

GOD'S WORDS FOR OUR PARENTAL DISCOURAGEMENT PSALM 107

Case Study:

Martha was an empty nest single mom who had done the best she knew how and that time/energy had allowed. She looks back now with lots of regret as all four of her children are far from God and not looking to return. When they were in her home she stressed the importance of church, she often referenced Bible passages when she disciplined them, and always she prayed for each of them daily.

Todd is the wandering soul. He doesn't know what he believes or what he wants. Occasionally he gets excited about some new hobby, job, relationship, or faith, but it never lasts long.

Amy is the child who is mired in depression. She is the one who spoke most about missing a father figure. Divorced and with a child of her own, Amy struggles to muster the energy to get to her minimum wage job. Child support (when it comes) and occasional assistance from Martha helps her "just get by."

Doug is the child who got into drugs. Meth is his drug of choice. He stays high, doesn't eat, and when Martha does see him it breaks her heart. Doug is rail thin with sunken eyes that reveal a soul as empty as Doug's life really is.

Steve is the "successful child." Steve saw his older siblings throw their life away and vowed not to repeat their mistakes. Steve went to college, got his degree, moved to the nearest major city, got a good job, and worked his way into several promotions in his brief time there. However, his obsession with work is already putting a strain on his marriage and Martha can see how much his kids miss their father. Steve occasionally tells Martha about a few of their marital arguments, but he can't understand why his wife is upset when he's "doing everything right."

Martha thought she would get to rest when the kids all moved out. But babysitting, paying off debt, and the burden she carries for her children hardly let her rest. She knows she should pray for her kids, but a cynicism is growing within her because she has prayed for years and it hasn't done any good. In her pain, she calls out to God, "Lord, give me the words to pray."

Pre-Questions:

This case study is meant to challenge you to think biblically about the real struggles of life. These questions will not be answered completely in the sections below. But they do represent the kind of struggles that are being wrestled with in Psalm 107. Use the question to both stir application and to give you new insight into the psalm.

- If Martha was in your small group or Sunday School class, what would be effective ways you could ministry to her?
- How would you respond when Martha expressed guilt and/or anger about the "train up a child" verse (Prov. 22:6)?

- How would you help Martha discern the line between enabling her children and loving her children (or her grandchildren)?
- How could you assist Martha as she struggles to not just give up hope?

Read Psalm 107 in your preferred Bible translation. The “rewrite” of Psalm 107 below is an attempt to capture the words that God would give Martha to pray (Romans 8:26-27). This would be something Martha would need to pray many times as she was burdened for her four children..

A re-write of Psalm 107

Martha Prays for Her Family:

1. Lord, You are good. I may struggle to see it, but if Your love was not trustworthy and unending I would be hopeless.
2. You have brought me through so many things as I raised my four children on my own. When we needed food, new tires for the car, or clothes for school some how You always provided. It is so easy to forget those times of faithfulness in the midst of the current hardships.
3. Right now we are scattered and need to be brought back to You and each other... again. We have gone to wandering, depression, drugs, and the American Dream. It feels like we have been scattered to the ends of the earth.

Martha Prays for Todd:

4. Todd wandered into wandering. He's not connected, addicted, or committed to anything. There is nothing that guides his decision making and allows him to get anywhere.
5. He is starving to find something that gives meaning to life and gives direction to his choices. His heart has given up, checked out.
6. *May Todd call to You in his troubles and be delivered from the mess he is making of his life.*
7. Bring Todd back to the narrow way that leads to life, meaning, and satisfaction. Let him know what it means to live in a community of faith that cares for one another.
8. Bring Todd to the place where he can thank You for Your steadfast love, continual presence, and ample grace. *Give him a testimony of Your redemption that he can share with his friends and bring many to You.*
9. Only You, Lord, can satisfy his search for meaning. His soul is hungry call him back to Yourself, the Bread of Life and Living Water.

Martha Prays for Amy:

10. Amy is in darkness and the shadow of depression is always covering her. She is a prisoner in her own sorrow, grief, self-pity, and shame. They weigh her down like shackles.

11. She listens to her pain and it drowns out any truth that comes to her ears. She refuses to hear instruction from Your Word because she believes it's too hard, cliché, would work for someone better than her, or it just hurts too much to hope any more. If I mention the Bible, she just gets off the phone.

12. Bring her to the bottom of her pain and self-pity so she will look up to You. Remove from her life her friends who don't want her to "do better" because then she would leave them behind. Those friends are not friends. Cause Amy to see how alone she is.

13. May Amy call to You in her troubles and be delivered from the mess she is making of his life.

14. Bring Amy out of the darkness and shadows. Break the emotional shackles that bind her.

15. When You do, let her see that it is (and only could be) You who freed her with your steadfast love, continual presence and ample grace. *Give her a testimony of Your redemption that she can share with her friends and bring many to You.*

16. For you are The Great Despair Buster. You are Hope! Life! and Peace! You are the Light that penetrates the darkness.

Martha Prays for Doug:

17. Doug is a fool because of his addiction and meth is his cruel master that causes his many pains.

18. He looks awful. He won't eat. He'd rather be high, starve himself to death, and meet the destiny that awaits him.

19. May Doug call to You in his troubles and be delivered from the mess he is making of his life.

20. Send someone to Doug to speak truth to him that will penetrate his denial and lack of care. Wake him from his addiction and deliver Doug from the inevitable destruction it will bring.

21. When You do, let Doug see that Your steadfast love is stronger than the bonds of addiction; that Your continual presence is more comforting than the escape drugs provide; that Your ample grace is able to penetrate and remove the sting of guilt he fears when he gets sober. *Give him a testimony of Your redemption that he can share with his friends and bring many to You.*

22. When Doug returns to You let him be as generous with life for Your glory as he was frivolous with his life for the temporary pleasure of drugs. Let him put the contrasts into words that he can share and point many to Your superior joy!

Martha Prays for Steve:

23. Steve has left for a better life. He is doing good business in the city. Steve is prospering in his job and getting the promotions he deserves.

24. Steve heeded the call of Your Word to work hard. He is reaping the benefits of following Your principles; by them You are raising him up.

25. Your Word is true and works whether those who are following it have genuinely surrendered their life to You or not.

26. But without You at the center of his life Steve cannot handle the success he has achieved. The more he has, does, and is, the more he gets in over his head. I can see when he realizes it; fear grips him. He is scared to death to be “a failure” like the rest of us.

27. He frantically pours himself back into his job, because he knows how to succeed there. But when his wife isn't happy, the kids don't appreciate him, and he has no peace, he doesn't know what else to do.

28. *May Steve call to You in his troubles and be delivered from the mess he is making of his life.*

29. Let Steve see that You are the Peace that can calm the storm of his fear of failure. Let him come to grips that the Gospel calms the waves of a performance-driven, bottom-line existence.

30. Teach Steve to be content with a simpler life of worshipping You and loving his family. Bring him to that life You made him to live and for which he longs but cannot put into words.

31. When you do, let Steve see that “success” is merely resting in your steadfast love, continual presence, and ample grace. Out of that life-altering redefinition of success *give him a testimony of Your redemption that he can share with his friends and bring many to You.*

32. Since You have raised him up to a position of influence, let him use that influence to call Your people back to “success” as You define it. They will listen to him because they admire him. May many people see that what You have to offer is better than what the world has to offer because of the change you bring in Steve's life.

Martha Prays through New Wisdom:

33. Lord, You turn success into failure (Steve); comfort into pain (Doug); suffering into misery (Amy); and meaning into folly (Todd).

34. All this you do because we seek to live independent from You. Nothing we want is what we think it will be without You.

35. Lord, it is also true that You turn failure into success with Your grace; pain into comfort and misery into bearable suffering with Your presence; and folly into meaning with Your balance of truth and love.

36. You are inviting Todd, Doug, Amy, and Steve to come dwell with You when they will repent and acknowledge it is You they have been looking for all their lives.

37. When they surrender to You, I know they will begin to live differently. As they surrender to You more and more they will sow wisdom and reap blessings by the truth of Your Word and the grace of Your care.

38. Everything I want to give them is in You. My fretting for them and enabling of them is as foolish and broken as their sins. Only you can bless them as I try to bless them. Remind me that I cannot care for them better than You currently are.

39. It pains me to pray that they will be broken more so that they can be made whole by You. I know You often work to change our hearts through suffering.

40. Like a proud prince must be reminded he is only human, You have to show them their “wisdom” is empty. They must taste of fear of being completely lost and without hope before they will call to You to find them.

41. But I also know that You, Lord, raise people out of that kind of despair and pain when they quit trying to do it for themselves. You are the Good Shepherd who will go looking for Your one lost sheep (or my four).

42. I see that now, and for now, my fear is less. Thank you for returning to me the joy of Your salvation. I can be quiet in Your presence again.

43. I know I will battle the foolish doubt of You again, but return me to You in prayer for these things again and again. It is only your steadfast love, continual presence, and ample grace that can comfort this mother’s heart.

Passages for Further Study:

Judges (for an account of God dealing with His children as they wandered and returned many times);
Matthew 23:37-39; 3 John 4

Post Questions:

Now that you have read Psalm 107, examined how Martha might rewrite it for his situation, and studied several other passages, consider the following questions:

- What do you learn from the repeated themes that arise in each sinful situation the “some” (v. 4, 10, 17, 23) find themselves in? What should we pray for everyone caught in sin?
- What do you learn from the unique aspects that are prayed for each of the sinful situations? How does God present Himself uniquely to each of His children to draw them from their particular sin?
- For what instances of regret or troubled friends/family do you need to re-write your own version of Psalm 107?