

What a time we are living in. All the suffering we are witnessing. Not to mention those adversities we experience up close and personal. Bringing Why and Doubt knocking at our doors. We become discouraged, disappointed, we falter, we stop praying. Does nothing for our faith, does it? It's a vicious circle. Causing even those rich in it to struggle to hang on to it, and those shaky in it, to loose it. How do we strengthen it, how do we regain it? There's plenty of scriptures from which to interpret which touch the subject of why suffering is allowed and how to regain, hold on to, and grow in our faith. We can read them, try to apply them through our own hardships and, if we're lucky, be filled with a sense of satisfaction. Easier said than done for most of us. Why is that? Because we live in the "fast food" era for one. We want everything "yesterday." When faced with our own adversities we want swift resolutions; when faced with loss of faith, we want it back in a flash. And on top of that, we want this without having to put much effort into it. Think again.

I can tell you I'm no stranger to adversity, from losing loved ones to being told of the chance of our son not walking out of his surgery. Being visited plenty by Why and Doubt, and feeling like the "lost sheep" on many occasions, wandering in my lack of faith like a lost soul. And folks, this while already having the faith seed planted in me. That seed is priceless and powerful, but it doesn't grow on its own. Turns out we must cultivate and water it so that it can grow into a plant to such a great extent that even a mountain of earth cannot stop it from pushing upward. How do we cultivate our faith? How can we make it so strong that it can move that mountain? With prayer. It works. I know first hand how faith can be regained, maintained. This may take a while, however, because this doesn't fall in the fast food category. Patience plays a big role. So does willingness and effort. Case in point:

There was a very religious man named Jim, who lived near a river. One day, the river rose over the banks and flooded the town, and Jim was forced to climb onto his porch roof. While sitting there, a man in a boat came along and told Jim to get in the boat with him. Jim said, "No, that's okay. God will take care of me." So, the man in the boat drove off.

The water rose higher, so Jim climbed onto his roof. At that time, another boat came along, and the person

in that one told Jim to get in. Jim replied, "No, that's okay. God will take care of me." The person in the boat then left.

The water rose even more, and Jim climbed onto his chimney. A helicopter came along and lowered a ladder for him. The woman in the helicopter told Jim to climb up the ladder and get in. Jim said, "That's okay." The woman said, "Are you sure?" Jim replied, "Yeah, I'm sure God will take care of me."

Finally, the water rose too high and Jim drowned. Jim got to heaven and was face-to-face with God. Jim said to God, "You told me that you would take care of me! What happened?"

God replied, "Well, I sent you two boats and a helicopter. What else did you want?"

God helps those who help themselves. And the mere fact that we are conscious of that empty and lost feeling inside of us when we lack faith is a great sign and what pushes us to strive to regain that flame in our hearts. God's plan and purpose, beyond our control. Our faith, totally within our control. It's ours for the taking. Be sure that, like the lost sheep, He will carry you back to Him. All you need is desire. Just grow in your faith and watch God set about the removal of your mountain. Be patient yes, but get on it.

-by Connie Perez

["The readiness is all." – Shakespeare].

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