

Suffering, Singing, Praying!

By Mary Kane

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let Him pray.”

This weekend my husband and I went down to Lafayette, In., to watch our son play in a basketball tournament— we just returned a few hours ago. I was looking forward to competition for a special reason; it was our son’s first big sporting event since recovering from a broken collarbone in July and surgery in September. Just two weeks into the season and Scott was starting to hit his stride. He scored six points in his first game and 22 points in his second game. We were starting to get back to normal after weeks and months of pain, doctor appointments, x-rays and a missed soccer season.

It was the final game of the tournament, our boys had trailed the other team the whole game by as much as twenty points. Scott had scored fourteen points in the 4th quarter and had tied up the game with a well-placed basket from the free-throw line. We went into overtime. Both teams were playing hard and trading points. We were doing our best to cheer them on to victory! About two minutes into overtime Scott went up to defend a shot by the opposing team, and came down on another player’s foot and rolled his ankle. I held my breath as I watched in what seemed like slow motion, Scott falling to the floor, grabbing his ankle in pain (with his good arm). I thought “No! Not again!” as I worriedly watched my son rolling on the floor in anguish. The coach came over to examine Scott and then two teammates carried him off the floor, to the bench.



After the game finished, Dr. Kennedy, one of the cheerleader’s fathers examined him and said he had a high ankle sprain. We’d had experienced a high ankle sprain before and knew the drill—a couple of weeks to recover and several weeks of physical therapy.

“Lord, what is this all about?” I thought to myself, mystified, “I thought we had learned all the “injury lessons” we needed to learn and were ready to put this season behind us. What do we do now?”

After settling my son once again on the couch with many pillows and a bag of ice, I got him his dinner, did a few chores and settled down to

finish typing this study. I laughed to myself as I read what I had typed a few days earlier, "Is anyone among suffering, let him pray."

I have my answer. I know what to do now; if my son is suffering, I need to pray.

Please read James 5:13-18.

What do you usually do when you are suffering?

All too often, my first reaction to suffering is to pick up the phone and call one of my best girlfriends and indulge in a pity party. I want the satisfaction of hearing my friends say how unfair and terrible it is that I am suffering. God does, in fact, want us to tell someone about our sufferings. Check out verse 13 to find out whom!

What does verse 13 state that we are to do if we are suffering?

Did you realize that the first thing God wants us to do when we are suffering is to tell Him about it? I find that very encouraging! God in His infinite wisdom has given us the privilege of prayer so we can go directly before His throne and tell Him our concerns. He could just take care of our every problem without any input from us, but He wants to have a relationship with us in order to teach us about Himself through prayer. This is not to say that we shouldn't share our sufferings with other godly Christian friends; God has given us friends to counsel, encourage and console us during times of suffering. But, our friends can not actively do anything about our situation. Let's take it to Our Father first and ask Him to work our trials according to His perfect will for our lives.

Let's imagine, for a moment that you just broke your arm. What if the only thing you did was to run to the phone, called your best friend and

told her all about the accident. Perhaps you'd tell her about how much pain you were in and how you wouldn't be able to work from this point on? Could your friend set the broken bone, operate if needed, give you pain medicine or prescribe physical therapy? No! You would need to get to the hospital. That is one thing a friend could do, drive us to the hospital. That is what a good Christian friend should do for us as well; take us to the Healer.

How can you direct a friend who is facing a tough situation to Jesus?

As I was thinking about suffering and what I would say to a friend in need, the first question that came to my mind was, "What do you think God might be trying to show you through this hardship? What is He trying to reveal to you about Himself through this situation? (Please realize that these questions would not be appropriate in every situation.) Little did I realize how I would need to use my own advice within a week of writing this study.

The Sunday after the ball tournament, I took a walk and asked myself these same questions. I asked God to please show me why we had to go through yet another season of injury for my just-recovered son who had already suffered so much. Later that same day, God sent me His answer.

I was reading a book while I was eating my lunch. I could feel the Holy Spirit within me "nudge" my soul as I read something like the following, "Whatever God is allowing in your life right now is for the express reason of conforming you to the image of His Son, that you can be a witness to all the world." Something in Scottie still needs shaping so that the world will be able to see Jesus through him. And through these trials, Scott is being abundantly equipped so that he will be able to minister to others out of his own suffering, just as our Savior ministers to us from His suffering. And God get's the glory. Praise His Holy Name.

Have you been able to minister to another person in need out of your own suffering?

As Beth Moore has often said, "Turn your misery into your ministry."

Speaking of suffering, let's take a look into the original text and see what hidden treasures God has for those who are willing to get their hands dirty.

The word used for *suffering* is *kakopatheo* which means to suffer hardship or troubles, and endure afflictions or evils. One of my resources stated that this word for suffering contains a reference to *time*; This is where the definition becomes very interesting and



encouraging! I'm not trying to build a major tenet of the faith here, but I would like to suggest that the definition of this word implies that our times of suffering are limited in their duration; they will last for a time... an hour... a season. Aren't you relieved to know that there is a definite time limit on your seasons of suffering? That while weeping

may endure for a night, that joy comes in the morning? God will not allow your suffering to last one second longer than is necessary to accomplish a great work for His kingdom and for your good. Suffering doesn't happen upon us by the will or whim of the enemy. God holds us in the palm of His hand and nothing comes to us except for what God allows through His fingers. He is sovereign over everything and our Heavenly Father promises to use all things for our good, according to His purpose (Romans 8:28) All things. Good things, bad things, hard things, things that the enemy intends for evil. I've had a few very hard seasons of suffering during my life. And while I couldn't see the "good" that God was working from them, I can say that I was and am faithfully trusting that the good will be revealed in His time. So, let's hold on and keep believing!

Are you going through a hard season right now?_____.

If the answer is yes, can you see or think of anyway that God can or is using it for your good?

If you can't see any good at this point in time, can you at least commit to trusting God; that He is good and that He loves you?

Some things we may never know the reason for this side of heaven. However, some day we will see everything clearly—faith will become sight and we will see Him as He is. But, for now we are called to walk by faith.

Please go back and read verse 13 again.

What does God's word tell us to do if we are cheerful?

This command is very good news for those of use who love to sing—we get to sing songs! And for those of you who can't sing, I also have good news—the Greek word that translates *sing* in this verse also means (and I quote) “to twitch or twang.” So you have your choice when you are happy; you can sing, twitch or twang to the Lord! No one has any excuse not to participate!

Please read verses 14 and 15 again.

What are we to do if we are sick?

Why do you think that the sick are instructed to call some one else to pray over them?

Looking at the meanings of the word *sick* will give us a few clues as to why the elders of the church were needed to pray over a sick person. The original word for *sick* in this passage is *astheneo*; it means to be without strength, powerless, sick, feeble, weak and needy. It also means those who were sick or powerless in their soul or mind. Later in this passage, in verse 15, we see the English word *sick* is used again, but a different Greek word for *sick* is used this time, *kamno*. *Kamno* means to grow weary, be weary, faint or sick. Some sicknesses then require the wisdom that comes with spiritual maturity and authority.

As we have discussed before in earlier studies praying is hard work! It is during our prayer times that many of our spiritual battles are won or lost. Have you ever tried to do hard physical labor or tried to complete an important written assignment when you were sick? It is hard to think straight when we are under the weather. And hard physical labor is very difficult if not impossible to complete when we are ill. We all need a little help when we are sick. If we are spiritually unhealthy it makes even more sense to call in sanctified reinforcements to fight for us!

In closing:

When we are suffering we are to _____ to the Lord.

When we are happy we are to _____, _____ or _____ to the Lord.

When we are sick we are to _____
to pray over us to the Lord.

Keep on praying!

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