

LOOK AT WHAT GOD CAN DO!

I've been having a conversation with God, questioning Him about how a person with deep depression can focus on Him when she can't control her thoughts.

But I feel like I've been arguing with God and I don't feel very good about it. I had set out to find God's truth but all I did was look for loopholes, claiming that things were different for people with depression. I wasn't open to listening. But now I want to start listening, because He's been very good to me. Who am I anyway to be arguing with One like Him?

The truth is, I know we do need to keep focusing on Jesus, no matter how hard it gets. We need to try.

I love the story in John 9 where Jesus and His disciples come upon a man who was born blind. I especially like how Eugene Peterson tells it in *The Message*:

The disciples asked Jesus, *"Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?"* Jesus replied, *"You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause and effect here. Look instead for what God can do."*

Aren't we who are born with mood disorders similar to the blind man? The question for us should also not be who is to blame. Instead we need to look at what God can do.

Jesus made some mud and put it on the blind man's eyes, telling him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man trusted Jesus and did what He told him to do, even if it did seem like kind of a weird thing to do. He came back home, seeing! Amazing what God can do when we trust Him!

Pastor Don's question to the congregation a few Sundays ago was, "How do you face hardship and suffering?" Can you face them like Paul did at the time he was in prison, writing to the Philippians? Although Paul did report on his situation in the letter, he deflected the attention away from himself, instead putting the focus on Christ. And because he did that an attitude of joy permeated everything he wrote.

- Are you able to do the same when you're suffering? Can you focus on Jesus?
- Can you recall a time of hardship when focusing on Jesus gave you joy?

But what about those times when we *can't* focus on Jesus? Might we then not be like the paralyzed man in Mark 2:3-5, unable to connect with Jesus on our own?

Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

But Jesus did not heal him immediately. Let's read what happens next in Mark 2:6-12:

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

The lame man needed to rely on friends who had faith in Jesus – great faith, actually, to have gone to the lengths they did.

Sometimes we need to rely on godly friends to connect us to Jesus.

- Do you have a friend who can encourage you in your faith or pray for you when you can no longer pray for yourself?
- Are you able to reach out to friends when you're depressed and have trouble connecting with God?

We mustn't forget Paul's thorn in his flesh (though no one knows exactly what it was he referred to here). God can use our pain too.

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:8-9)

- How has God used your pain in the past?

Remember what Jesus said. There is no one to blame for your disorder. Look instead for what God can do.

- What has God done in your life?