

The background of the book cover is a soft-focus photograph of purple flowers, likely petunias, with green leaves. The flowers are in the foreground and middle ground, creating a sense of depth. The background is a clear, light blue sky. The text is overlaid on this background. The author's name is at the top in a green, serif font. The title is in the center in a large, dark blue, serif font. The subtitle is below the title in a smaller, dark blue, serif font.

Debbie Alsdorf

A Woman
Who Trusts
God

Finding the Peace
You Long For

A Woman Who Trusts God

Finding the Peace
You Long For

Debbie Alsdorf



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Introduction

Heart to Heart

Can I start this book with a disclaimer? Some days I am not a woman who trusts God with all my cares, problems, and details. There, I said it. Truth is, there are times I sit and stew in a self-pity party of insecurity, worry, and fear. And, yes, there are times I try to overanalyze and figure out everything on my own, seeking for a piece of control. But I have found that when I don't trust God with my life and my circumstances, I have very little peace. I have experienced both—trust and fear. And I like trust and the life it gives me much more than I like the anxiety that comes from relying on my own limited resources.

I want to grow as a woman who trusts God—especially in the ordinary things. So I am hoping that you will walk with me through the pages of this book and through the challenges we both face in life. One thing is certain: God longs to give us his peace just as much as we long to receive it. And there is no joy in this world like a mind at peace—it trumps everything.

I don't know where you live or what your situation is, but I do know that even if our lives are different, we have much in common. You and I go through tough stuff in this life. From daily frustrations and responsibilities to the bigger challenges, life is hard, and if we are not careful, the hard things can overwhelm us and rob us of joy while diluting our faith.

I am quite an expert on living in freak-out mode, so I speak from experience. But a few years ago it dawned on me that there really is a better way to live and that I no longer had to be bound by the way I had done things in the past. I could learn a healthier and more spiritually alive way to approach life. I didn't have to go from A to Z in one giant step. I could go from A to B, then travel along to C, going through the steps of growth while each and every situation played out in my life. In his Word, God teaches us the basic principles for living this way, and I have great news for you. These principles work!

This year I have walked alongside women who have gone through things that are unthinkable difficult to endure: the death of a child, the death of a spouse, financial collapse, marital unfaithfulness, addictions of every kind—alcohol, food, drug—and the loss of their dreams as life collapsed around them. Times have been hard.

I have also walked alongside women who have endured garden-variety trials: nothing earth-shattering, but difficult situations that drained their joy, things like unreasonable husbands, unruly children, unmanageable friendships, and frustration with a life that is not the fairy tale they hoped it would be.

And, finally, I am aware of many women who are just fine. Thank God! They are walking along, trying to grow, weathering life's seasons, and staying above water. These women don't think they have it all together; they just keep praying for the grace to stay the course.

So like I said, we have much in common. All of us, no matter where we are today, have a life to be lived. None of us gets to choose how or when we will die, but each of us gets to choose the direction in which we will live. And our direction determines our destination. I often wonder if we realize that the choices we make determine how much peace we experience. I am not talking about big choices as much as little ones—the tiny daily steps of trust. That is what this book is about. Our journey together is one of looking at our choices—of attitude, belief, and mind-set.

I wish we could sit down over a cup of coffee and talk through the difficult spots in life. We could encourage one another, commit to praying for one another, and part ways a little better because of the sincere exchange of real-life stuff. If we could spend some time together, I would want to open the book of Philippians—a letter written by the apostle Paul to the early church. He gives such amazing insight, and I know we would be mutually challenged and encouraged. But since I can't meet you at the local coffee shop, these pages will have to do for now.

It is my prayer that as we journey together through the spiritual direction that is found in Philippians, we will gain new courage to trust that all of life—even the pain and suffering—is part and parcel of the reality of the human condition here on earth. In no way do I have it all figured out, so we will just walk side by side, heart to heart, woman to woman, gaining strength during our difficult “meantime” places—those places in between where we wait for God to answer our prayers, solve our problems, or make some sense of it all. One thing is certain: real life requires something bigger than ourselves.

These pages are for women living in the meantime:

- those who want to live well while waiting for a solution to be realized

- those who hear the word *trust* and cringe because they don't know how to trust a God they cannot see while living in circumstances that are difficult and disappointing
- those who hear the word *peace* and dismiss it because they are living with no peace at all and don't know how to find it
- those who want to live the life God has called them to and find joy in it, no matter what current circumstances they are facing or what tomorrow might bring
- those who want to learn how to walk in truth, living in the promises of God rather than just talking about them
- those who are tired of living lives limited by self—habits, weaknesses, ruts, attitudes, and other things they can't seem to break free from
- those who want to be changed, transformed, and conformed into the image of God—and want to know how it happens

If there was never rain, there would not be flowers in the garden of your life. Rain, though soggy and annoying, is a beautiful expression of God's provision. The harsh times in life are the same—though difficult and discouraging, they will prove to be the change agent we need, making us beautiful women who have learned to trust God with everything. Trust doesn't happen overnight; it happens step-by-step, lesson by lesson—in the furnace of the meantime.

My favorite devotional of all time is Oswald Chambers's *My Utmost for His Highest*. This particular section is something I carry with me as I learn to trust God. Read it, think about it, and maybe you too will be changed by its message. The main thing that is necessary as we learn to trust is the surrender of our thoughts and attitudes to the truth of God's faithfulness. As you begin this book, consider the words penned by Oswald Chambers years ago:

Is your mind stayed on God or is it starved? Starvation of the mind, caused by neglect, is one of the chief sources of exhaustion and weakness in a servant's life. If you have never used your mind to place yourself before God, begin to do it now. There is no reason to wait for God to come to you. You must turn your thoughts and your eyes away from the face of idols and look to Him and be saved.

Your mind is the greatest gift God has given you and it ought to be devoted entirely to Him. You should seek to be "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ . . ." (2 Cor. 10:5) This will be one of the greatest assets of your faith when a time of trial comes, because then your faith and the Spirit of God will work together. . . . Your mind will no longer be at the mercy of your impulsive thinking but will always be used in service to God.¹

This book will give you a little to think about each day as you consider where you are and what you are going through. Underline and highlight, answer the journaling questions, and if you are really brave, do this with a friend. In the back of the book you will find a five-week study guide. I added this for those who want to dig deeper into Philippians by themselves or with a group.

Here's to the meantime! May we learn to live well, laugh out loud in the face of our problems, and grow through the hard stuff! God himself is forming something beautiful within us.

1

The Meantime

What It Is and Why You Need a Plan for It

I thank my God every time I remember you . . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:3, 6

It was a great afternoon sharing the gift of friendship. We ate our favorite salads, drank our favorite spiced ice tea, and caught up on months of each other's lives. But as soon as we walked out of the restaurant, we were once again thrust into our real worlds, facing small daily annoyances and bigger real-life problems. As we said good-bye, my friend smiled. "I know things will get better, *but in the meantime*, I have a lot to face—chemo, radiation, and finding a wig."

We both laughed at her finally becoming a blonde—through a Dolly Parton wig. But there was nothing funny about her

immediate path in life. Recently diagnosed with cancer, she was on the road to recovery, but in the meantime, life was going to take some very difficult twists and turns.

In the meantime . . .

We all know about the meantime. It is that place in between a problem recognized and a solution realized. It is the dash between point A and point B. The meantime is a part of life. Whether it be getting through the day or getting through the next few months or the next few years, the meantime is all around us. This place in life doesn't have to revolve around big things. The meantime is even in the little situations we face each day and throughout each week.

Just today I had a meantime experience. I was driving through town, singing to the radio and enjoying my morning. Then my cell phone rang. A frantic call from someone in my family sent my mind spinning and my heart racing. I immediately thought, *God, please come through and help us in this situation!* I knew he would, but I didn't know God's timing or how long the problem would take to resolve.

As my anxiety level rose a bit, I had a choice to make. The situation was real and brought immediate concern, but God was bigger than the situation. Knowing the truth—that God was bigger—how would I live, in the meantime? In other words, how would I live while I was waiting for the situation to be resolved? Would I trust God while waiting for answers to the problem at hand? Or would I freak out and temporarily forget there is a God who claims to be bound to faithfulness toward me?

It's not a question of *if* but a question of how will we live *when* life presents a problem, a disappointment, devastation, a loss, or a daily annoyance. How will we live in that space between our prayer to God and the answer on earth? Does the meantime rob us of joy? Does it steal our peace and dilute our faith? Does it distract our focus? Does the meantime open the door for chaos and worry?

Certainly, as life unfolds, it has the potential to shake us up and dilute our faith. I can fall prey to that temptation while trying to figure out my problems or trying to fix my life. Truth is, when I am in a meantime place, I often excuse my behavior because I am upset. I suppose that because most people live this way, I have not stopped to realize that God wants so much more for me than living from freak-out to freak-out. I like the idea of living from peace to peace or from glory to glory as I am being conformed into his image one moment at a time.

Sitting in Philippians

A few years back I began sitting in Philippians—a letter the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Philippi. What do I mean by “sitting” in Philippians? Simply put, I read the book over and over, lingering in parts that jumped out at me, spending time with truths that seemed challenging or impractical, looking for themes and key points, then digesting them for practical application. As I prayed over the text, I asked God to teach me, to infuse the truths of Scripture into my heart and mind. I asked to be changed by truth and for the grace and strength to walk it out in my life. Sitting in a book of the Bible, or a chapter in the Bible, can be a quick sit of a week or a much longer stay. I have sat in certain passages for up to a year.

As I sat with the spiritual direction in the letter the apostle Paul wrote thousands of years ago, I began to realize that life can unravel people or bring them to a continual place of greater peace. I began paying attention, because I had already mastered the steps to coming undone and unraveled. What I needed to learn was something new—how to walk in peace, contentment, and victory. Maybe you could use some encouragement in these areas too.

Though there are many experts on the human condition, no expert can match the knowledge that God has of our condition.

He made us, he sustains us, and whether we realize it or not, he has provided a way for us to live our lives. But because he is not a celebrity or on the talk show circuit, we discount what he has to offer and replace it with the latest craze or the newest techniques marketed to us by the world's experts. This creates a problem, because the meantime for Christians is much more than a circumstance to walk through; it is a life span between our real home and the one we live in now—the space between earth's realities and heaven's promise.

From Here to Eternity

We are told throughout the Bible that as believers in Jesus Christ this world is not our home. Yet, since this is all we know for now, we live like this is all there is. In doing so, we live our lives based on human philosophy, self strength, and fleeting feelings. When things don't go our way, we fall prey to discouragement and defeat. Some day we will be with Jesus, but in the meantime, we are living in this world with people who rub us the wrong way, disappoint us, hurt us, and cause us a lot of pain. In this life, we have bills to pay, children to raise, problems to solve. Add to that list aging and illness and securing our future. There is a lot to think about, in the meantime. And let's not forget the smaller problems that cause each and every day to be some type of meantime place.

Take work for instance. You wake up, want to stay home, but know the responsible thing to do is to show up for work. So off to work you go, looking forward to the end of the day. In the meantime, you have eight to ten hours to live your life. That's a lot of meantime hours. Will they be wasted in mindless waiting? Or will they be lived fully even though you are eager to be somewhere else?

Though Jesus Christ does not have a TV talk show, the Holy Bible is a best seller and has been for years. The Bible lays out truths and life applications for us so that we can know how to live in this

life—while preparing ourselves for the one to come. Trouble is we don't pay enough attention to what has been laid out for us. We read the Bible, create spiritual theories about it, but fail to walk it out day after day in the meantime places of our real worlds.

I have read Philippians many times over the years. I have memorized the key passages. But as I began sitting with the simple truths again, I was amazed at how practical all of Philippians is in regard to this place called the meantime.

As I sat, prayed, and thought about Paul and the writing of this letter, the thing that continually jumped out at me was that he was not in a “good” place when he wrote it, but he lived in a “good” place despite his actual circumstances. Think of it—the apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi while in prison. He was certainly in a meantime lockdown! He had no control over his circumstances and could not free himself from jail. But there were a few things he did have control over:

- the attitude with which he faced his circumstances
- the direction he then took each day and each step
- where he put his hope and trust each day

Likewise, we face circumstances over which we have little control. We cannot control other people's choices, even though their choices do affect us. We cannot control certain things like disease and disaster, though both are a part of our world.

What we do have control over are the three things Paul had control over: attitude, direction, and trust. In other words, what we have control over is what we set our minds on.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things.

Colossians 3:1–2

Paul was clearly focused on God's purpose in all things. He begins his letter by thanking God with prayer and joy for his friends as he reminds them that God will complete his own good work in them (Phil. 1:6). This was his stand, his focus, and the way he lived: to give others courage by helping them believe the truth that God is always at work.

Interval Training

In the meantime, will we set our mind on the problem and how long it's taking for a resolution? Or will we set our mind on the truths that in the meantime God is with us, is working in all the hard stuff, is teaching us something because of it, and always has our back?

Webster's Dictionary defines the meantime as "the period between occurrences: an interval." Perhaps what we need is interval training! And that is exactly what Paul holds out to us in Philippians—interval training for living in this life while we wait for the next.

It would be ridiculous to think we could wave a wand or sprinkle some spiritual fairy dust and get a quick fix for our real-life problems. But we shouldn't be too quick to dismiss the basic steps and principles we find in God's Word. Think how our lives would be different if we paid attention to them and set our hearts toward living them out in our lives. The spiritual practice of walking in biblical truth is often called a discipline of the believer's life. This discipline can help lead us into a mindset of trust and an inner atmosphere of true peace.

This book is a call to live the life God has called us to. God has given us life and shown us how to live. It's time to get serious about life, redefining it, reclaiming it for God's purposes and plans. One thing is certain: he has plans for you, plans that are good. Those plans cannot take place if you are living your

life on your terms. It's time for us all to come back to him in every area—surrendering, once again, our lives into the arms and care of the God who gave us our first breath and will be with us to our last.

I have been through enough to know that the meantime is often mean. And I continue to learn how to get outside the box of “me” in order to deal with what is happening around me or to me. I am hoping this book will be a journey through the principles in Philippians that will change us and shape how we live. For this change to take place, we will have to practice remembering the truth of who God is and how faithful he is to his people.

Why Remembering Is Important

I don't know about you, but my good attitude can change the moment my circumstances change. I forget the things I need to remember. It's like I have sudden amnesia concerning God and his faithfulness. And when I forget, I tend to spiral into a place of worry, fear, and hopelessness. In that place, I easily begin to depend on myself rather than turn to God and his grace. Perhaps like me you easily fall prey to the enemy's strategy of getting us to focus on anything other than God when times are hard.

This is a book of remembrance, a tool to help you remember the presence of Christ in the middle of the difficult places in your life. I have the hardest time in the middle of a problem, probably because I want to control the outcome and realize I can't. Though this book will not change your problem, it can help you look up and change your perspective. It is my prayer that each page will give you a little hope for the journey.

Our problems aren't resolved overnight, and we all need the most help while in the middle of a problem. So I wrote this book in short chapters for you to chew on, processing your personal

meantime and finding God and help through his Word. You can read it straight through. You can turn to a topic that seems to fit a particular need on a particular day. Whatever way you read it, it is my prayer that you will remember that God loves you, he provides for your every need, and he has predestined you to be conformed into his image—and that happens in the rough spots of life. Finally, I know God wants each of us to remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And that translates into *no thing!*

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35, 37–39

Today is the day. As we take this journey through Philippians, we will discover ways to navigate life in the good times, the bad times, and all the spaces in between.

Each chapter ends by asking you to reflect on your thoughts and listen to God whispering to you. The journaling is followed by a short prayer. These prayers are meant to help you start to talk to the Lord about your situation. If they help you, great. If you are comfortable praying and don't need them, that is fine too. The important thing is learning to trust God in the meantimes of life. Here is an example.

In my meantime place, I am learning . . .

That I typically get all freaked out when things do not go as planned. In those times, the last thing I am thinking of is praying

for help from God or rejoicing that I am his. I am reacting to my circumstances rather than reacting to the truth and promises in God's Word.

In my meantime place, God is requiring me to . . .

Pay attention to my attitude and actions when things are not optimal. I need to make prayer a first line of defense against going down emotionally and mentally. I also need to realize that difficult times are a part of life and quit expecting they will not happen. I need to learn to look to God and trust him when they do. Counting to ten when emotions hit helps too.

Prayer

Lord, it is so easy to focus on my problem rather than on your power. Give me the grace to live above my problems with the view of your faithfulness covering me in each of life's situations. In the practical, guide me. In the spiritual, train me. In the places in between, steady me for the duration of the problem at hand. I surrender all that overwhelms me today into your hands. Amen.

2

Problems Are Inevitable

Living Overwhelmed Is Optional

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9–11

Life has a way of surprising us. Sometimes the surprises are good—like an unexpected gift or the perfect pair of jeans. But not all surprises are good. Some surprises take our breath away, bully our faith away, and leave us worn-out. It was Paul’s prayer that his friends would be able to discern what is best, and if he could be with us today, that would be his prayer for us too. He would coach us in the ways of truth. He would help us understand that life is hard and that God is always good. He

would lift up our chins, pray for us, and undoubtedly preach to us from what he knew to be true about Christ's workings in human lives. One thing is certain: the meantime usually starts with a sudden unexpected turn of events and can be difficult to handle. Another thing is certain: the meantimes in life can change us if we yield to God in the midst of them.

Expect the Unexpected

It was a great Monday morning. I woke up with boundless energy, had a meaningful morning conversation with my husband, and looked forward to the plans for the rest of the day. As my husband left for work, I stood at the kitchen door cheerfully waving good-bye. But something dampened our otherwise perfect morning, literally.

While walking out through the garage, my husband stopped, looked puzzled, and wiped his brow. A drop of water. Another drop, a third drop, and it became obvious that water was dripping from our garage ceiling. A quick look and we realized the water had to be coming from our son's room directly above the garage. While my husband waited downstairs, I ran as quickly as I could up to my son's room to make sure everything was okay.

But things were not okay. As I walked into the room, my feet sank into a carpet resembling wet grass. I knew we had a problem, and a big one at that. I began screaming for my husband, startling my son and waking up the entire house. We wondered if a pipe had burst in the night or if the toilet in his adjoining bathroom had overflowed. One thing was for sure. Without any advance warning, our lives were turned upside down in a moment. We were hurled into the meantime—a space of time that caused upheaval in our home for about seven weeks!

What started out as a fine day ended with furniture in our hallways, our son living out of boxes and sleeping downstairs,

and contractors and repairmen in and out of our house—a few hours here, a few hours there—all the way up to the Christmas holidays.

Having the disaster happen right before the holiday season only added to the stress of the situation.

- It was not good timing—the meantime never is.
- It was inconvenient—the meantime always is.
- It was exhausting to live differently—the meantime takes you out of your comfort zone.

Despite the frustration, I was determined to learn how to live in the challenging space in between the onset of trouble or crisis—my house in complete chaos—and the resolving of the problem—my house being put back together again. By the looks of things, it was not going to be a quick or inexpensive fix.

When Bad Things Happen, God Is Still in Control

Truth be told, my normal way of handling an interruption like this would not be pretty. I would be stressed, overwhelmed, and negative until the problem could be taken care of. I remember years ago when a counselor pointed out a pattern in my life. When a problem arose, I began stressing, spinning, worrying, and, yes, obsessing over what to do. You probably are calm, collected, and don't relate to my approach, but just in case you do, I have since found that there is a better way to live.

Faced with a major catastrophe taking over my house, something within me knew that God really could give me a new kind of peace and victory over my situation. Times like these are part of life, and I wanted to learn how to trust God when it seemed easier to moan and complain.

I had just started teaching the book of Philippians to the women at our local church. We called the study Living the Life, and now, through trial and error, I was about to embark on my own journey of learning what it means to live the life God has planned for me when life isn't much fun. Facing a problem with that faith-centered attitude requires a firm belief that every problem can be a positive growth experience. In other words, something good can come out of something not so good. I was about to embark on the challenge of remembering that when bad things happen, God is still in control and is still with me. Quite frankly, this basic biblical truth can evaporate from our memory when life is difficult. It's tempting to think God has forgotten you when things aren't going well.

It's easy to think the stories of the Bible are outdated and don't relate to our modern lives. We don't eat manna or see water turned to wine. We don't see burning bushes or parted seas. But every story in the Bible declares to us who God is and how he works in human lives. We see personal intervention and plenty of meantimes in the pages of Scripture. And just look at what Scripture says about all those stories:

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

If there were a "like" button on my Bible, I would definitely put "like" by this verse! The stories are there to teach us, and in learning, we will gain endurance and hope.

The reality is, many times in life you and I will face difficult times. During those times, we can get confused about God and his care for us. We start asking a lot of whys. Why does God allow bad things to happen? Why is there so much evil? Why can't he just give me a break? If he loves me, then why am I suffering?

I think Paul was teaching a groundbreaking principle when he said, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him” (Phil. 1:29). And though I am not sure I like *that* verse, I have to acknowledge that it is there to teach me and guide me in the storms.

Randy Alcorn addresses the questions of suffering and evil in his book *If God Is Good*. He says, “We live between Genesis 3 and Revelation 20, between Eden and the New Earth. Things are *not* all right with the world.”¹ And the reason things are not all right is because in Genesis 3 sin entered and everything changed. Now we wait for the new earth, the place God has prepared and promised to those who believe. But in the meantime, we need hope to face all the things here and now, for today we are living in that place in between, right smack dab in the middle of the meantime places of life.

Scripture helps us to put our troubles into proper perspective, and it’s wonderful that Jesus Christ himself gave us a heads-up about real life.

I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]

John 16:33 AMP

Right now I am thinking of that saying “Mama said there’d be days like this,” and I am reminded that Jesus said there’d be days like this. But he also said these days could be lived with cheer and confidence because he has deprived them of the power to harm us or conquer us. Wow! Now that is a different way to look at things when they go wrong, isn’t it? That leads us straight into the key principle for how to live in the meantime:

if God is with us in the hard times, then being overwhelmed is optional rather than a mandatory lifestyle.

Living Overwhelmed Is a Choice

Our God is a “green” God. He recycles everything in our life to further our growth and increase our faith in him. No matter what the situation is, surrender it to the Lord. Ask him to work out the details, lead you through the particulars, and give you the grace and strength not just to go through the annoyances but to grow through them.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.
Do not be wise in your own eyes.

Proverbs 3:5–7

Our house situation wasn't easy to solve. No one was able to figure it out, and that made the problem last for what seemed like forever. At some point we began to stop trusting in our own ideas of what happened and began asking God for his wisdom to show us. Until we knew what the culprit was, nothing could be fixed. We were deadlocked in a mess.

A friend of ours was puzzled by the whole thing and came over, sure he would find the problem. But, he could not figure it out either. However, as he was walking out our garage, a drop of water, like the first one that fell on my husband's head weeks earlier, landed on my friend's brow. He became determined, and after getting a ladder and opening up the garage ceiling, he found a nail that was embedded in a plastic tubing pipe.

End of story—the builder then stood behind the problem, fixing everything, making our house like new. With no money

out of our pocket, the house was fitted with new carpet, and new piping, and all was back to normal right before Thanksgiving Day. The Lord made the path straight as we began looking to him rather than spinning in circles.

Where are you today? God knows the details of your current hardship. He desires to see you through to the end.

When you are in the middle of a problem, stop to ask these questions:

- What is the problem? (In this case, mine was a house disaster.)
- What are my options? (I can scream, fret, or stay calm.)
- Which one will I choose? (I want to scream but will choose to stay calm.)
- When will I start? (The moment I realize I really do have a choice.)

Can you try, just for today, just for the next five minutes even, to focus on God's ability to see you through? Remember, you often can't choose your circumstances, but you can choose how you will live in them. Being overwhelmed is a choice.

Overwhelmed means:

1. to flood over: engulf
2. to overcome utterly: as by physical or emotional force
3. to turn over: upset²

When was the last time you felt engulfed by a problem or pain? Maybe it's right now. Perhaps the emotional force is upsetting you so much that you are barely making it through the day. You spin the facts, fret over the outcome, worry more than trust. For the record, that is what it looks like to be overwhelmed. And believe it or not, even though it feels we must be

overwhelmed, as if there is no other option, the truth is there is always a choice.

We should battle through our moods, feelings, and emotions.

Oswald Chambers³

The opposite of being overwhelmed is to surrender the current situation to God. Surrender is an important step in trusting.

Surrender:

1. to give up control or possession of to another
2. to give oneself over: to yield⁴

Surrendering a problem to the Lord is a choice. It's intentional. We must stop and purposely give it to him. It's more than just wishing he would take it from us; it's knowing we have given it over to him. As Christians, we often lean on our own wisdom and understanding, much more than we would like to admit. "We do not believe God, we enthrone common sense and tack the name of God on to it. We lean on our own understanding, instead of trusting God with all our hearts."⁵

Think again about the last thing that overwhelmed you. What would it look like to live in peace instead of turmoil? Do you think it's a viable option? When we are overwhelmed, we are to surrender whatever is overwhelming us to God.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Psalm 61:2 KJV

Your current problem or challenge can overcome you. It can get you in an emotional grip that might make it difficult for you to trust God in your situation. Often when we are in that emotional place, we completely give ourselves over to being upset.

Is this how you want to spend today? Do you want to surrender to the emotional grip of distress? Is this how you want to live until there is a solution to your situation? I bet not. There is a better way.

May the LORD answer you when you are in distress;
may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. . . .

Now this I know:

The LORD gives victory to his anointed.
He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary
with the victorious power of his right hand.
Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Psalm 20:1, 6–7

In my meantime place, I am learning . . .

In my meantime place, God is requiring me to . . .

Prayer

Lord, I want to learn to trust you. Living overwhelmed is easy, but I want to try something different, something that requires faith. It is my prayer that faith will be pleasing to you in every way. Teach me, Jesus, to trust you. Amen.