

Chapter One

From Problems to Promises

What problems are you facing today? Do you feel overwhelmed and discouraged? Do you feel like there is no answer to your problem or that God isn't listening to you? Did you know that the man after God's own heart felt that way too? Listen to David's heart cry in Psalm 69:1-3:

Save me, O God, for the waters have threatened my life. I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched; my eyes fail while I wait for my God.

I too, have allowed my problems to become my focus and have felt such a heaviness that stayed with me like a dark cloud blotting out the sun in my life. I couldn't see any good that God was doing, only the pain of my situation

and the hopeless feeling of not understanding what God was allowing. I've been betrayed by a close friend, hurt deeply by a relative, lied about in ministry, called to leave places I loved to obey God, suffered prolonged serious illnesses and so on... but through it all, I always had a choice to believe God's promise that "All things work together for good to them that love God..." (Romans 8:28a) or to focus on my problems and live by my negative feelings.

I was meeting with a woman recently who told me that she wakes up each morning and feels overwhelmed and depressed before she even gets out of bed because she thinks of all the problems and difficult circumstances in her life and she can hardly face the day. I asked her if she had ever played with one of those large magnets when she was a child. She said she had and I asked her what happened when the magnet was close to paper clips or pins? She responded that it drew them to it immediately and they clung to it. I then told her that our minds are like that magnet. God has given us the free will to focus on what we choose to, but so often, we attract the negatives in our lives because we spend our time thinking on them. You see, we can choose to be a magnet for good or evil thoughts in our minds. The choice is up to us! I've had to practice that over and over and over as I've had to leave unkind or untrue words in God's hands and focus on the truth of God's word in every situation.

This past year, I had the great privilege of traveling to a foreign country to speak at a retreat for Arab world missionaries. I was humbled, grateful and excited about this ministry opportunity but as the trip grew closer, I began to feel overwhelmed and discouraged. I had been traveling

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for months already and was weary and didn't want to leave my dear husband again and travel so far away. I knew God had called me to do this, I knew it was the right thing to do, I knew God would see me through and yet...my mind kept focusing on the loneliness of the 10 days away, the difficulty of traveling so far, the unknown problems, my own weariness and all I'd be missing at home. You see, I had become a magnet for all the negatives involved in this trip and those thoughts spiraled me into discouragement.

I had only been home 5 days from a previous retreat and had to leave the next day for Amsterdam. I knew I had to get my heart in line with God's plan for me, so I sat in my family room and cried out to God. I told Him my deepest feelings and asked Him to replace those feelings with His joy and a renewed heart to serve Him. As I sat there quietly waiting on Him, He so lovingly brought to my mind that Jesus had left His home...not for 10 days or a few months, but for 33 years...for me! I was so overwhelmed with that thought that tears filled my eyes as I began to reflect on all Jesus went through on this earth for me and how he left all the comforts of "His home" just to save me, an unworthy child. My heart was so transformed as I felt God asking me, "Are you willing to leave for 10 more days so that others can be encouraged, renewed and refreshed by the words I've given you to share?" What a miraculous transformation took place in my heart that day! I left the next day eager, renewed and ready to serve my Savior who left all...just for me!

