

Spiritual Reflection for November 2018

The Tough Stuff

The world seems to be crumbling around us. There is one disaster after another reported in our daily news. Recently, several people in our own community felt the devastation of flooding not once but twice in a short period of time. Nationally, wild fires burn through the states in the west while hurricanes pummel the states on the east coast. Let's reflect on what to do when life seems filled with tough stuff.

As I looked at pictures of the wrath left by hurricane Michael my heart sank and my mind raced with questions. I wondered how, how does one begin to pick up and go on after something like this happens? What does it take for communities destroyed by water, wind or fire to rebuild? Where do people find the strength needed to take that first step toward rebuilding their lives, their neighborhoods, their communities?

The tough stuff is not only found in major disasters. It is found in the home of a new baby where sleep is hard to come by and making ends meet requires both parents to work, often alternating shifts to save on the cost of daycare. The added stress can lead to strained relationships and limited opportunities for talking about anything other than bills and schedules. It can feel as though the world is crumbling with no end in sight.

It also abounds in the homes of individuals facing changes related to their own declining health or that of a loved one. It comes with the loss of a job. It comes when the car breaks down, the roof leaks, or the wind topples a tree in the front yard. It exists in the heart of the farmer waiting for fields to dry out enough to get the equipment into the field without burying it in the mud. Every day around the world people experience tough stuff in their life.

Whether we are in the midst of a personal disaster or we are longing to help someone experiencing a dark place in their life the questions remain the same. How? What? Where? When? Why? Most of these questions will not have easy answers. Faith, hope and love will be the answers that have the biggest impact on how we survive the tough stuff.

The bible holds rich promises and provides us with strength to work through difficult times. Yet, these consoling words hold little healing power if they are quoted with the expectation of automatically taking away one's pain and suffering. People experiencing dark days have a list of stressors, worries, and concerns on our mind. Sharing the most powerful promises spoken by God with these individuals will mean nothing to them unless we are willing to first go to that dark place with them and help them spill out what is on their mind. We need to go with them into the sadness, into the fear, into the uncertainty, into the depths of despair. Personally we also need to explore our own sadness, fear, uncertainty and despair before we can fully trust God's promises.

It is when we open our hearts by listening intently and acknowledging those feelings, theirs and our own, are real, that we can begin to search for answers, seek guidance and trust in the strength of a higher power to get us through the tough stuff.

Questions to ponder:

What challenges am I facing right now in my life?

When will I accept that my feelings are real and need to be expressed?

Where can I go to receive the help I need to work through stress?

How will I ask for help in getting through this difficult part of my life?

Why must I trust in a higher power?

May God's Peace be Yours,

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When you are ready, check out the song my Mercy Me titled, *Even If*. It offers great support of God's promise to be with us through the tough stuff.