITTLE FAITH WILL BRING YOUR SOUL TO HEAVEN,
BUT A LOT OF FAITH WILL BRING HEAVEN TO YOUR SOUL.

D.L. MOODY

DON'T SHUFFLE ALONG, EYES TO THE GROUND, ABSORBED WITH THE
THINGS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU. LOOK UP, AND BE ALERT TO WHAT IS
GOING ON AROUND CHRIST-THAT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS.
SEE THINGS FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE.

COLOSSIANS 3:2 (THE MESSAGE)

WITHOUT THE LENS OF FAITH TO FILTER ALL THE RANDOM
AND DESTRUCTIVE EVENTS OF LIFE... WE'RE LEFT BLIND
TO GOD'S SAVING ACTION IN OUR LIVES.

JERIS E. BRAGAN

WE RARELY SEE GOD'S GOOD PURPOSE IN PAIN OR FAILURE OR
EMBARRASSMENT WHILE IT IS HAPPENING... ONLY IN HINDSIGHT DO
WE UNDERSTAND HOW GOD INTENDED A PROBLEM FOR GOOD.

RICK WARREN

EACH ONE OF THESE PEOPLE OF FAITH DIED NOT YET HAVING
IN HAND WHAT WAS PROMISED, BUT STILL BELIEVING.
HOW DID THEY DO IT? THEY SAW IT WAY OFF IN THE DISTANCE,
WAVED THEIR GREETING AND ACCEPTED THE FACT
THAT THEY WERE TRANSIENTS IN THIS WORLD.

HEBREWS 11:13 (THE MESSAGE)

GOD TELLS US THAT HE IS OUR MOST RESPONSIVE FRIEND...
WHEN WE SEE THINGS RIGHTLY WE'LL WRITE HIS NAME
IN CAPITAL LETTERS AT THE TOP OF OUR LIST OF FRIENDS AND,
WITH THE ANGELS, BOW LOW BEFORE HIM IN ADORATION AND AWE.
AND HOPE. I BELIEVE THAT. BUT IT TAKES SOME DOING
TO SEE THINGS RIGHTLY.

LARRY CRABB

DISCOVERING A NEW PERSPECTIVE

by Jani Anderson

I will never forget the look on my husband's face when he walked into the kitchen that Tuesday. Norris and I had been married for eighteen years, yet I had never known his eyes to convey such seriousness and concern. He looked at me and quietly said, "I need to talk to you upstairs." Upstairs meant away from our three boys who were awaiting daddy's return home from work.

Norris sat on a rocking chair in our bedroom. I sat on the edge of the bed, searching his face for an answer. He told me that for the past couple of months he had felt a lump in his body. That afternoon, another doctor at the clinic where Norris is employed as a family physician had determined that the lump was more than likely a cancerous tumor.

There it was, the dreaded "C" word in our bedroom, with us! I felt as if I could hardly breathe. Norris explained all the medical details and said he would be having surgery later that week. We shed tears and a very intimate union of our hearts. I promised to be there with him every step of the journey no matter what would come our way.

Thus began a week that we called "the worst of weeks and the best of weeks" all rolled into one. Yes, we were in this thing together, but we each grappled with the reality of this new chaos that toyed with our minds, emotions and spirits. I have always battled the fear of ill health in myself and my loved ones. That fear has often sent me into a state of extreme anxiety. All of a sudden I was facing cancer in the life and body of my husband, and I was terrified. "How can this be, God? We have three boys who need their daddy, and you know how much I need my husband!"

During that first twenty-four hour period, I went from screaming out to God in prayer and panic to not being able to pray at all. But in line with God's sovereign care for me, I happened to be involved in a Bible study and on the day prior to learning of my husband's scary news had read a lesson entitled, "God's Perspective is Vital." Perspective! That was the key.

From my perspective, our life was spinning out of control. My mind was filled with concern, dread and fear. From my perspective, there was no hope or peace. I was a mess. Yet the authors of that study suggested that on those "bad news days" when we face confusing, scary or tragic circumstances the first thing to do is to go to God and ask Him to reveal His perspective. They suggested looking back at our circumstances from the heart of God. When we do that, the Spirit of God will take the Word of God and reveal to us the truth of our circumstances and help us understand them from God's perspective.

I reread the entire lesson on seeking God's perspective. I closed the book, fell to my knees and prayed, "Lord, help me to see Your perspective in this situation, because my own perspective is clouded by fear."

The night after praying that prayer, God answered me in a very real, direct way. I was just coming out of sleep but not fully conscious. All of a sudden, in a very brief, clear, concise dream I saw an image of the precise area of Norris' body where the tumor was located. I then heard a voice, speaking very slow, deliberate words, "All things work together for good." I startled and woke up! Norris recognized my startled awakening and asked if I was okay. I told him of my dream and its precise clarity.

What I experienced could not have been any more real or personal. God had revealed His perspective to me in response to my prayer. I am near tears once again as I write these words because I am so amazed by God's goodness. As a desperate wife and mother, I was only able to see our circumstance with near-sighted eyes, but God saw the big picture. He knew the end of our story, the last page of the last chapter, even while we were still on page one.

The battle for me, after hearing from God, came in trusting in His spoken word. God spoke truth to me and I needed to surrender the outcome of our journey to His sovereign care. It took me a couple of days of nasty spiritual battling, but in obedience I finally surrendered my sweet husband to the care of his Creator and Author. I chose to believe that "all things work together for good," as stated in Romans 8:28. It was only at that point of believing and obedient surrender that I experienced peace.

Norris and I experienced many blessings and learned a lot about God and ourselves during his illness. The beauty and miracle of how peace accompanies God's perspective is probably the lesson that is most precious to us. We learned that God's perspective is vital in helping us understand our life circumstances and that as we seek His perspective, He is faithful to respond. God's perspective does bring peace. We experienced it, we believe it, and we are forever thankful.

**GOD'S PERSPECTIVE
DOES BRING PEACE.
WE EXPERIENCED IT,
WE BELIEVE IT,
AND WE ARE
FOREVER THANKFUL.**

JANI ANDERSON

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE: THE GIFT THAT HELPS US ENDURE

When we're suffering, our pain can overwhelm us. The resources we've counted on to get us through our trials fail us and we lose confidence that we can make it through what lies ahead. But God's perspective is never shaken by circumstances or diminished by our weakness. His perspective is a gift—a resource that gives us grace, strength, wisdom, peace and a reason to endure. Paraphrased below are highlights from God's Word. They reveal His perspective that can help us today, tomorrow and every day that follows.

MY DEAR CHILD, I HAVE SO MUCH TO GIVE YOU,¹ and My Word tells you many of the ways I will sustain you.² So much of what I have given you, I gave before you even asked,³ and I will give exceedingly more as you come to Me and ask.⁴

MY AMAZING GRACE IS MY GIFT TO YOU.⁵ It brings salvation to you.⁶ It is the revelation and evidence of My extravagant love, favor and kindness in your life.⁷ It is all you need to sustain you in any weakness.⁸ It will give you strength.⁹ It will supply what you need and bless you.¹⁰ Because I am the source of grace, come to My throne of grace in prayer to receive it.¹¹ I will pour it out upon you generously.¹²

I AM YOUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, your ever-present help in any trouble. So do not fear no matter what calamities happen.¹³ I know how greatly you need My strength when your soul is overwhelmed. It is what the Father gave Me in the Garden of Gethsemane.¹⁴ Ask Me for strength and wait for it because I am “the high and towering God who lives... in the high and holy places, but also with the low-spirited, the spirit-crushed, And what I do is put a new spirit in them, get them up and on their feet again.”¹⁵

I CAN SHOW YOU MY POWER AND STRENGTH BEST WHEN YOU RELY ON ME instead of relying on yourself.¹⁶ You can accomplish far more with My limitless strength than you can with your own.¹⁷ I give power to those who are tired and worn out and offer strength to the weak: “Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the LORD will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”¹⁸

MY WISDOM IS PRICELESS, better than the finest riches on earth.¹⁹ It will guard you and protect you.²⁰ It will save you from unnecessary heartache and preserve your life.²¹ It will give you knowledge and understanding²² and help you know what I want you to do.²³

MY WISDOM IS FOUND IN MY WORD.²⁴ It is available to you for the asking,²⁵ and I am delighted when you ask Me for it.²⁶ The man who has it is blessed²⁷ and his paths are peaceful.²⁸

I LOVE YOU AND WANT TO SHARE ALL GOOD THINGS WITH YOU.²⁹
Come away with Me. Let Me lead you to a place of rest.³⁰ Let Me take you
to a place where you can be still. Then you will know that I am God.³¹

"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD."³² I long to lead you to a place where
your heart is satisfied; where your soul finds peace; where your spirit
feels at home; where you are restored.³³ So I will guide your feet into the
path of peace³⁴ because I want you to have My peace at all times and in
every way.³⁵ As you focus on Me,³⁶ when you hand your troubles and
heavy heart to Me,³⁷ when you trust Me,³⁸ as you walk in My ways and
spend time in My Word,³⁹ I will give you My peace.

PEACE IS FOUND IN MY PRESENCE, so it is possible to have My peace
regardless of your circumstances.⁴⁰ My peace is more wonderful than
your human mind can fathom or understand.⁴¹ It is better than
prosperity.⁴² It gives life to your body.⁴³

YOU ARE MY CHILD. I HAVE BIG PLANS FOR YOU.⁴⁴ Don't
expect your life on earth to be painless. You are in
training.⁴⁵ Your heart and soul, your mind and spirit, will
come home to be with Me forever,⁴⁶ so I need to prepare
them for your homecoming.⁴⁷ Trust Me with the training.⁴⁸
Your reward and joy in heaven will far exceed your sacrifice
and suffering here on earth.⁴⁹

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO NOT LOSE HEART. Though outwardly
you may be wasting away, inwardly I will renew you day by day.
Your afflictions are producing an eternal glory for you that
will make them pale in comparison. So fix your eyes and
set your heart not on what you see, but on what you
don't see. For what is seen is temporary, but what is
unseen will last forever. We will celebrate it forever.
I promise.⁵⁰

MY PRECIOUS CHILD, I UNDERSTAND YOUR PAIN.⁵¹
Ask Me to join you on your journey.⁵² I never expected
you to go it alone. I will accompany you⁵³ and I will
bring you safely home to be with Me forever.⁵⁴

NOTES

- 1-4: ¹Romans 8:32; Matthew 7:11. ²Romans 15:4. ³Ephesians 1:3-8. ⁴Matthew 7:11; James 4:2.
5-12: ⁵Ephesians 2:8. ⁶Titus 2:11. ⁷2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3:3-5. ⁸2 Corinthians 12:9. ⁹2 Timothy 2:1.
¹⁰2 Corinthians 9:8. ¹¹Hebrews 4:16. ¹²2 Corinthians 9:8.
13-15: ¹³Psalms 46:1-3. ¹⁴Luke 22:39-43. ¹⁵Isaiah 57:15 (MSG).
16-18: ¹⁶2 Corinthians 12:9. ¹⁷Philippians 4:13. ¹⁸Isaiah 40:29-31 (NLT).
19-23: ¹⁹Proverbs 4:7. ²⁰Proverbs 2:8. ²¹Proverbs 2:12-13. ²²Proverbs 2:6. ²³James 1:5 (NLT).
24-28: ²⁴Psalms 119:97-104. ²⁵James 1:5. ²⁶1 Kings 3:5-13. ²⁷Proverbs 3:13. ²⁸Proverbs 3:13-17.
29-31: ²⁹Matthew 7:11. ³⁰Matthew 11:28. ³¹Psalms 46:10.
32-39: ³²John 10:11. ³³Psalms 23:1-3. ³⁴Luke 1:79. ³⁵2 Thessalonians 3:16. ³⁶Isaiah 26:3. ³⁷Philippians 4:6. ³⁸Isaiah 26:3.
³⁹Psalms 119:165.
40-43: ⁴⁰Psalms 4:8; Romans 15:33; 2 Thessalonians 3:16. ⁴¹Philippians 4:7. ⁴²Proverbs 17:1. ⁴³Proverbs 14:30.
44-49: ⁴⁴1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Revelation 3:21. ⁴⁵James 1:2-4. ⁴⁶John 17:24. ⁴⁷Hebrews 12:7-10. ⁴⁸Hebrews 12:10.
⁴⁹Romans 8:18.
50: ⁵⁰2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Psalms 16:10-11; 1 Corinthians 2:9.
51-54: ⁵¹Isaiah 53:3-5; Hebrews 4:14-16. ⁵²Luke 11:13. ⁵³John 14:16-17, 26-27. ⁵⁴John 10:28-29; Revelation 21:3-4.

STRAIGHT TALK FROM DAVE

HOW DID YOU LEARN TO TRUST GOD AND HIS PERSPECTIVE WHEN YOUR LIFE SEEMED TO BE FALLING APART AROUND YOU?

It is never easy to trust a God we cannot see. It is especially difficult to trust God when we hurt, when things happen that don't make sense to us and when God doesn't live up to our idea of who He is or our expectations of what He ought to be doing in our lives. Like many others who have endured times of adversity, I've wrestled with the reality of suffering in my life. I've struggled to reconcile the reality of difficult circumstances that seem to be in opposition to the words of Scripture that say God desires good for me.

As I have wrestled through these things, I have come to realize that God is so much bigger than any of us can imagine. He has wisdom beyond our wisdom and plans beyond our plans. When His plan and wisdom don't line up with mine, I've learned that I have to accept it and trust that God is in control. And when I take that step to trust Him, even when my life doesn't make sense to me, I've taken the first step toward seeing my situation through His eternal perspective.

Now please don't think I learned this all at once, because it took a long time. I would wrestle through one difficulty, come to a point of peace, then I'd lose perspective when the next struggle came along and begin the process all over again. But because of what I was forced to face during those times of adversity, I have learned to see my life in a way that is more in line with God's perspective, and that helps me when I face new challenges today.

I know how hard it can be to trust God when adversity strikes, but I also know that God can be trusted. How do I know this? Because He tells me so in His Word and I trust His Word. If I can't trust His Word, then I can't trust Him, and if I can't trust Him, then my life is chaos.

Let's face it. I don't know, nor can I comprehend, the mind and heart of God. So the perspective that keeps me going when life seems to be out of control cannot be focused on what I can fully understand. It must be focused on trusting Him and knowing that what He sees is far greater than I can possibly grasp. The perspective that endures is not found in what I can get my arms around here on earth but in trusting His vision of the ultimate perspective—that He loves me and I will spend eternity with Him.

Now I've learned that we do have to be careful about how we trust God. Instead of truly trusting God, we sometimes "trust" Him because we think we've got Him all figured out. And then, when He doesn't respond the way we think He should, we're devastated by it. So we have to remember that no matter how much we trust God, there will always be things beyond us that we cannot understand. So when life seems to throw us a curve ball and God doesn't respond the way we want Him to respond, then we have to trust that God has something different for us in that situation.

There is another part of trusting God and seeking to see life through His perspective that has helped me. That has to do with my relationship with Him. Trusting God in the midst of difficult circumstances isn't something I can muster up on my own. I have to seek out God during those times in order to trust Him. I have to read His Word. I have to communicate with Him. I have to get to know Him and His Word better in order to see what He sees. So difficult circumstances can actually draw me closer to Him. And as I am drawn closer to Him, the more I am able to accept difficult circumstances and trust Him as I live in the midst of them.

If I really believe that God exists, I've got to believe that He sees the whole picture. I've got to trust Him to see me through it regardless of what happens. And that perspective makes all the difference—yes, ALL the difference—in living through life when it falls apart. That perspective motivates me to live well regardless of my circumstances. Even though I don't fully understand God's intention with my journey through life, I can see some of it. And that glimpse of His perspective motivates me to live my life to honor Him, my Creator and Savior.

**THE FUNDAMENTAL
FACT OF EXISTENCE IS
THAT THIS TRUST IN
GOD, THIS FAITH,
IS THE FIRM
FOUNDATION UNDER
EVERYTHING THAT
MAKES LIFE WORTH
LIVING. IT'S OUR
HANDLE ON WHAT
WE CAN'T SEE.**

HEBREWS 11:1
(THE MESSAGE)

*Sometimes the very essence of faith
is trusting God in the midst of
things He knows good and well we
cannot comprehend.*

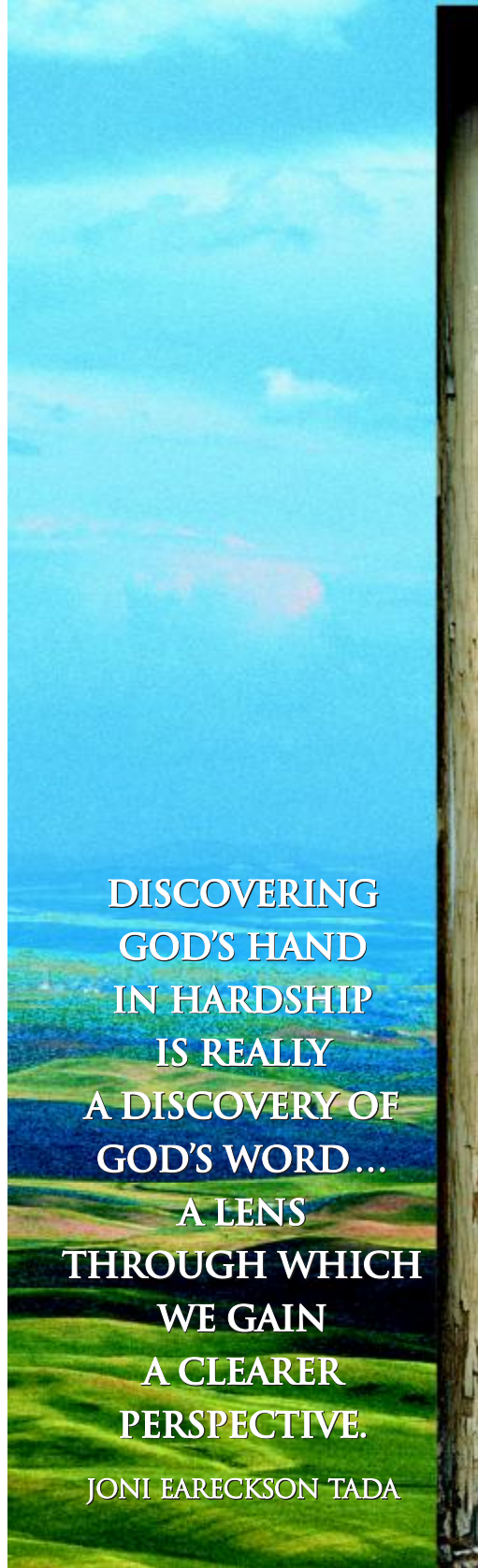
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THROUGH WHICH
WE GAIN
A CLEARER
PERSPECTIVE.

JONI EARECKSON TADA