
YOU'RE NOT LOSING IT, LIFE IS HARD!
a mini devotional
NATASHA N. SMITH

YOU'RE NOT LOSING IT,

LIFE IS HARD!

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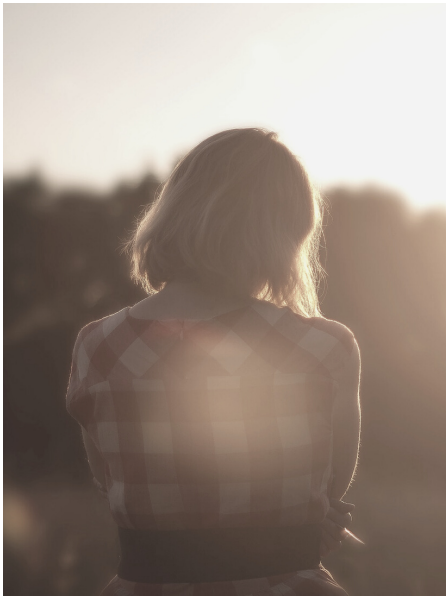
DAY 1 TROUBLE ON EVERY SIDE

"WE ARE TROUBLED ON EVERY SIDE, YET NOT DISTRESSED;" 2 CORINTHIANS 4:8 KJV

Lord, please send trouble my way! Said no one ever because who likes trouble? I mean we probably can think of that one person that we know, who is crazy enough to say "come on trouble". But for most of us, we want to stand clear of trouble. Yet trouble tends to find its way to all our doorsteps, oftentimes letting itself in the door. It makes its way in and proceeds to sit with us for a little while. Yes, trouble is the uninvited guest of life. Trouble can be described as any difficulty or problem that may arise in life. You know, kind of like car "trouble".

I remember my first car. It was a blue 88' Hyundai Excel. I bought the car from my sister for a few hundred bucks that I paid in installments. Oh, that car. I was so happy to have my first car but the trouble that it caused me more than outweighed the happiness of having it. It was constantly breaking down and needing repairs. Break down after break down, repair after repair, and with a college student's nonexistent budget, I could not afford it. The short of it, all the trouble that the car caused, stressed me out. You see, trouble naturally causes stress.

Now look at the word "distress" in the verse above. Distress here means to suffer from anxiety, sorry, or pain. Yet 2 Corinthians 4:8 says that "we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. Other translations say, "we are pressed on every side, yet not crushed".



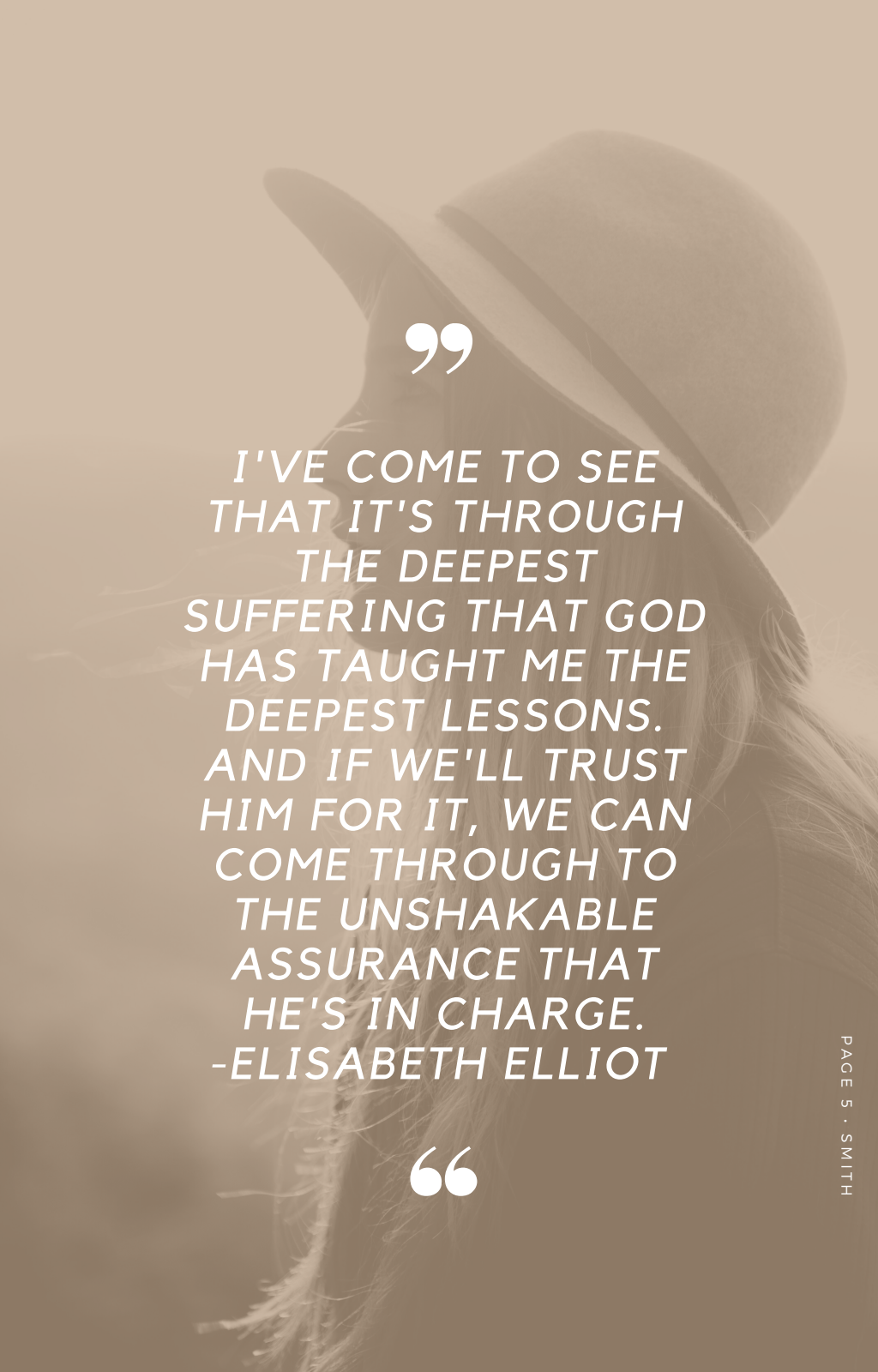
I believe that it is saying that as we serve God, because we live in a fallen world that is prone and subject to trouble, we find trouble all around us YET even in this trouble we are not overcome with suffering from anxiety, sorrow, or pain. Its saying that we are not brought down to a point where we can no longer function in the world.

Thus, it brings new light to the saying "living in this world but not being of the world". Instead, maybe it can be said that we live in this world, but we do not have to feel the full-on effects of this world because we have Jesus. We know that the presence of Jesus does not void our life of trouble but Jesus with us, helping us to navigate through every trouble, makes the difference. We can face trouble on every side, yet not crushed by anxiety, sorrow, or pain. This can only be said in and through the strength of God, living on the inside of us. We will always find that Jesus is our very present help in our time of trouble, and in every hard place of life.



A PRAYER

Lord, right now I pray that you will help me to see you even in the hard places of life. Help me to see where your hand is working. Help me to trust that even when I cannot see your hand, that you are still moving, still working and still advocating on my behalf. I cast my cares on you and I pray for peace in the midst of my situation. My hope is in you, and I know that you are with me; therefore, I will trust in you. In Jesus name. Amen.



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I'VE COME TO SEE THAT IT'S THROUGH THE DEEPEST SUFFERING THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT ME THE DEEPEST LESSONS. AND IF WE'LL TRUST HIM FOR IT, WE CAN COME THROUGH TO THE UNSHAKABLE ASSURANCE THAT HE'S IN CHARGE.
-ELISABETH ELLIOT

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DAY 2 CRUSHED AND PRESSED



"FOR OUR LIGHT AFFLICTION, WHICH IS BUT FOR A MOMENT, WORKETH FOR US A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY;"
2 CORINTHIANS 4:17 KJV

In order to produce oil, the olive is first crushed and made into a paste. Then, the paste is pressed and separated into water and oil. Crushed and pressed to produce oil. And that is what life feels like at times, as if we are being crushed and pressed. Life sometimes feels as if, our very essence is being squeezed out of us.

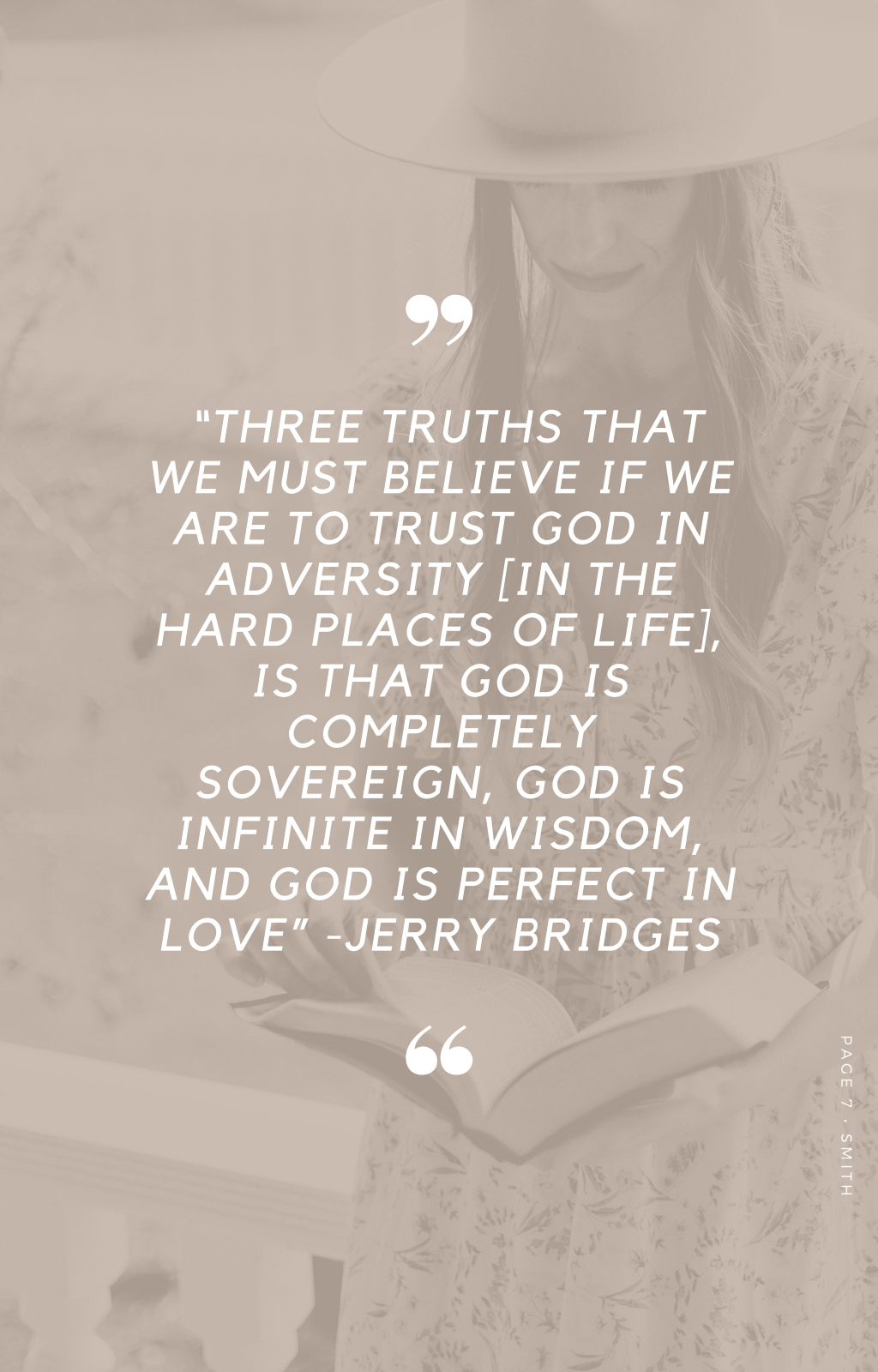
But can I let you in on something that I didn't know when I became a Christian? God will use whatever He must to get out of us what needs to come out in order to put in us what He desires. He will use what He must to bring us to the place that He has already prepared for us, if it is our desire to be all that He has called us to be. What does that mean? God does not send bad things to happen to us nor does He cause bad things to happen to us, but He does use everything that happens to us for our good. "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us," (Ephesians 3:20 NIV).

So what you may be going through may not "feel" good right now, and it may not "feel" victorious" right now, but you have to keep the faith that God is still working on your behalf to bring you out of this hard place and into something far greater than you can imagine.

It's encouraging to note that God calls whatever our "hard" is, our "light affliction" and God says that it "but for a moment". Know that what you are going through is never wasted but God will use it for good.

A PRAYER.

Thank you Lord that you do not leave us to navigate life alone, yet you are with us, helping us through each fire, helping us through the water. You never leave us nor forsake us. God, I pray that the eyes of my understanding will be open to viewing the hard places of life as opportunities for me to know you more, and as opportunities to learn more about the purpose and plan that you have for me. I know that nothing is ever wasted in you God; therefore, I trust you. In Jesus name. Amen.



"THREE TRUTHS THAT WE MUST BELIEVE IF WE ARE TO TRUST GOD IN ADVERSITY [IN THE HARD PLACES OF LIFE], IS THAT GOD IS COMPLETELY SOVEREIGN, GOD IS INFINITE IN WISDOM, AND GOD IS PERFECT IN LOVE" -JERRY BRIDGES



DAY 3 THROUGH THE FIRE

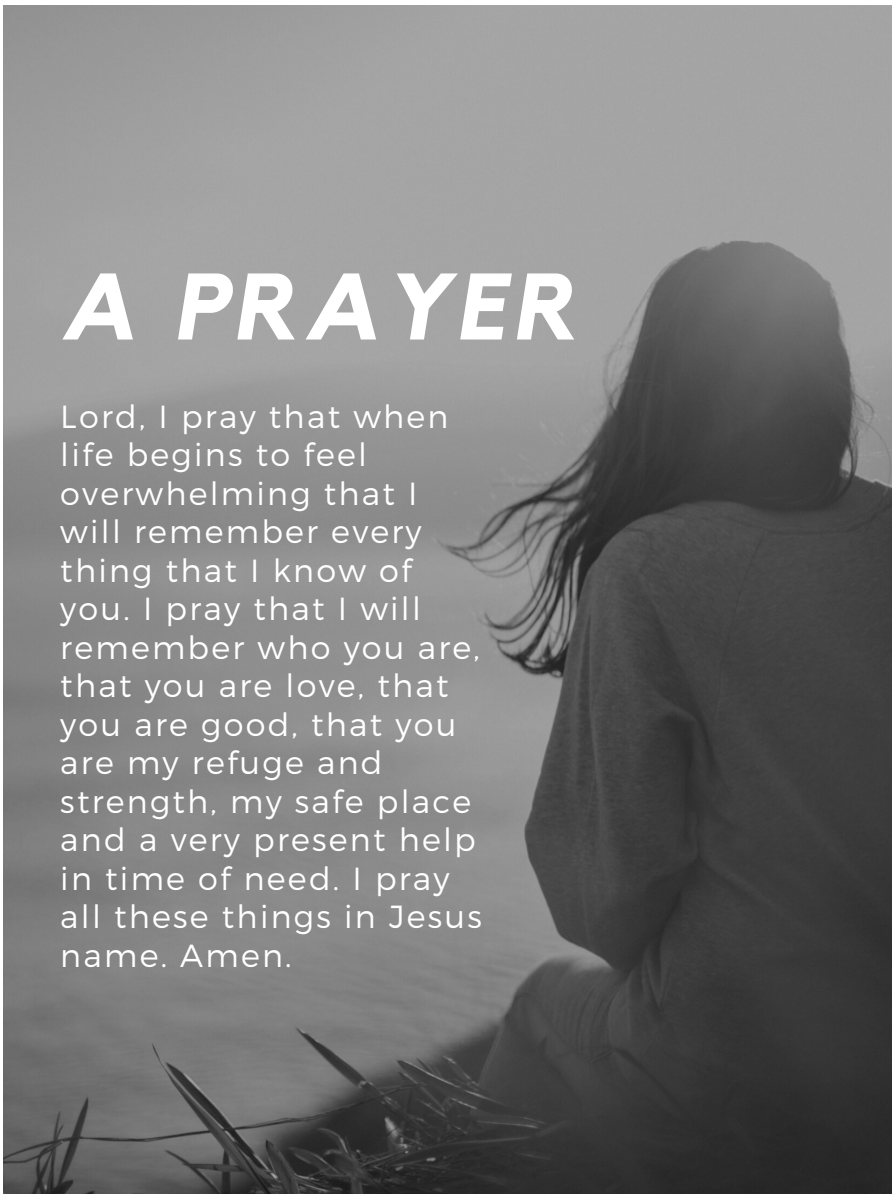
"WHEN THOU PASSEST THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH THEE; AND THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY SHALL NOT OVERFLOW THEE: WHEN THOU WALKEST THROUGH THE FIRE, THOU SHALT NOT BE BURNED; NEITHER SHALL THE FLAME KINDLE UPON THEE." ISAIAH 43:2 KJV

I believe what makes life feel even harder than it is, is that, somewhere along life's journey we believed that once we became a Christian that life would be easy peasy, lemon squeezy. It seems as if no one ever told us that we would be given lemons time after time, to somehow make into lemonade.

No one ever told us that we would one day be given the task of making bricks without straw as the Israelites found themselves tasked with in Egypt under Pharoah's rule.

I remember feeling this way, like no one ever told me that life would be THIS hard. But as mentioned in John 16:33 in this life we will face trouble, also take note of the word choice in today's verse in Isaiah 43:2. "When" you pass through the waters and "When" you walk through the fire. It does not denote a matter of "IF" but a matter of "WHEN".

It is comforting and encouraging to know that I am not losing it and that you are not losing it, but that life at times can be HARD. And my "hard" may not be the same as your "hard", but we are in this together. Most importantly God is in it with us. Isaiah 43:2 says that although we may go through the fire and the water, they will not overtake us. We may feel some discomfort in this life but ultimately, we always have the victory in Christ. Jesus overcame the world so that we can do the same.



A PRAYER

Lord, I pray that when life begins to feel overwhelming that I will remember every thing that I know of you. I pray that I will remember who you are, that you are love, that you are good, that you are my refuge and strength, my safe place and a very present help in time of need. I pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen.



Natasha Smith

Natasha is the author of the forthcoming book Can You Just Sit With Me: Healthy Grieving for the Losses of Life to be released in Fall 2023 with InterVarsity Press. She writes and speaks about faith, family and grief. Her mission is to sit with the hurting while God does His healing work in their lives.

You can find her work on her blog, as well as publications such as: Her View From Home, TODAY Parents, Focus on the Family, Beyond Women, Dear Sister's Magazine, plus multiple works in forthcoming books by Guideposts

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