

Running on Empty

Drained. Sapped. Empty. Whatever adjective you'd like to use...the message is the same—we're *running on empty*. We find ourselves depleted of hope because life just isn't meeting our expectations. We've exhausted ourselves seemingly to the point of no return. In our efforts to "press in" and "press on," we seek God, yet we find our faith is debilitated because we simply haven't been filling our time with His presence. When we cry out, "Where is God?" we find that He is there...He's been there all along...*it's where we've been that's the begging question.*

Life is able turn in an instant. We can be filled with joy and peace one moment, only to be consumed with deep sorrow and despair in the next. We can find ourselves in a position before God where we're too discouraged to kneel in prayer, much less lift our hands in praise. (Psalm 38:13-14 NIV) Our spirit becomes so vacant that we simply have nothing to say. We're desperate to be filled; to have the joy that comes from unwavering faith, the peace that comes from trusting in a loving sovereign God, and the rest that comes from knowing that God is with us always. In the darkest valleys of life, we cling to our faith with little hope.

But see, we *walk* by faith...which means our faith *moves*—it requires action. It is the *Spirit of God* that meets us in the darkest places in life and who will "fill up" our spirits and revive our souls. But, as He helps us, there are four ways in which He will invite our faith to work. God invites *you* to:

- 1) Examine your heart.** (2 Corinthians 3:5) We think of "sin" in terms of what we call the "big ones." Those sins such as murder and adultery; the "fleshly" sins. These sins are easy to point the finger at because they're easy to see. But the sins we *don't* see are the ones that can go unnoticed and will seriously hinder our fellowship with God. The Spirit of God wants to uncover and reveal to you those areas where there is bitterness, unforgiveness, or pride. As those dark struggles are brought to light, ask God to work in and through you to bring your heart into His will.
- 2) Renew your mind.** (Romans 12:1) As the Spirit of God begins to reveal the areas in your heart that are in desperate need of repair, He will move you to renew your mind. Our mind holds incredible power and where our mind is, there our heart is also. So, we have to *begin thinking about what we're thinking about*. Are they thoughts that are aligned with God's will? How much time are we spending filling our mind with God's Truth? If we do not focus on what is true, there are a million and one lies in any given day that will cast us relentlessly into despair. As we renew our mind in God's Word, hope overflows.

- 3) Check your motives.** (1 John 5:14-15) At times when we're calling out to God, we feel as though our prayers are simply falling on deaf ears. But through our knowledge of Truth, we know for certain that He hears us. (Jeremiah 33:3, Isaiah 59:1) Yet, we're also told to pray according to *His will*. Although we may not know God's will in a particular situation, we can rely on the Spirit to go to the Father for us...if we come to Him with a humble heart and ready to accept that His way is always best. If our intentions are selfish, we end up back at STEP 1 because God still has work to do in us. God is always at work. Thank heavens He never slumbers!
- 4) Focus on Him.** (Psalm 25:15) Too often, as we come before God in prayer, in our most hopeless situations, we're focused on our wants and desires and we lose focus of God and His purposes for our trials. If we're not focused on God, we're allowing our emotions to take precedence over our faith in God. The secret to victorious faith is to dwell on God's ability to handle our problems. We will only find true peace and joy if we *completely surrender* to His will...trusting that *His way is always the best way*.

Lord God, when all my strength is gone, it is You that I will run to. As I throw myself helplessly at Your throne of grace, I ask You to fill me with Your love, mercy, grace, and Truth. Do a work in me that will lift me from the pit of despair and raise me up to give You glory through my trials of life. When all hope is gone, I will refocus my heart and place all of my hope in You. I will cling to the hope that comes through trusting in You alone, for I know that the true hope I have in You will never disappoint me. Heavenly Father, You are all I need whenever I am in need. It is Your joy that is my strength. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.