



A few months ago, I asked my friend Christi to share a post about friendship. It is an honor to have her on the blog today as she shares how to help a friend in emotional need. I know this will resonate with many of you. From a woman who does friendship well...

I heard the FaceTime call on my iPad in the other room. Then my phone signaled I missed a text and began ringing. I fumbled to find a device that could tell me what was happening.

All the notifications were from the same friend – the one who told me that morning she wouldn't have time to talk. Recovering from a major health incident, she didn't think she would be up for a chat that day.

So my heart sunk. This couldn't be good. When we finally connected, there was no sound at first. She couldn't catch her breath between sobs.

She had just learned some demoralizing news about one of her children.

She finally began to form words, telling me of the angry things she had said to her child. Doubting herself as mother, harboring frustration with her husband, and feeling forgotten by God, she was hopeless and broken. Weakened from her physical trauma, she had no reserves and was hanging on by a thread.

What do you do when you get a call like that?

You can't say it all. You have to choose. Like any emergency, you must triage the patient, deciding what needs to be addressed then and what must wait until she is stabilized.

If you are called to be a first responder for a friend in an emotional ER, here's a quick lesson in CPR.

### **Console and listen**

*"A time to be silent and a time to speak."  
(Ecc. 3:7b)*

It may feel like you aren't doing enough and you need to somehow fix it. But you can't fix it. The first reaction to trauma is shock and your loved one needs to process.

Help her navigate through the waves of emotions by asking questions and reflecting back what you're hearing are her deepest hurts. There's something strangely comforting about hearing another soul identify the cries of your own.

But mostly, listen. And don't forget to say, "I'm so sorry this happened." Those few simple words morph into more than you can imagine as they land on the ears of someone who is hurting.

## **Provide hope at the appropriate time**

*"And how delightful is a timely word!"*  
(Prov. 15:23b)

The enemy will not hesitate to exploit the weakened soul to plant his lies. Hopelessness is one of his favorite fertilizers; once spread, there are so many other seeds he can grow.

After almost an hour, my friend had begun to run out of words. At that point I chose to speak:

"I understand it feels hopeless right now. But I love you too much to let the enemy plant that lie in your heart. God is never undone and never out of options. I know you can't imagine how...and I don't have answers either...but I stand on the truth of God's promises ... He will redeem this pain."

I believe that people can't hear the hope we offer for their hurt until they know we've heard how much it hurts.

Thus, administer this step slowly. Don't rush into it.

## **Refute rash words or actions**

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
But a harsh word stirs up anger."*  
(Prov. 15:1)

In the heat of the moment, we all do and say things we regret. If a friend is contemplating actions or words you know will exasperate the situation, you may need to speak hard truth.

Don't preach and don't elaborate. There will be a time for sorting out appropriate emotions from lies and drama. This is simply a stopgap effort.

Just as you would apply a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, so you apply the necessary admonition to stop further damage to her relationships.

(I would be remiss if I didn't mention that if you think your friend has any tendency toward physically harming herself, you should get professional help. These basic thoughts are for the basic situations.)

I am still in touch with that friend, praying for her every day and checking in on her often. CPR is just the beginning. If God is calling you into the gap for a hurting friend, it may be a lengthy journey as you walk with her through the valley. If so, you'll have plenty of time to talk about all that you chose not to say when you received the initial cry for help.



*Dear Encourager,*

Hi, it's us.

The fallen, the broken, the discouraged, the hurting.  
The ones who sit alone at home or feel alone in the middle of a big gathering.  
The ones that few others see. Except you.

You have a gift. You see beyond the facade to understand much of what we can't express.  
You sense that you are called to speak up, reach out, and draw us in.

But we can imagine that it's not always easy. We know. We're us. Sometimes when you reach out, we might not respond in a way that fully affirms the value of what you offered.

We're sorry for that. We're not always aware of how broken we are and how broken our responder is.

We wonder if the enemy uses our broken responses to downplay the importance of what you do.

In case you've doubted yourself lately, we think there are a few things you need to hear.

### *1. When you tell us "I'm praying for you," it's not just words.*

Don't ever think you sound trite and simply polite or even worry that you sound too "spiritual."  
You. Posting, texting, messaging, calling, writing.

However you do it – whenever you do it. Matters.

***It matters.***

Sometimes it's the one thing that helps us fight back that next round of tears or wave of panic.

***Yours words carry behind them the power of heaven when you pray for us.  
And then when you tell us, you remind us that heaven heard our pleas.***

And that's really it.

When you tell us we are on your heart and that you've been prompted to pray, we know that means the Spirit has been moving you, interceding for us.

***And we are reminded that we are not alone.***

Not only are there others on this earth who care, but God is marshaling His army of warriors on our behalf.

## ***2. You are a nighttime ninja.***

When the daylight fades and the darkness takes over, our ***weakness is magnified.*** We are scared of what the future holds.

Yes, we may act brave and talk of God's goodness and faithfulness when you offer sympathy, but we really aren't that brave.

We do believe that God is good and He is faithful, ***but when the night creeps into our bedroom, that knowledge somehow stops informing our heart.***

**Knowing the truth and feeling the truth are two different things.**

And so. When you reach out just before you go to bed with a Scripture or a prayer or a simple "I care," it's like you did a Star Trek move and teleported to our bedside to let us borrow your shield and sword and fight off the lies of the enemy.

With that in mind, here's a passage that has comforted many of us. We never get tired of being reminded of this truth.

***"He will cover you with his feathers.  
He will shelter you with his wings.  
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.  
Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies in the day.  
Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,***

*nor the disaster that strikes at midday.*  
*Psalm 91:4-6 (NLT)*

### *3. You don't have to fix it.*

You don't have to have something big or profound to say.

Just saying, "I'm so sorry. I know this must hurt," is a great start.

Every word and action you offer to us when we are down is multiplied and magnified.  
***We hear so much more than is actually said.***

You hold power in your hands when you pick up that phone to send a text or type a message that speaks truth and life and comfort. It's not as much about the actual words as it is about knowing you care. So don't fear that your words aren't perfect. ***And please don't let the enemy convince you they aren't necessary.***

Dear encourager ... be encouraged.

This is kingdom work.

It's ministering to the least of us at times when few others even know you did. You will likely never even know your impact. But we know.

And more importantly, God knows. And we imagine that when He looks at you, He thinks, "Well done."



***“Help! I’ve fallen and I can’t up!”***

The Life Alert (Life Call) commercial’s campy catch phrase rose to pop culture status and became a universally recognized punch line.

The newest remake of the commercial is more like a [horror short film](#) and ends with this noteworthy warning:

***When you fall and cannot get up, an accident can turn into a tragedy.***

Every time it comes on TV, I lunge for the remote to make it stop.

It’s no longer a laughing matter and when I hear the poor woman’s cries, I go to a dark place.

[That’s because I fell.](#) [And I couldn’t get up.](#)

I’ve often thought about what it would have been like if my family hadn’t been there to call the ambulance.

There was no phone on the main floor and my cell was upstairs.

My foot was hanging from my ankle, dislocated, and broken in three places.

There was no way I could have helped myself and had I been alone, my accident would have turned into something even more traumatic.

***When a believer is “down”***

I began to see connections between what happened with my accident and what happens when **believers suffer from a brokenness that keeps them “down.”**

I’m not talking clinical depression. If that monster is what you fight, my heart breaks for you and I know there are no easy answers.



**I'm talking about continued discouragement** — when you feel like you are limping along emotionally and spiritually.

It may be from circumstances beyond your control or it may be due to sin that has separated you from regular prayer and time in God's Word.

Maybe you've been lying in the darkness so long that you have decided God must have turned His back on you and so you've returned the favor.

*Whatever the circumstances of the fall,  
when you can't "get up," you begin to spiral  
further down into loneliness, shame, and hopelessness,  
drifting further away from the one who can lift you out of the pit.*

If this is where you or a loved one is right now, maybe the following words will be an encouragement.

### *1. He's seen this before*

When the EMTs arrived at my house that night, they were taken aback. They hadn't seen an ankle dangling like mine and weren't sure how to stabilize it. To say the least, that was **not comforting to hear**.

Once we got to the hospital, I heard the ER doc state that this was the worst he had seen. I was thankful for the serious drugs that **numbed the effect of that statement**.

But when the orthopedic surgeon visited us the next day, he assured me that, although mine was bad, **he had done surgeries like this before**. He knew what to do.

*The same is true with our brokenness and  
God's experience as the great physician:  
We aren't the first or the only or the worst He's seen  
and He knows what to do.*

I'm thankful for the honest transparency of Scripture that bears witness to the spiritual failures and emotional weaknesses of the heroes of the faith, as well as God's response to them.

Even before Peter denied Him, Jesus predicted Satan's sifting, and told Peter that **WHEN** (*not if*) [Peter turned again](#), he would **strengthen his brothers**. (Luke 22:31)

David's sin led him to the place where he cried out to God, "*Restore to me the joy of your salvation,*" noting that his sins were ever before him, and begging the Lord to "*Let the bones which you have broken rejoice.*" (Psalm 51:12, 3, 8)

God did restore his heart and now it is the **writings of David that we turn to in our own times of brokenness**.

After experiencing victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah's next stop was discouragement and depression.

One day he was on the mountaintop and the next he was in the **wilderness, begging God to take his life**.

But instead, God fed his needs, came to him in a gentle whisper, and gave him a new assignment.



**It is a myth that good Christians don't get down.**  
Scripture testifies differently and also records  
that God doesn't get down on you because you are down.  
But He will allow you to feel the depth of your brokenness  
if it is the result of sin or self-inflicted distance.

And that's why the second thing I learned is so important.

---

## ***2. Don't wait to get healed before seeking the doctor***

It would have been ridiculous to have waited to go to the ER until my ankle was better.

But isn't that so often what we do with our spiritual needs? We think we have to get ourselves cleaned up, doctor the broken places, and present a healthy soul for a sun-bathed time of prayer and worship.

***But prayer is especially for those who don't have their act together.  
Prayer doesn't work because you are good; it works because God is good.  
God listens to desperate people in desperate situations,  
even if the crisis is because of their own choices.***

Someone needs to hear this because darkness has settled in your heart and you've turned your back on things you know you should do and maybe even sought solace in things you shouldn't. You need to know that ***you can't sink so low that your words can't get up to God.***

Psalm 103 records so much about God's understanding of who we are and His faithful, redeeming, forgiving nature. And I love this reminder:  
*"The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.  
For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust."*  
(Psalm 103:13-14)

### ***He remembers we are only dust.***

He's not surprised that you are weak and if sin has played any part in it, He is THE ONE:  
*"... who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion..."* (Psalm 103:3-4)

### ***God is in the pit-redeeming business.***

So right now.

Right where you are.

In the middle of your pit, with all your scars,  
oozing infections, and even self-inflicted wounds.

Turn yourself over to the only one who can make it right.  
***You don't have to "get right" before turning back to God.***

Redeeming your wrong, strengthening you to do right,  
and even giving your soul the capacity  
to bless Him with all that is within you  
is what He does best and what He desires to do most.

### *3. Continue to follow the course of treatment, even when it doesn't feel good*

Once the broken places were stabilized, it was time to start the long road of physical therapy. PT was not a quick fix.

And often, the exercises and treatment caused scar tissue to flare and I limped out in more pain than when I limped in.

If I had let how I felt about it all dictate whether or not I showed up to the clinic each day, I would have stayed in bed.

**For the believer who is broken, the most important therapy is the Word of God.**

But during a dark season, you may not feel like the Word is enough.

You may have even decided it's not working or it's not relevant.

Or you are just so exhausted from the weight of the darkness that you don't feel like opening your Bible.

Perhaps because of sin, the Truth may cause scar tissue to flare and that's never comfortable.

This is where the rubber meets the road and you see the admonition that “*feelings follow correct behaviors and not the other way around*” play out before your very eyes.

Eleven times in Psalm 119,  
the author references God's Word “reviving” him (NASB).

Other versions translate it as “give me life,”

“preserve my life,”

“spare,” “restore,” “renew.”

Pick a translation.

The concept is the same.

***The Word of God is ground zero for life.***

But just like therapy, it's not necessarily a quick fix.

You won't open your Bible feeling sad and then close it feeling glad.

Being transformed by the Word takes time.

During my six months of physical therapy, there were many days when I showed up simply because of the relationship with my doctor and his team. They became my friends and ministered to my heart as well as my limbs.

This is why returning to a relationship with your Great Physician is so vital to all aspects of recovery.

When you are stumbling through a dark season, you cannot rely on how you feel to determine if you should keep doing what you know has been prescribed. Trust Him to help you recover.

*Make your first prayer of the day,  
“God, give me a passion for your Word.”  
It is a prayer He answers every. single. time.*

---

#### *4. Sometimes the only treatment for infection is to cut it out*

Early into my recovery, I developed an infection at the surgical site. At first, we thought antibiotics had cured it, but it returned.

When it did, my entire foot was now at risk.

This was serious and required a second surgery.

I came out of that surgery with a hole in my ankle.

My surgeon wasn't messing around this time. Every single bit of infected tissue (and more to be safe) was gone.

I think you can complete the analogy.

**Some things can't be doctored – they have to be removed.**

And if you need to get help removing it, don't wait any longer.

This is serious and you can't mess around.

#### *5. Setbacks are a normal part of forward progress and healing*

Four months after the accident, I was sitting in my surgeon's office reporting in on how well I was doing.

Before the week had passed, I couldn't walk without pain, and when it didn't get better after two weeks, there I was again.

Staring at my surgeon and demanding answers.

All he could say was, *“Setbacks are a normal part of the healing process. I was hoping you wouldn't experience this, but it's actually not uncommon.”*

I lost it. I was so over this forward-backward business.

I was tired of therapy and tired of this doctor.

**I just wanted to be healed. For good.**

Can you relate?

Two steps forward — three steps back may be a catchy phrase, but when you are walking through the dark valley, you want out ... and anytime spent in backward motion is demoralizing and the discouragement can affect you exponentially.



When I limped back to my therapy team,  
they consoled me by reminding me of how far I had come compared to where I started.  
**Yes, I wasn't as far along as I had been,  
but thank God, I was further along then when I began.**

The same is true for whatever setback you may experience as you cooperate with your Healer to mend your broken spirit or recover from the sin that so easily besets. ***You may continue to stumble, but you don't have to fall again.***

*"The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him;  
though he may stumble, he will not fall,  
for the Lord upholds him with his hand."  
(Psalm 37:23)*

---

## ***You will get up and you will walk again***

The Greek word "***katartizo***" is translated in multiple ways.  
It is used both literally and figuratively to describe ***mending that which is broken***.  
It carries the idea of equipping, adjusting, preparing, and even restoring a person in error.

It is the word used to speak of the disciples mending their nets (Mt. 4:21) and then Peter uses it to describe the after effects of suffering (perfect).

*"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you."* (1 Peter 5:10)

**It is no small thing that this one word covers all these concepts.**

God is the perfect creator-healer, who can mend a broken bone, restore a downcast spirit, and adjust a wayward heart ... all with one word.

**Your fall doesn't get the final word on your life.**

All through Scripture we see that restoration after failure leads to encouragement for others.

He will do the same for you.  
**He will replace the weakness with strength.**  
You will be stronger in the broken places  
and as you then testify of His sustaining grace,  
your walk – even if it is with a limp —  
will lead others back to Him.

*He will replace the **weakness** with strength  
You will be **stronger** in the **broken places**  
and as you then **testify** of His **sustaining grace**,  
your walk  
— even if it is with a limp —  
will lead others back to Him.*