

I've Hit Rock Bottom ... Now What?

We live in a "perfect" world ... If we believe social media. Everyone looks perfect. Never a wrinkle. Every location looks perfect. Never a cloud.

Life, however, isn't perfect. At least mine hasn't been.

In 2007, I had to have emergency surgery. After opening me up and finding out that things were very bad, I had the worst parts snipped out. And then spent a solid month in the ICU, trying first to just survive, then trying to recover.

We are not meant for laying in bed for a month. My weight went from 175 pounds down to 135 pounds. What muscle I had slowly disappeared.

When I was finally able to begin rehab, I was excited. Finally, I'd be able to walk again.

I remember the physiotherapist asking me if I thought I could walk to the nurses' station. This was maybe 20 meters away from my bed.

20 meters? I was the guy who ran track, played hockey and ball, and even got a few tryouts for a couple of football teams after high school. 20 meters? Surely I could accomplish that simple task.

Nope. When I went to stand up, my skinny little legs began to shake. Perspiration poured off of me, and I wasn't sure that I wouldn't have a heart attack. I had to sit down after about 15 seconds. Without having taken a single step.

Not an Instagrammable moment at all.

In my weakened state, I thought that this was, perhaps, the end of my usefulness as a human being. How could I work, if my body couldn't even take a step? How could I be a husband or father?

After a lengthy rehabilitation, I was able to leave the hospital. In part, because of my experience, I was hired to be the associate pastor at the church I attended. Many of the older men were able to talk to me about losing strength and purpose, because they knew of my story.

My health sidelined me again, seven years later. After another lengthy rehab, I was able to move to Shekinah Retreat Centre and work there for another almost six years, until my health began to fail again.

I can't claim that I was the most effective person to ever be an associate pastor or executive director; however, I was able to be useful and be of service.

People often want to know how to make good decisions. The way I've discovered (the hard way) is to become more wise. How do you become more wise? You make bad decisions and try to learn from them.

Our scripture passages talk about hitting rock bottom and having life as we know it fall apart; however, it is just at these times that God is extending grace and love to us.

I don't know what you have gone through. Maybe you've had a business go under. Join the club - we should get jackets. Maybe you have lost a job and feel like things are hopeless. Maybe your health - physical, mental, or spiritual - has taken a beating and you are feeling like you may never be useful or whole again.

We always hope (assume?) that things will "go back to normal" after we have suffered any kind of defeat. This may not always be possible, in spite of social media telling us that all things are perfect.

However ... this does not mean that you are useless. Your sense of humour may still be intact. Use it. You may still be able to shake someone's hand and wish them good health. Shake it. Your very presence may allow someone to remember better times and give them a sense of peace, if only for a short while. Be there.

There is a Japanese practice called kitsugi. In it, crafts people take a broken potter dish and repair it with gold. Instead of trying to hide the fact that it was broken, the breaks are emphasized to not only make the dish usable again, but to also make it more beautiful.

Take some comfort in today's scripture:

"So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace."

And, when grace is given, when wisdom is earned, when lessons are learned, be useful and of service in whatever way you can.