

the Encourager[®]

Hope for Those Who Hurt

Vol. 11 • No. 3
Fall • 2005



SURVIVING
A SHATTERED
PERSPECTIVE

A PUBLICATION OF DAVE DRAVECKY'S OUTREACH OF HOPE

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The Outreach of Hope is a non-profit organization supported by tax-deductible contributions and the sale of resources. We are a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

13840 Gleneagle Drive • Colorado Springs, CO 80921

Phone: 719 481-3528 • Fax: 719 481-4689

E-mail: info@OutreachOfHope.org • Internet: www.OutreachOfHope.org

President...*Dave Dravecky*
Vice President...*Jan Dravecky*
Editorial Director...*Kim Jones*
Editor...*Amanda Sorenson*
Designer...*Chuck Haas*
Cover Photo...*CK West*

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YOU CAN'T
CONNECT THE
DOTS LOOKING
FORWARD; YOU
CAN ONLY
CONNECT THEM
LOOKING
BACKWARDS.
SO YOU HAVE
TO TRUST THAT
THE DOTS WILL
SOMEHOW
CONNECT IN
YOUR FUTURE.

STEVE JOBS

WELCOME

Dear Friends,

I know firsthand how hard it is to find solid ground when pain and suffering blast into your world and turn it upside down. How overwhelming it feels when adversity shatters your view on life. How frustrating it is to lose perspective just when you need clear vision and insight the most.

To me, the journey through pain and suffering feels a bit like waking up in a foreign country where you don't speak the language. All of a sudden you're in a world you don't understand. You don't understand what people are saying to you, and you don't know how to communicate back to them. Sometimes you don't even understand what your own brain is thinking! You have no clue about what is happening around you, but there's no doubt you're right in the middle of it.

That's the way it is in the world of pain and suffering. Suddenly everything you thought you knew about life—how it worked, where you fit in, what is important—is up for grabs. At that moment the questions flood over you: "How do I survive this?" "How do I make life work again?" "Is it always going to be so hard?" "What do I need to do to get through each day?"

As difficult as this journey is, I promise you there are some wonderful things that you can begin to experience that will help you cope. In this issue of *The Encourager*, we're going to share a few of those perspective-building experiences with you. So if you feel lost in the darkness of a strange and unknown place, even if you feel like you can't see your hand in front of your face, there is hope! You can find ways to survive the journey. You can begin to see life from a new perspective.



Dave

FROM MOUNTAINTOP TO VALLEY FLOOR

The scene atop Mount Carmel must have been spectacular. The people of Israel and their evil king, Ahab, had gathered to witness the showdown between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:16-40). God didn't disappoint them. To settle the dispute about whose god was truly God, the God of Elijah showed up in a heavenly fireball! The people's response was no less dramatic. The false prophets were killed and the people repented of their idol worship.

After the decisive victory, Elijah was elated. Nothing could stop him. He ran 17 miles cross country to be present when Queen Jezebel got the news that her beloved prophets were no match for the living God. That, however, was when good news turned to bad. Instead of repenting, Jezebel had a death threat hand delivered to Elijah.

Elijah's mood plunged from the exhilaration of the mountaintop to the chasm of despair. The Bible doesn't tell us what went on in Elijah's mind when he received the threatening news. It only tells us that he, the great prophet who had just been used by God to orchestrate one of the most dramatic spiritual confrontations in history, turned tail and ran:

He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep (1 Kings 19:4-5).

That's an unusual victory speech! Why the sudden change? Apparently Elijah, a man of great faith, momentarily lost perspective. Why else would he flee from one woman after defeating 450 men? Why else would he be so discouraged that he would ask God to take his life?

Exhaustion, stress, unfulfilled expectations and fear are just a few of the experiences that can lead to a loss of perspective—no matter how spiritual we are or what victories we may have amassed. But we can find some comfort in knowing that giants of the faith lose perspective and become discouraged too. Elijah's response (1 Kings 19) to a crushing loss of perspective provides helpful insights for dealing with our own perspective issues.

THE DISTANCE
BETWEEN THE
MOUNTAINTOP AND
THE VALLEY FLOOR
CAN BE QUICKLY
TRAVERSED. YET
GOD'S CHILDREN
WHO MAKE THAT
JOURNEY DISCOVER
THAT GOD IS IN
BOTH PLACES.

JAN DRAVECKY

He sought solitude. Elijah got alone with God. After receiving Jezebel's death threat, he went off by himself, "a day's journey into the wilderness."

He was honest with God. Elijah didn't hold back his true feelings. "I have had enough, LORD, he said. Take my life."

He rested. Elijah didn't fight his body's response to stress and exhaustion. He took care of his need for rest. "Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep."

At times, we may find ourselves in a similar state of mind as the prophet Elijah. One moment we're standing tall on the mountaintop. We're certain that God is with us, working for our good in the midst of great adversity—cancer, divorce, financial crisis or whatever trial we face. Then, before we know it and when we least expect it, everything changes. Our perspective shatters and we don't recognize the landscape at all. Our circumstances don't indicate that any plan might be in place—much less a plan with a good outcome. Our expectations are dashed. We grow disillusioned and weary. Our perspective shatters.

But we don't have to stay in that place. We can survive the plunge from the mountaintop to the valley. With God's help, we can begin to reconstruct a perspective that enables us not only to see the mountaintop but to stand upon it.

TRIAGE FOR A SHATTERED PERSPECTIVE

Sometimes our perspective shatters so violently that we are deeply wounded. Yes, our injuries will heal, but to survive well, we may benefit from the support and encouragement of others.

IF YOU THINK YOU MAY BE DEPRESSED, SEE YOUR DOCTOR. After a family crisis that was serious enough to shake the foundations of her faith, Lucy remembers feeling "dead" inside. She had trouble concentrating. She couldn't remember simple things, like where she parked her car at the store. She had trouble falling asleep, then she couldn't stay asleep. She began eating between meals and late at night—pretty much all the time. At work, she felt overwhelmed by every phone call even though she previously had enjoyed her "high people contact" position. When her symptoms persisted, she called her doctor who diagnosed her depression and developed a treatment plan for her.

FIND A COUNSELOR. Lucy readily recognized her need to find objective, godly wisdom from a person who was trained in dealing with emotional and spiritual wounds. Her counselor helped her understand what had happened and learn new, better ways to respond.

CONNECT WITH PEOPLE WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. Lucy knew she needed the support of godly people who would love and encourage her without judgment, so she shared her situation with several wise and trustworthy friends. She and her husband also talked over their situation with their pastor. The emotional support, spiritual wisdom and prayers she received through these relationships were like a breath of fresh air. "Their support made me feel like I could survive this crisis."

For a depression screening test and other resources for dealing with depression, go to HopeForDepression.org, or call the Outreach of Hope, 800 295 5880.

GOD RESTORES HIS SERVANT'S PERSPECTIVE

When Elijah hit bottom, he responded the way many of us do. In his battle-weary, beaten-down state, he lost sight of the big picture. Discouragement clouded his vision. He focused only on the negative and totally dismissed the positive. His immediate circumstances loomed so big that he lost sight of God's faithful character and sovereign power. The result? He ran as far and as fast as he could, then he simply gave up.

Although Elijah's perspective that God was in control appears to have shattered completely, God had not changed. We can take comfort in the way God reached out to restore His weary, despairing servant. God didn't reprimand or reject him. Instead, He sent a messenger to provide food and water to meet his basic needs. Once Elijah was rested and refueled, he and God met for a heart-to-heart talk about the way Elijah saw things. Their interaction is most revealing.

"And the word of the LORD came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too'" (1 Kings 19:9-10).

First, Elijah complained to God that the other prophets had been killed and that he was the "only one left." Elijah was so overwhelmed that he overlooked the fact that Obadiah, a prophet and friend of Elijah's, had hidden one hundred prophets in caves. The two prophets had discussed the covert operation shortly before the showdown on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:13-18).

Second, Elijah complained to God that the entire nation of Israel had rejected Him. But God knew better. He told Elijah that He had reserved "seven thousand in Israel... whose knees have not bowed down to Baal" (1 Kings 19:18). Elijah wasn't alone after all.

Third, Elijah complained to God that they (the entire nation) were trying to kill him. The truth was, only one person threatened Elijah—Queen Jezebel. In fact, multitudes had publicly proclaimed their faith in God and helped to capture the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:39).

**DESPAIR IS ALWAYS
COLOR-BLIND;
IT CAN ONLY SEE
DARK TINTS.**

ALEXANDER MACLAREN

What Elijah was really saying, through words laced with self-pity, was, “After all I’ve done to serve you, all is lost, all is lost.” This may have been how Elijah saw it, but his conclusions about the state of the nation of Israel were not accurate. God saw a bigger picture and knew exactly how to reconstruct the weary prophet’s perspective.

God invited Elijah to unload the burdens on his heart by asking, “Why are you here, Elijah?” Next, God gave Elijah specific instructions for dealing with the situation before him (1 Kings 19:15-17). He told Elijah where to go, who to see, what to do. He set Elijah back on course—a sure sign that Elijah still had a purpose and God still had a plan.

God didn’t scold His down-and-out servant for his clouded perspective and wrong conclusions. He met him right where he was and addressed his concerns. When our perspective gets way out of focus, God wants us to come to Him and share our concerns, too. Although He may not show up to address them in the same way He did for Elijah, He will show up. It may be through the encouraging words of a friend. It may be through a passage of Scripture that silences a nagging question. Or it may be through a magnificent sunset that reminds us that God is still in the heavens, still in control and that the sun will rise again.

IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE BLINDING YOUR VIEW?

Just as Elijah’s perspective prevented him from seeing things as they really were, our perspective can blind us to reality too. People who suffer often express similar beliefs that colored their perception of life and hindered their ability to cope with it. These common false beliefs include:

Life is supposed to be good and fair—at least most of the time.

God is in control, and He won’t let tragedy happen to me.

I’m a good person, so I won’t suffer too much.

Friends and family will “be there” for me if I’m suffering.

I’ll always feel God’s presence, even when I’m suffering.

God will always answer my prayers for healing and deliverance.

If God doesn’t heal me, it must be because I don’t have enough faith.

Suffering is all bad—nothing good will come from it.

What Debilitating Condition

Affects nearly 10% of the population in any given year?

Strikes one in four women in their lifetime?

**Is treatable for nearly everyone who seeks help
although only 10% of people do?**

Is the number one cause of disability worldwide?

**Is still perceived by over half of Americans as
a “personal weakness” instead of an illness?**

It's Depression—
It Can Be Life-Threatening
Get Help, Get Hope

HopeForDepression.org

A Ministry of Dave Dravecky's Outreach Of Hope

**Depression Screening Test • Step by Step Instructions for Dealing With
Depression • Resources That Can Provide Help and Hope • How to Help a
Friend Who May Be Depressed • Links to Counseling Referral Services**

Statistics from NIMH, NMDMA, WebMD

FOR THE JOURNEY

Wisdom

SUMMING IT ALL UP, FRIENDS, I'D SAY YOU'LL DO BEST BY FILLING YOUR MINDS AND MEDITATING ON THINGS TRUE, NOBLE, REPUTABLE, AUTHENTIC, COMPELLING, GRACIOUS—THE BEST, NOT THE WORST; THE BEAUTIFUL, NOT THE UGLY; THINGS TO PRAISE, NOT THINGS TO CURSE.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 *THE MESSAGE*

ALTHOUGH SUFFERING IS NEGATIVE, IT IS PART OF LIFE—ESPECIALLY THE GROWTH PART OF LIFE. NO ONE GROWS TO MATURITY WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND SUFFERING. . . . WE HAVE MUCH WORK TO DO BEFORE WE CELEBRATE THE FINAL VICTORY.

HENRY CLOUD & JOHN TOWNSEND

TRUSTING GOD IS DANGEROUS BUSINESS. UNLESS WE'RE TRUSTING HIM FOR WHAT HE'S PROMISED TO PROVIDE, THE STEP AFTER TRUST IS DISILLUSIONMENT.

LARRY CRABB

PERHAPS SUFFERING IS NOT THE CRUEL TASKMASTER WE HAVE MADE IT OUT TO BE. PERHAPS IT IS A SOMBER, UNPLEASANT DOSE OF REALITY THAT JARS US FROM OUR MORAL AND DREAMLIKE SLUMBER SO WE FINALLY FACE WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE ARE GOING AND WHO IS BECKONING US TO FACE OUR DIVINE CALL AND HERITAGE.

ANONYMOUS

WHEN YOUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT SUFFERING DOESN'T LINE UP WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH SUFFERING, YOU HAVE TO MAKE SOME CHOICES. YOU HAVE TO GET IN YOUR BIBLE AND STAY IN IT. NO MATTER WHAT, READ IT, BELIEVE IT AND HANG ON TO WHAT IT SAYS.

KARLA

WE ALL LIVE IN TWO ENVIRONMENTS, THE ONE BEING THE WORLD AROUND US, THE OTHER OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THAT WORLD. THE LARGER WORLD CANNOT AFFECT US DIRECTLY; IT MUST BE MEDIATED TO US BY OUR THOUGHTS, AND WILL BE TO US AT LAST ONLY WHAT WE ALLOW IT TO BE. . . . EXTERNAL THINGS AND EVENTS ARE THE RAW MATERIAL ONLY; THE FINISHED PRODUCT IS WHATEVER THE MIND MAKES OF THESE.

A.W. TOZER

PEOPLE CAN HELP US FIND OUR WAY

When he was a teenager, Henry Cloud dreamed of becoming a professional golfer, and he was well on his way to fulfilling that dream. A successful amateur, he was recruited to play NCAA golf in college. But the dream began to fade when he developed severe tendon trouble in his left arm. Doctors couldn't figure out the cause or how to treat it. Henry's game suffered, and after two years of hampered play, he quit. The dream was over.

One afternoon, alone in his room, Henry tried to figure out what to do next. The enormity of his loss became unbearable. "I looked at various interests and majors," he explains, "only to arrive at a deep emptiness and sense of darkness regarding the future. I was at the end of myself. Thoughts about all the aspects of life that were not working went through my head like a whirlwind. *What will I do? How will I find my way in my career and in my relationships? How can I change into a person who is not so depressed and unable to figure all this out?*"

Although the door to professional golf was shut, God had other plans for Henry. Slowly, Henry's perspective on what his life would be began to change. He committed his life and his uncertain future to

God. He joined a Bible study that helped anchor him spiritually. Yet he still struggled with depression. One day he confided to a Christian friend, "I asked God to help me, but I don't feel any better. I thought that if you prayed, God would make you feel better." Because he still felt lousy, Henry concluded that God wasn't doing much in his life.

That perspective would change, too. Henry's friend introduced him to Bill, and his wife, Julie. Bill was a wonderful Bible teacher who helped Henry discover his love of the Bible and theology. Through conversations with Bill and Julie, Henry discovered that the emptiness he was feeling "was not emptiness at all, but sadness and hurt about the loss of my dream to play professional golf." As Henry worked through the counseling material Julie gave him and began applying what he was learning, the burden began to lift from his shoulders. Before long, he knew God was calling him to go into Christian counseling.

"Sometime later," Henry continues, "I realized my depression and feelings of emptiness were gone! I actually felt good about life and about me." But Henry was also disappointed. "God had changed my life. My life had taken a 180-degree turn. But God had not healed me when I sought healing. He had not supernaturally 'zapped' me."

THE BODY OF CHRIST IS A
BIG PART OF THE DELIVERY
SYSTEM OF HEALING AND
GROWTH THAT GOD HAS IN
STORE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

HENRY CLOUD

As he talked to people about his disappointment, Henry heard the same thing over and over: “God uses people, too.”

Another shift in perspective was about to take place, but in the meantime, Henry “hated hearing that phrase. I wanted God to touch my depression instantaneously and help me. Instead, he used people.”

Henry’s difficulty was that he had always considered God’s supernatural intervention to be true spiritual healing—Plan “A.” He thought that when “God used people to heal, it was the ‘inferior,’ although effective, Plan ‘B.’ I accepted that I was one of those people who got Plan ‘B.’ So there I was, grateful and somewhat disappointed at my grade ‘B’ healing. It was good, but it felt more like sitting in the bleachers than in the box seats.”

Then Henry read a Scripture passage that changed his perspective on how God had been working in his life: “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:16). Henry couldn’t believe it, so he read it again. Plan “B” wasn’t second rate after all! People helping people was, in fact, God’s Plan “A”!

While Henry was waiting for God to share his grace through supernatural “zapping,” God was giving it to him through His people. “I was waiting for him to speak to me directly; he was speaking to me through his people. I was waiting for him to give me direction in life; he was the strength behind the direction people were giving me. I was waiting for him to heal my depression; he sent special people to comfort me.”

Henry’s perspective on life and how God would work in his life had been completely transformed. He no longer felt as if he had gotten Plan “B,” as if he had received a lesser healing. “I had received God himself and the healing he had always planned to give me through his people.”

Adapted from *How People Grow, What the Bible Reveals About Personal Growth* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, published by Zondervan. Used by permission.

I’M CONVINCED THAT IN ORDER TO GET THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE, YOU’VE GOT TO BE AROUND PEOPLE WHO WILL GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO PROCESS. WHEN MY PERSPECTIVE WAS ALL MESSED UP, IT WAS VERY GOOD TO BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT IT. SO I THINK IT’S REALLY IMPORTANT TO FIND SOMEBODY WHO ALLOWS YOU TO EXPRESS ALL OF THE STUFF INSIDE THAT CAUSES YOU TO STRUGGLE. IT IS VERY HARD TO TALK ABOUT THESE THINGS, BUT ONCE IT IS OUT IN THE OPEN, YOU CAN BEGIN TO PROCESS IT.

DAVE DRAVECKY

TRUTH- OUR WINDOW TO A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Janette and Bill needed a fresh start, so the chance to move out of state for a new job opportunity looked like a divine gift. But life after the move was complicated. Bill's new job didn't turn out to be what he was promised. Janette was still feeling the pain of wounding words from her previous employer, which made it difficult to handle the stress of her new job. Their children were feeling lonely and insecure as they adjusted to new schools and tried to find new friends. Then, just when Janette didn't think she could handle one more challenge, Bill was diagnosed with an aggressive form of colon cancer.

So, far from the only home and support system they had ever known, they faced cancer surgery, a colostomy, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, more surgery and a host of complications and unexpected bills. Janette shifted into "survival mode" and pushed herself to get through each day, but the stress took its toll. She began to experience anxiety attacks when her heart would beat so fast she thought she would die. She was so exhausted she could barely get out of bed in the morning. Fatigue, crying spells, hopelessness, anger, fear and isolation became part of daily life.

What made things worse was that Janette was dreadfully afraid that she and Bill had done something to cause the difficulties they faced. She had been taught that suffering was almost always caused by personal wrongdoing or a lack of faith. So she believed that she and her husband were somehow responsible for what was

happening to their family. Yet she had no idea where they had gone wrong, and she couldn't figure out what horrible sin deserved so much suffering.

No wonder Janette's perspective on life was shattering. Her emotional health, her view of God and her perspective on suffering were all crumbling under the stress of circumstances and the burden of a perspective that wasn't true. Although she sensed that she wasn't seeing things clearly, she was afraid to ask for help. What if her newly made friends at church thought the whole

THE PERSPECTIVE I HAD ABOUT SUFFERING WAS THAT IT COULD SOMEWHAT BE AVOIDED. I THOUGHT THAT IF YOU READ YOUR BIBLE, PRAY, AND FOLLOW GOD, LIFE IS JUST GOING TO GET BETTER AND BETTER— BUT IT DIDN'T. I DON'T THINK THAT PERSPECTIVE WAS TRUE TO BEGIN WITH, BUT I BELIEVED IT. HAVING COME FROM A SAFE, MIDWESTERN WORLD, I HAD NEVER HAD A REASON NOT TO BELIEVE IT.

KARLA

ordeal was due to her personal sin or spiritual weakness too? Where would she find help then?

Fortunately, Janette's new friends refused to stand by and do nothing. They knew she was hurting and encouraged her to participate in a faith-based support group at church. There she began to more closely examine what the Bible taught about suffering.

Then, a widowed friend shared about how she struggled with depression following her husband's death. Her honesty about a personal struggle surprised Janette. Having come from a setting where exposing weakness would result in harsh judgment, her friend's vulnerability opened Janette's eyes to the possibility of looking at what was really happening in her own life.

Prompted by another friend, Janette began to list the hardships and losses she had recently endured instead of trying to ignore them. As she did, she realized why she felt overwhelmed, sad, and full of anxiety. Who wouldn't be? The pain she felt wasn't because of weakness. It was understandable in light of the traumatic losses she had experienced.

Once she faced the truth of those losses, Janette began to grieve. It wasn't an easy or pleasant process. It was especially heartbreaking to realize she no longer thought of God as being wise, loving and caring. But as painful as it was to confront those losses and to uncover the perspective that made them nearly unbearable, Janette is glad she did. Today, as a result of her Bible study and the support of caring friends, she has a new perspective. She knows that while some suffering may come as a consequence of our actions, suffering also comes as part of life. Even more important, she knows that from God's perspective suffering is an opportunity to draw close to Him, and she has rediscovered a closer, more personal relationship with her wise and loving God.

As Janette learned, we rarely give our perspectives a second thought when life is going well. But when our perspectives fail us, it's essential to take a close look at what the truth really is so that we can make adjustments in our thinking. Sometimes when our perspective shatters, we can finally see the truth clearly.

I always try to remind people that as painful as it may be, truth is always your friend. No matter how difficult it is to swallow, truth is reality and that is where ultimate safety, growth, and God are. We need to know the truth. Sometimes the truth leads us to what is hurting us. . . . Sometimes it leads us to what we need to change. At other times it leads us to what we need to do next in a relationship. At still other times it leads us to what our weaknesses or limitations are, such as what we are not ready to deal with. But whatever the truth is, it is our friend.

HENRY CLOUD & JOHN TOWNSEND
HOW PEOPLE GROW

WAITING ON GOD FOR PERSPECTIVE

When her marriage of twenty years crumbled, Grace desperately needed perspective. Her marriage had been wonderful. She and her husband had counseled other couples in crisis. They had opened their home to the homeless, sick and hurting. And Grace gave God credit for all the good things she enjoyed in her marriage. "Having experienced two failed marriages previously, I thought God had brought me to a place of marital blessing to show me His love," she explains. "I assumed our marriage would always stay strong. I never, ever dreamed that it would end. I never thought God would let me suffer in this area of my life again."

But suffer she did. For months after her husband left, Grace often felt overwhelmed by pain, loneliness, disappointment, shame and guilt. Despite her strong faith, she sometimes couldn't feel God's presence at all. For two weeks she was so distraught that she didn't get dressed, brush her teeth, change her clothes or get off the couch.

Through it all, however, Grace held on to God as her refuge and strength. Previously, when she had been alone, abandoned and desperate, she had cried out to God for help. He had answered and promised to take care of her. So Grace was determined to hold God to His promise. Even when she despaired of life, she continued to seek refuge in Him. At times she was tempted to turn on the television, call a friend or find some other distraction to escape the pain. But she knew that God was her best escape. So she stayed as close to Him as possible.

On the recommendation of a friend, Grace took to heart Ruth 2:12: "May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." In her own way, Grace took refuge under God's wings. "I would fall on my face and lie on the floor and ask God to help me, to be with me, to comfort me. Then I would wait for Him. Sometimes I would wait a long time, but an amazing thing would happen. Eventually God would speak to my heart and instruct me in what to do."

Waiting on God became a lifestyle for Grace, and in time she was richly rewarded. Grace's circumstances haven't changed, but she now has peace and a renewed passion to live in God's presence. She has insight into things she never could see before. Her faith has deepened. Her strength is returning. By taking shelter under the wings of her loving God, she is discovering how to spread her own wings and soar.

**BUT THOSE WHO
WAIT UPON GOD GET
FRESH STRENGTH.
THEY SPREAD THEIR
WINGS AND SOAR
LIKE EAGLES. THEY
RUN AND DON'T GET
TIRED. THEY WALK
AND DON'T LAG
BEHIND.**

ISAIAH 40:31 *THE MESSAGE*

STRAIGHT TALK FROM DAVE

WHAT DO YOU REALIZE NOW ABOUT SURVIVING
A SHATTERED PERSPECTIVE THAT YOU DIDN'T
REALIZE AT THE TIME, AND WHAT DIFFERENCE
DOES IT MAKE IN YOUR LIFE TODAY?

I've learned that rebuilding a shattered perspective isn't a one-time deal. When we come to a point in life where our perspective has been shattered in a big way and we've picked up the pieces and learned to look through the lens of a more realistic and healthy perspective, we tend to think we're done. We want to think we're done. But the reality is, we're not. We don't have all the answers after one, two or even three times through the process.

I know this may be a hard truth to face, but it's not a bad thing. You see, God is in the refining business. He is all about training us to see life from His perspective. So our journey through life will give us a number of situations that will challenge our dearest, most tightly held, human perspectives. Each time our world is shaken up, we will be confronted by the need to reevaluate some part of our perspective on life. Ultimately, growing into a mature perspective that will weather the storms of life is about going through that process.

So, I guess I have learned that even though I have gained a much better sense of what God's perspective is, I now understand that I am in the process of learning and growing—of being transformed by Him—until I get to the end of my journey through life. The process is hard and painful, but at the same time it is a beautiful thing.

Think for a moment about what a broken piece of pottery that has been pieced back together looks like. It's not going to look perfect. It will be marred. It will have visible cracks. It's the same with us. Our brokenness will still show, but it is through the brokenness that God's light shines through. And I think that is ultimately where we want to be. We may have been broken and shattered. We may have some cracks and imperfections, but we're still intact and the light of God's mercy and love shines brightly through us.

Dave Dravackoy's
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IT'S THROUGH
THE EYES OF FAITH
THAT WE FIND
MEANING IN OUR
CIRCUMSTANCES.
FAITH GIVES US THE
VISION TO SEE THE
POSSIBILITIES FOR
GRACE AMID THE
MOST BITTER PAIN.
IT FREES US TO
CREATE CONTENT
OUT OF CHAOS,
TO CHANGE
STUMBLING BLOCKS
INTO STEPPING
STONES.

JERIS E. BRAGAN