



“IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD”

March 2018

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16

You may know the poem *If* by Rudyard Kipling. In 1965, a doctor in the emergency room at Vancouver General Hospital had me read it out loud as I was being sedated before transfer to Riverview Hospital. I was nineteen at the time.

I read to the end, finding encouragement and hope in the words. Even now, various lines of the poem jump out at me, depending on where my life has taken me. Today it was the first two lines:

*If you can keep your head when all about you
are losing theirs and blaming it on you.*

It's painful to be blamed for something that's not your fault. Being blamed hurts. It happens to all of us at times. And when that happens it helps to stay calm and "keep your head." And sometimes all I can think of doing is to hurt back. But I try not to. I don't want to cause pain, I only want my own pain to stop. How will I keep myself strong?

The best way I've learned is to connect with God. Keeping my head includes reminding myself of the truth of God's love. And the greatest love of all was Jesus giving up his life for us. That kind of love is *real* love. It's sacrificial. As the Scripture says: ". . . *we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*"

So, when I'm feeling unfairly blamed, I remember why God made me. I rest in the knowledge that I'm his child and I'm doing my best to do what he gave me to do. For the last twenty years God has led me to work towards bettering the lives of those with mental health issues. When I'm doing God's work I'm secure in the knowledge that he is with me and that he's pleased with me. Nothing can take away from that. Not even being unfairly blamed.

But doing God's will is not always easy. In 2 Timothy 3:12 we read: *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

This is true of the life I'm living. Revealing myself as a person with mental health issues poses dangers. Things I say may be misunderstood or disbelieved. My illness may cause disdain and rejection. I will make enemies and I will probably lose my reputation among many.

But isn't that all part of following Jesus? Isn't that what Jesus went through as well?

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