

# Adventuring with God

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## The Blues

Do you ever get “the blues”? I don’t mean the serious condition of clinical depression that some people are afflicted with. I’m talking about the garden variety of everyday blues ... the feelings that come on you unbidden but are generally linked to some sad new developments in your life.

When things are going great and you’re busy and fulfilled, you don’t seem to have time for such thoughts and feelings, but when you find yourself in a hard place that doesn’t appear to have any exit doors, you can begin to experience what we call the blues.

A variety of things can bring them on. My oldest son recently remarked that he was feeling the beginnings of what we call “empty nest syndrome” and it was making him sad. He’ll adjust to the change, but for a season he’ll feel the loss. Some of us get the blues from new problems at work ... maybe you get moved to a less fulfilling role or you suddenly find yourself without a job. When something like that happens, unbidden questions can begin to swirl around in your head: Am I still relevant and useful, or am I washed up in my career? What will I do with my time now? Will I still matter when I am no longer a ...? (You fill in the blank.)

At other times, our seasons of blues are related to relocating, new health issues, economic challenges, or problems with relationships. Sometimes we just get tired of ourselves, some pattern of behavior we don’t seem to be able to change, and we grow discouraged. Whatever the *reason* for the blues, we have a choice about how we’ll respond to the unwelcome intruder. While part of us would like to wallow in our self-pity

and give in to all the negative thoughts, as Christians we’ve been called to something higher. We must rally our spiritual resources and fight back ... even if we don’t feel we have the energy.

When King David began to feel the blues (and believe me, he had plenty of good reasons for them), he took action, asking himself, *“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?”* He didn’t ignore his feelings and negative thoughts—he was honest and acknowledged them for what they were—but he turned his attention to the One who could deliver him from them. *“Put your hope in God”* (Psalm 42:11), he told himself.

It may take time to turn our emotional ship around, or it may be accomplished the moment we turn in faith to our Savior. However it happens, our gloom will lift if we pursue Him. But if we choose to continue on in our own strength, trying to rein in the blues through our human reasoning, we’ll find it difficult to overcome.

We’ve all heard that praise drives back darkness, and joy comes when we rejoice in our God, not our circumstances. While such advice sounds good, the challenge is actually putting it to the test. When I’m feeling down and discouraged, the last thing I want to do is put on a happy face and praise anything. But when I have mustered the strength to turn to the Lord and praise Him in spite of how I was feeling, I’ve been amazed at how quickly my mood can change.

In *That Incredible Christian* A.W. Tozer writes, “We all know how the presence of someone we deeply love lifts our spirits and suffuses us with a radiant sense of peace

and well-being. 'Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.' If only we would stop lamenting and look up. God is here. Christ is risen. The Spirit has been poured out from on high. All this we know as theological truth. *It remains for us to turn it into joyous spiritual experience.*"

The Holy Spirit will help us do that if we choose to turn our back on our self-pity and trust Him. Circumstances don't need to change to find this joy ... our joy comes from our relationship with the Lord. In Isaiah 49, the prophet encourages the nation of Israel to trust their faithful God even in the midst of their terrible circumstances of captivity. While their daily existence probably felt desolate, devoid of anything that would be called a blessing, the promise comes that God will deliver them in the time of His favor (v. 8). While they wait, they can also be assured that He will make a road through the mountains that seem insurmountable. He will guide and direct them, leading them beside springs of water; they will be well fed and protected from the desert heat (vv. 9-10).

In other words, He will look after their every need no matter how dire or depressing their circumstances may look. And the same is true for us too. When we complain (as the Israelites did) that God has obviously

forgotten us, He is quick to answer: *"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me"* (vv. 15-16).

The blues are part of our human condition. We are subject to emotions and thoughts that aren't true or helpful at times. As unwelcome circumstances arise, we find ourselves vulnerable, even when we've given careful attention to our relationship with the Lord. But we don't have to stay there indefinitely. We can choose, as David did, to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness. When we turn in faith to Him, He'll give us a *"firm place to stand"* and *"put a new song in [our] mouth, a hymn of praise to our God"* (Psalm 40:2-3).

The truth of who He is and who I am in Him keeps me safely anchored in rough seas. Changes, difficulties, and challenges come to all of us, but we can turn our attention away from them and focus instead on God our strength. *"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God"* (Psalm 25:1). When the blues creep in and begin to steal my joy, I'm going to fight back. I'm going to choose to praise Him, knowing that *"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"* (Psalm 30:5).

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"In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;  
and safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here.  
The storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid,  
But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?"

"Wherever He may guide me, no want shall turn me back;  
My Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack.  
His wisdom ever waketh; His sight is never dim.  
He knows the way He taketh, and I will walk with Him.

"Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;  
Bright skies will soon be o'er me, where darkest clouds have been.  
My hope I cannot measure; my path to life is free;  
My Savior has my treasure, and He will walk with me."

**Written by Anna L. Waring, 1850**