



God
Meets
Us In
Desperate
Places

by: Carol Gilham



Real Life
mommy

REALLIFEMOMMY.ORG

God Meets Us In _____ Desperate Places

by: Carol Gilham

As you begin this journey, know that I've already prayed and poured over this devotional and every single person who goes through it. I believe with all of my heart that God will use it to speak life, encouragement and healing into your life. I'd suggest buying a journal to use as you go through these next ten days. Spend time at the end of each day writing out your prayers, feelings and thoughts to God, being vulnerable and He will meet you there.

Here are a few tips for journaling if you've never done it before:

- Use your journal as a way to write down your thoughts and prayers to God each day.
- There's no specific way to do this, just write as much or as little as you want.
- Start out thanking God for all He has given you; gratitude always helps me talk to God.
- Write out a phrase or Scripture that stood out to you that day.
- Tell God how it made you feel, be honest and authentic.
- Your journaling should be personal, between you and God, so make a vow that you and your husband will never read one another's journals. That way you can always be completely real and raw.

Day 1: Lean in.

Read: Psalms 34

**“THE LORD IS NEAR TO THE BROKENHEARTED
AND SAVES THE CRUSHED IN SPIRIT.”**

After a year of marriage, we found out unexpectedly that I was pregnant. We were excited that it happened so quickly and so easily. We were ignorantly blissful about the process of trying to conceive and having a healthy baby. At our 18-week appointment, we found out our baby girl had a severe neural tube defect and wouldn't make it full-term or even outside the womb at all. We were devastated to say the least. We made the gut-wrenching decision to early induce. After healing a bit from that experience, we started frantically trying again because I wanted a do-over. I wanted to make it right and have a healthy baby. I remember not being mad at God and just accepting it as something we had to go through because I knew He would redeem it.

We got pregnant again, and I thought, “This is it!” This is where He redeems our pain with a perfect, healthy baby.” Six weeks later, I miscarried and I was finally angry. I couldn't understand why God would let us go through this pain again. I couldn't understand why or how He could do this to us if He loved us. But I remember someone at work told me, “Lean in, Carol. Be mad at God, that's okay, but be mad WITH Him. Don't push Him away. As hard as it is, lean in.”

So today as we start this journey, decide to lean in. You can be angry, sad or frustrated with your situation, or even with God. This is a real relationship and He knows all of your thoughts and feelings anyway. So take some time to share your real feelings with Him today. All throughout the Psalms, David shared his true feelings with God. So today, take some time to write it out. Pray your frustrations to Him. He's there with you, and He loves you with an unconditional love. We don't understand why He allows these things to happen, but I can tell you this, in His perfect timing, He WILL redeem it. Our job is to just lean in to Him even when it's painful.

Day 1

Prayer Moment:

1. Sometimes it's hard to draw close to God when we're angry or confused. It always helps me to start out in thanksgiving. Write down a list of things that you are thankful for (i.e. His grace, your spouse, your home, your job). Thank God for His grace and mercy; thank God for the things He has provided in your life. Somehow thankfulness always seems to usher me into His presence in a real and authentic way, even when I don't feel like drawing near.

2. Be honest with God. Take some time to tell Him how you really feel. He already knows and just wants you to draw close. On a separate piece of paper, write down your deepest, darkest feelings, fears and emotions around your situation. Then tell them to God, maybe even pray or read them out loud. Once you've done that, lay the paper "at His feet" and tear the paper up, giving those fears and those emotions over to God. You may have to give God these fears and emotions every day until He heals your heart, but that's okay. He will give you the strength each new morning.

Pray something like this: *God, I'm heartbroken, desperate and angry. I feel ashamed and guilty. I don't know where to go from here or how I will get through this, but I'm asking you to take away these feelings of anxiety, guilt and hopelessness. I lay them at your feet and pray you will bring a peace to me today that surpasses all of my understanding.*

Day 2: It's okay to not be okay.

.....
Read: Romans 8

“LIKEWISE THE SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR WEAKNESS. FOR WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT, BUT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF INTERCEDES FOR US WITH GROANINGS TOO DEEP FOR WORDS.”

One of the hardest parts of the trying to conceive journey or going through the loss of a baby is that it's a very lonely place to be. You feel like no one understands you. You feel like even God has abandoned you or angry with Him for allowing it. You feel like you're experiencing pain, while the rest of the world just goes on. I had so many well-intentioned people say the dumbest things to me, and had more than a few people tell me how I should be feeling or mourning. But I'm here to tell you that it's okay to not be okay today. It's okay to be angry, it's okay to cry or mourn. It's okay to not want to leave the house, or even to throw yourself into work because that's how you are coping. One thing I learned in going through all of the things we did is that it's okay to be in a season of "not okay" because one day you will wake up and be yourself again. One day you will heal from this, and one day you will laugh and feel joyful again. In the midst of pain, we wonder how we'll ever be okay, so in this season or this moment, just know that the Holy Spirit is interceding for you. In times when you feel so lost or alone that you don't even have the strength to pray, or you don't even have the words to pray, the Holy Spirit is fighting for you. In those times where you're feeling broken, the Holy Spirit is praying for you, groans too deep for words. God knows what you need, and He's already meeting you there in this moment.

Rest in that today, that even when you don't feel like it, God is carrying you through this painful season.

Day 2

Prayer Moment:

When we go through something like this, it creates a lot of guilt, shame, expectations, anger and confusion in our hearts.

Write down those feelings in your journal. Do you feel ashamed or guilty? Do you feel like you need a do-over or like you need to control the situation? Do feel alone or suffocated by other people's expectations? Write those things down.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." So take a moment to be still. Ask God to help you release those feelings of guilt and shame. Ask God to help you release any expectations you have about what you need to DO to feel better. God is working in and through this already and just wants you to rest and heal while He works.

Day 3: You are not alone or broken.

Read: Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28

“FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU,” DECLARES THE LORD, PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE.”

Yes, we're all broken in the Gospel sense of the word. We all are broken and in need of a Savior. But, YOU are not broken because of your infertility or your loss of a baby. Because my husband and I are so open with our story, I now know more women who have experienced some sort of trouble conceiving or had a miscarriage than women who have not. The thing about this kind of pain is that you feel ashamed so no one talks about it. You feel alone and you feel shame because this is something our bodies, as women, are just supposed to do. We feel as if there's something wrong with us, when in reality, SO many people have been through the same things you have. We long for that child, so all we see on social media are people getting pregnant. But, what we don't see is how they got to that place. We don't see the multiple miscarriages. We don't see the second round of IVF that got them to that point. Social media being our highlight reel tends to drag us further into this feeling that we are alone or broken somehow. But I'm here to tell you that you are not alone. You are not broken. 100% of the women who have shared their stories of infertility or loss with me have gone on to have beautiful children, whether through childbirth or adoption. These desires to be a mommy are GOOD desires from God. We have them for a purpose because God IS preparing us to be a mother, in His perfect timing. In our experience, if we had never suffered the loss we did, we wouldn't be the parents we are today for our child. The pain we went through drew us closer to God, strengthened our marriage, and made us better parents to the child He knew we would have one day.

So rest in the fact that He has a good and perfect plan for you. His timing is never our timing, but His plans are ALWAYS better than our plans. It's only in hindsight that we can see Him working through our pain, but we just have to trust Him in it.

Day 3

Prayer Moment:

Take some time to pray about the future you want to have, whether that is healing from a miscarriage, a deep desire for a baby or to expand your family. Pray specifically for those things, write them down and read them out loud to God, because even with a tiny bit of faith, God will work in all things, even tragedy, for our good and His glory. Write down someone's name to whom you will reach out to today.

Day 4: God meets us in desperate places.

Read: Ephesians 3

“...THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD. NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO DO FAR MORE ABUNDANTLY THAN ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER AT WORK WITHIN US...”

Desperation has a way of bringing us to God like nothing else in this world. God is a good Father who allows us to go through trials to draw us closer to Him, our only real source of life and hope. In my experience, every time I've been desperate for God, desiring something completely out of my control, having to wait on something I've longed for or experienced an immense amount of pain, God was preparing me for something great, something for my good and His glory. I heard a quote once that left a mark on my soul, "When God has an impossible task to accomplish, he finds an impossible person and crushes them. So leave room for the crushing. In every great work of God, brokenness and failure are necessary." (Chuck Swindoll) Wow. That's a prayer I would NEVER pray for myself or anyone I love, but man, I've seen it to be true in my own life. It gives me a great sense of peace, power and purpose. God meets us in these desperate places, He doesn't take us here and leave us here alone. He deepens our faith, and it's in these times when we realize that our circumstances don't dictate our joy.

Our circumstances will always change, but His love for us never does even if we don't feel it. God's faithful love is unchanging and unconditional. It's hard for us to understand this truth because we look at it from our human perspective. But what God is allowing you to go through right now will one day be the thing you look back on, thanking God. It's hard in the moment, but it's always in hindsight when we realize His plans are always better than our plans, and His timing is always better than our own. He wants something so much more for you than you could even ask or think, so rest in that today, and have hope that He will redeem it.

Day 4

Prayer Moment:

God, I acknowledge that you never change and your love for me is unconditional. I believe that despite my circumstances you love me more than I could ever imagine. You are faithful to me even when I am not faithful, and you have and will always provide. I'm praying today that you remind me of that and give me a hope for the future you have for me.

Day 5: Isolation.

Read: 1 Peter 5:6-11, Romans 12:9-21

“YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR.”

This place can be a very lonely. Going through the trials of life makes us feel like no one really understands. Our world seems to be falling apart, or even standing still when you're wishing it to move forward, but everyone else just keeps on living. It's easy in these moments to isolate ourselves from others. But it's in these moments of pain or longing when we need others more than ever. God created us for community, and a part of loving one another isn't just in the happy times of life, it's in the moments when we're hurting. Pastor Joby Martin once said, "Friends are like a bank account, if you don't invest in it before you need it, then you won't have it when you do need it." Whether you're going through something hard or not, invest in your friendships, those people who point you to Christ and point you to hope. You need people praying for you when you don't feel like you can pray yourself. You need people to cry and laugh with you. You need to let others in to your pain because that's how God created this family of believers.

Isolation not only leaves us alone in our pain, it's also a vulnerable place to be when you have an enemy who wants to steal, kill and destroy. If "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour," then who do you think the enemy attacks first? The one on the outside of the herd. When we're hurting and in pain, that's when we need a body of believers to draw us in and protect us when we don't have the strength. Who do you have in your life who will pray for you, hold you accountable, cry with you or hold you up when you feel like you can't stand? Make the decision to reach out to one person like that today. Be vulnerable and trust God to provide.

Day 5

Prayer Moment:

Take a moment to pray about your circle of friends. Pray for God to give you the strength to reach out or for God to provide someone or even a group of people to hold you up when you feel like you can't on your own. Pray for the opportunity to be vulnerable, and for God to surround you with the people you need to feel encouraged and not alone. God created you for community, especially in difficult times.

Day 6: To the husbands.

.....
Read: Psalm 40

"I WAITED PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD; HE TURNED TO ME AND HEARD MY CRY. HE LIFTED ME OUT OF THE SLIMY PIT, OUT OF THE MUD AND MIRE; HE SET MY FEET ON A ROCK AND GAVE ME A FIRM PLACE TO STAND."

When I look back on our painful situation, one thing that I knew we had to include in this devotional is a message to the husbands. For this day, ask your husband to read this message and use the Prayer Moment to pray with him.

This time of waiting, pain or loss is just as confusing and painful for you as it is your wife. You probably struggle with what to say or how to fix the situation. And I'm here to say that more than any other time in your life, now is the time to reassure your wife that she is more than enough. Going through a loss or not being able to conceive brings a lot of shame to a woman, feeling like she can't do the one thing she's supposed to do. So the one thing that helped me so much was my husband simply telling me that I was enough for him. He sat me down and said no matter what, if we never have any other kids, he is okay with that because he chose me. I can't tell you how reassuring that was even though we both knew we wanted children. And in times you want to say the right thing but don't have the words, just hold her. Just be there for her and listen no matter how many times she wants to say it. Also, it's okay for you to be mourning the loss of a child, the loss of the plans and future you saw for your family or be frustrated with the waiting. Be intentional about drawing close to God, even if you're angry with Him. He's the only source of life and hope, and you need to be filled up more than ever so that you can be a steady stronghold for your wife when she can't stand. Make sure you have friends in your life with whom you can be completely honest. You need friends with whom you can be authentic and broken, as well as friends who will point you to hope when you need it most. Be intentional about reaching out to that one guy friend, your mentor, your parents, whoever it is that you can be honest with and ask them to pray for you and pray with you. You and your wife will mourn or cope differently, and that's

Day 6

okay. But through God and your support network, you can be strong when she's weak. If she needs space, give her that, but don't leave her alone or let her isolate herself. If she needs more attention, be intentional about loving her well in this season. There will come a time when you need her just as much as she needs you now, and she will remember the grace and love you showed her during this time. Now more than ever is the time to draw close to one another, communicate freely about your feelings, and pray together.

Prayer Moment:

Take some time to pray out loud or write out your real feelings to God. I know this may be hard, but it's important for you to process too. Pray for your wife because she may not feel like she can pray right now. Lastly, reach out to someone who you can be authentic with.

God, I need you. I need you to fill me up in this season so that I can be there for my wife. Begin the process of healing in us both and give me the words to say to speak life and hope into her. Give me discernment in how I can love her better in this season. Even when we're angry and don't understand, redeem this and bring us through it. We know that we will look back on this time and see your hand in it. For we know that God works in ALL things for the good of those who love Him.

Day 7: Your marriage.

.....
Read: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

“...TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE, BECAUSE THEY HAVE A GOOD REWARD FOR THEIR TOIL. FOR IF THEY FALL, ONE WILL LIFT UP HIS FELLOW. BUT WOE TO HIM WHO IS ALONE WHEN HE FALLS AND HAS NOT ANOTHER TO LIFT HIM UP.”

We all experience the pain or loss differently, and God made women and men very differently as well. This means that we probably feel the same pain or longing, but may react to it or cope in other ways. Because of this a wedge or distance can grow between you and your spouse, making you feel even more alone. In a time when it's very easy to isolate yourself from everyone, including your spouse, it's more important than ever to draw close to one another. A few things helped me when we were going through our three years of loss and waiting: Tell your spouse it's okay for him to mourn the loss of your child or long for the baby too. Take some time to listen to him and his feelings even if it's hard. Ask your husband how you can pray for them that day. You may feel you're hurting more, but marriage is about dying to ourselves, and oftentimes, we find peace and comfort in taking our eyes off of our own pain and setting them on caring for someone else's needs. Praying for one another can bridge the distance so that you can better be there for each other. Even when it's hard, especially when you don't feel like it, take some time to pray together to God about your situation. Don't worry about using fancy words or the right words, just both of you lay your heart at God's feet and be honest together. When two or more gather in His name, He is there in supernatural ways. So draw close together so that He can draw close to you both. I remember a time when I was angry with my husband because I didn't think he was as sad or hurt as I was. I had to pray through that and realize that he was just coping in a different way than I was, and that's okay. He also might not know the best way to be there for you, so maybe tell him what you need. And more than ever, give each other grace because you're both going through this together and you need each other.

Day 7

Prayer Moment:

Pray together: *God, in a time when it's easy for us to grow distant, draw us close to you and draw us close to one another. We NEED you, God. We're desperate for you to show up, heal our hearts, give us hope and redeem this for our good and your glory. God, help us to love one another better. Show us how to be there for one another, and surround us both with people who can speak life into us when we don't feel like we can stand. We don't understand why this is happening, but give us peace that surpasses all understanding because you are all we need. And God, give us peace and comfort in the waiting especially, and we pray boldly for the children we will have one day too. Thank you for meeting us right where we are.*

Day 8: Tiny faith in a big God.

Read: Matthew 17:20

“...FOR TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, IF YOU HAVE FAITH LIKE A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED, YOU WILL SAY TO THIS MOUNTAIN, ‘MOVE FROM HERE TO THERE,’ AND IT WILL MOVE, AND NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU.”

Sometimes life throws us so many curveballs that we lose faith. It's hard for us to believe that God will come through or answer our prayers. Matthew 17:20 is the verse that got me through my pregnancy with our daughter, Kennedy. I remember saying, praying, probably every day, that given my past experience, I didn't think this pregnancy could result in a healthy baby. BUT, with a tiny bit of faith, I could believe that even if my body wasn't capable, God could do ALL things. He can move mountains, raise people from the dead, and He could knit together a perfect baby despite my own inadequacy. That tiny bit of faith helped me carry on throughout nine months. Then, through sharing our story, our faith spread far and wide, giving other people hope. And because of what God did in our lives, our faith has grown immensely because we've seen Him answer our prayers time and time again, even when they were hard to believe. Now, I know it's easier to say than put into practice. Mark 9:24 says, "Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe; help my unbelief!'" Our pastor often points out that every word in Scripture is important, and God wanted this specific sentence added so that in times when it's hard to believe, we can STILL believe that God can do all things. He can answer that prayer you've been praying so long that you want to give up. He can answer that prayer that seems impossible right now. So, if all it requires for God to move in our lives is just a tiny bit of faith, then why aren't we praying boldly for these desires God has put on our hearts? So pray expectantly even in your unbelief. Take next steps of faith, picking up your tiny bit of faith, and moving forward today. All throughout the Psalms, David shared his true feelings with God.

Day 8

Prayer Moment:

Write this Scripture down on a sticky note or a notecard and place it somewhere you see everyday.

God, I feel broken and my faith has been shattered. But, I believe you are who you say you are, and that you love me. I'm praying that even with a tiny bit of faith, you can and will do amazing things to redeem this in my life, for my good and for your glory.

Day 9: Casting out fear.

Read: 1 John 4:7-21

**“THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE, BUT
PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR..”**

I love the quote, “The opposite of faith isn’t doubt, it’s fear.” When we’re going through something hard, it’s easy to feel like God doesn’t love us or we’re being punished. After having our third pregnancy not work out and my husband being hospitalized for a serious illness I remember literally crying out and asking God if He actually loved us. I told Him that I needed to know again that He loved Daniel and Carol. And on top of feeling this way, I also felt like we were being punished somehow. Even though I knew the truth, that this was not how God works, I still felt like I had surely done something to deserve this pain.

But, like I said before, it’s only in hindsight that I could see that He allowed these things BECAUSE He loved us. Understanding how much God loves us, and understanding God’s character helps us understand that God has the whole world in His hands even when it feels out of control, and because of His love for us, there’s nothing to fear. God doesn’t change and His love isn’t based on our faithfulness. Because of what Christ did on the cross, we’ve been redeemed. Jesus took our ultimate punishment and now we’re free to live for Him. So, the punishment has already been paid. When we go through trials, we don’t always understand the why on this side of heaven, but we can trust that He is a good Dad, He loves us, and He will bring good from our pain, for us and for His glory.

Day 9

Prayer Moment:

God, if I'm honest, I'm fearful. I don't know how this will all work out. I'm trying to control things that are simply out of my control. I relinquish these fears to you and lay them at your feet. I will do this every day when I start to become fearful again. God, I trust you, I know that you love me and have an amazing plan for me. Help me remember today and every day how deep your love is for me, and how much you want good things for me, not just in heaven, but on this earth also.

Day 10: He will redeem it.

.....
Read: Romans 5:3-5

“NOT ONLY THAT, BUT WE REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERING, KNOWING THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES ENDURANCE, AND ENDURANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER, AND CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE...”

“Our real blessings often appear to us in the shape of pains, losses and disappointments; but let us have patience and we soon shall see them in their proper figures.” (Joseph Addison)

I just recently heard this quote and thought what an amazing way to end these 10 days. After one loss of a child, multiple miscarriages and my husband’s health issues, I needed God to redeem our situation. I needed to know that one day we would wake up with joy in our hearts again. I needed to know He would bring good from our tragedy, from our waiting and loss. During that time, I felt crushed and broken, I felt worn. But, now that we are through it, I realized how God was strengthening and preparing us. Through the pain, God was teaching us that even when we feel crushed, we can feel joy because Jesus is all that we need. My husband and I wouldn’t have the kind of marriage we have today if we had not gone through it all, and because of it, we are better parents now to our miracle baby. In the moment, the crushing feels suffocating and you can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel, but in reality, God is preparing you for something more than you could ever ask or think. Every one of the stories I’ve heard of people going through this kind of waiting or loss has a story of redemption. Each one went on to become parents and oftentimes the pain they felt became a ministry God is now using. Even when it’s difficult, we can have hope because He is a good, good Father who loves us more than we can ever imagine. He has a good and perfect plan, in His timing, and will redeem the pain for your good and His glory. It may not look like what you thought it would look like, or actually I’m betting it won’t look anything like you thought, but He will redeem your situation in so many more ways than you knew possible. Going through trials increases our faith because we can look back on these times and see how God met us there, how He provided and how He got us

Day 10

through it. As you end this devotional, I hope above all you have drawn close to our only real source of life and hope, Jesus. I hope He has reminded you of how much He loves you, and how much He will bring joy from the brokenness of this world. I hope He reminded you that He will bring beauty from our ashes. I hope you are filled with comfort and hope for the future I know He has for you.

Prayer Moment:

Because of this truth, we can pray expectantly for the things we desire. Pray boldly for those things you want so much. It's not a bad desire to become a mother or to hold a baby in your arms. Take some time to pray that despite your doubt, despite your fears, that He will provide. It may not look like what you want or think, but I can promise you that it will be even better. Pray that God will use your pain to speak life into someone else who needs it. Pray that you can look back on this and see all God was preparing you for. Pray for God to give you a sense of hope and joy for all He has in store.



Real Life
mommy

REALLIFEMOMMY.ORG