

# Where does my **HELP** come from?

Psalm 121

Pastor Jim Rademaker

He must have been one of the loneliest boys in history. The family into which he was born was anything but normal. With his Dad's favoritism for one wife, and the other wife's frustrations and disappointments, with two more wives nagged in their souls because of their inferior status in the family, with grandfather's tricks and schemes, with uncle Esau's temperament and resentments, and with the motley crowd of older brothers he lived with, Joseph must often have had quite the childhood. He lost his mother when he was just a teenager, he was regarded by his brothers as father's favorite and looked upon as a "mister goody-two-shoes." (John Phillips)

The brothers saw him coming. "Hey! Guess who's coming! It's Daddy's little boy." *"Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams."* ... Judah said to his brothers, *"... Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him ... So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt."*

"God doesn't give us more than we can handle?" Ever heard that? Ever repeated that to someone else? Is that really true? I think for Joseph, this might have seemed like more than he could handle. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, what did he say? "We were never worried for a second. After all, God won't give us more than we can handle." No. He said, *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself."*

Day Camp for our children this week was about answering one question. It's the question of the psalmist, *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?* It's a question found throughout the Bible, asked in a number of different ways. "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" "Who will save me from my foe?" Maybe one you can relate to from Psalm 69: *Save me, O God! The water is up to my neck; I am sinking in deep mud, and there is no solid ground; I am out in deep water, and the waves are about to drown me. I am worn out from calling for help, and my throat is aching. I have strained my eyes, looking for your help.*

Sounds like what? God allows into our lives more than we can handle. Otherwise, why would we need any help? And so, the Psalmist writes, *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?*

The booth first appeared on March 27, 1959, and the price for advice was a nickel. In a parody of the lemonade stands which countless children have operated down through the years, Lucy operates a psychiatric booth where others come looking for help with their problems. The first time Charlie Brown goes to Lucy's booth and tells her that he has deep feelings of depression, Lucy replies, "Snap out of it, five cents please."

When the Psalmist asks, "Where does my help come from?" what's implied? Like Charlie Brown, like Joseph, like King David, he needs help. We all need help in life. No one makes it on his or her own. "Snap out of it, five cents please." If it were only that easy, we wouldn't need any help, would we? And we could save our five cents.

Joseph arrived in Egypt in chains, his high hopes shattered, his life in ruins. If anyone needed help, it was Joseph. The taunts of his brothers were still ranging in his ears. "Bye, bye Joey! Happy dreams!" What had become of those glorious dreams of his? Dreams of power, dreams of position, dreams of the resources and the riches of the world poured into his lap?

We all have dreams, don't we? Dreams of where we're going in life. Dreams of where we'd like to end up. Dreams of success, dreams of the perfect marriage, the perfect family, dreams of health and wealth and happiness. And what happens to our dreams? Too often, they vanish into thin air. Then what? Then what do we do? How do we respond? Where do we turn? *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?*

*The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.*

Who would have thought any good could possibly come out of being betrayed by your family, left in a hole to die, kidnapped and taken away from your country, sold in a foreign slave market, put in a position of great privilege

and authority - only to be falsely accused of adultery by your boss's wife and thrown into prison as an innocent man?

Joseph entered Egypt at the age of eighteen. He left at the age of one hundred ten for glory, and for eighty of the intervening years he was the highest lord of the land. God used the tests in Joseph's life to grow trust in his heart, trust that God is faithful and good, no matter what.

Can you say the same thing; that God has a purpose in your shattered dreams, that God is using your broken dreams for a purpose, something deeper and better than you can imagine? The Apostle Paul put it this way: *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

*Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* (2 Cor 12:7-10)

From *Where Does My Help Come From?* by Gloria Furman: "As I looked forward to settling into my new role as a mother, I was given a role that I didn't anticipate - caregiver for my husband. A couple of years after we got married, Dave developed a debilitating nerve condition that afflicted both of his arms. My athletic, cheerful husband became disabled and discouraged. When our first child grew past about eight pounds, it broke Dave's heart (and mine) that his chronic pain and atrophy wouldn't allow him to hold his newborn. We needed help and hope.

... We had an urgent need for practical help with daily life - extra hands around the house - and at times God did send that kind of help. At other times, God gave us the ability to simplify our routines. Sometimes God sent so much practical help our way that we felt spoiled!

The psalmist sings a question, "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?" He doesn't miss a beat and answers himself, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

My help comes from the Lord. Today, eight years after those initial dark nights, Psalm 121:1-2 tastes sweeter to me than ever before. After standing on that rock-solid truth knowing my life depended on it, it has become at once more filling, more certain, and more weighty. My husband is still disabled, and I'm still the primary caregiver for him and our four kids, but time is teaching me how sweet it is to look to Jesus for help."

How do you respond when your dreams are shattered and life doesn't go as you planned, and it never does? Where do you turn for help?

Who would have thought that any good thing could come of ... divorce ... cancer ... job loss ... a troubled childhood ... an obnoxious neighbor or coworker ... an overloaded life ... financial loss ... a million other trials? Ever need help? Of course you do? Where will you turn?

*For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.*** (2 Cor 12:8-9)

*Then Joseph said to his brothers ... I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*

God answered Joseph's cry for help in another way. He saved Joseph's family from starvation in Israel by bringing them to Egypt, and then four hundred years later bringing them back to Israel in a mighty deliverance through the Red Sea, providing bread and water in the desert, giving them victory over their enemies, sending prophets to turn their hearts back to Him, and finally, coming down to them, all the way to the cross, suffering punishment for their sin, and rising for their resurrection, for your resurrection.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?* I lift my eyes to Mount Calvary, where does my help come from? The Maker of heaven and earth. The Redeemer of heaven and earth. Your Maker, Your Redeemer.

"God doesn't give us more than we can handle." Really? Where did all of Joseph's trouble come from? Where did it start? It began with a dream of his brothers bowing down to him. God gave Joseph the dream that led to all his troubles ... and all of his great triumphs. They meant it for evil. God meant it for good.

God was working trust while Joseph was being attacked, in a hole, injured and alone, wondering, unknown ... taken into slavery into a foreign land, thrown in prison ... Where was God? He was alive and well, in the midst of Joseph's dire circumstances ... giving him more than he could handle, so that he would turn to God for help.

God's still at work today in the circumstances of our lives, when we feel like our life is stuck in a hole, when we feel surrounded on every side, when our hopes and dreams are dashed.

I'm reminded again of Abby's New Year posting: "I am not going to lie, 2016 wasn't a great year. It was a hard year filled with things I never thought would become my reality. It made me face my fears, figure out who I am, love myself, learn to fight harder than I thought I could, and Most of all love God.

Not that any of the things I just listed were 2016 working in my life, they were God. 2016 was the year for God and me. He did all those things for me and has drawn me closer to Him than I ever knew I would be.

It kills me to say this, but I have to admit it: I am thankful for these experiences. If it weren't for God giving them to me I wouldn't be as close to Him."

You and I were created for a purpose – to live as God's children in relationship with Him, a relationship of total dependence and trust, a relationship where we grow in our love for Him – as we experience His love for us.

Day Camp for our children this week, was about answering one question. *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? The answer? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

*The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.*

The gospel, the Good News, is not a promise that all our problems in this life will be solved—or that we will never face anything beyond our ability to bear. The gospel, the Good News, is all about Jesus. He is everything we need. He is our only hope. Our loving heavenly Father often allows us to be burdened beyond our ability in order to deepen our dependence upon Christ, who is our true strength. He may even bring us to despair of life itself, so that we might find the comfort and strength of resting on the One who raises the dead. (Scott Churnock)

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ... What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?*

*... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:28-39)*