

For the last several years, singing has been difficult for her. She struggles with heart failure and lack of oxygen. Her 88-year-old body often gives way to weakness, sometimes making it difficult even to stand.

Yet in the last few days, Evelyn Christenson suddenly began singing again – she says for the first time in 20 years. The Lord is strengthening her to do so, and she is amazed that she is even able to “hit the high notes.” She has been filled with joy as once again she is able to *sing praises to Jesus*. But this renewed joy and strength has not come without cost

Evelyn has been a leader in the international prayer movement for decades. She has taught men and women around the world to pray. Prayer for revival – and ultimately the salvation of the lost – has been her heart cry. She has taught on revival, prayed for revival, and even experienced revival in years past.

The Deep Valleys

Yet the last two years of Evelyn’s life have brought the deepest valleys she’s ever experienced. There have been health and family struggles, disappointments, and even moments of despair. But the Lord has shown Evelyn that ***the depth of her valley is in direct proportion to the breakthrough that is on the horizon!***

“That’s always what the valleys are for,” Evelyn explains. “Every new glory level is always preceded by a valley of trials, grief, and sacrifice. The depth of your valley is in direct proportion to the next spiritual dimension that the Lord is preparing for you.”

Evelyn keeps her eyes fixed on Jesus and the coming breakthrough on the horizon. This breakthrough is that long-awaited revival that will convict individuals and the Church of sin, and will usher many lost souls into God’s Kingdom through salvation in Jesus Christ. She is convinced this revival has already started. Although still experiencing moments of the valley, Evelyn is singing her praises to Jesus as she waits on Him.

When Darkness Overwhelms

Peter had no idea that his greatest valley of darkness was about to consume him. He was bold and confident in following Jesus, absolutely convinced that he was even willing to die for Jesus. Yet Jesus prepared Peter for his coming valley by telling Peter that he would instead deny Jesus three times that night (John 13:37-38). It was a looming dark valley that Peter could never imagine.

As Jesus was about to be arrested, Peter tried to be bold. He foolishly cut off a servant’s ear in the presence of a battalion of Roman soldiers. As long as Jesus was present, perhaps Peter thought there would be some back-up of heavenly hosts!

But when Jesus was bound and taken away, Peter’s courage began to fail. Fear overtook Peter, and he vehemently denied ever knowing Jesus. The darkness overwhelmed him as Jesus’ prophetic words rang true in Peter’s ears. Upon the realization that he had denied his deeply loved friend, Peter left the scene, crying bitterly (Luke 22:54-62). Peter must have felt utterly alone and hopeless in that moment.

Valleys are like that. They can take us to the depths of despair. They are those moments when we had hoped Jesus would triumphantly rescue us, only to have doubt and fear set in. The valleys are the times when we might wonder if Jesus is truly present or willing to answer our desperate prayers. They are dark times when we discover our only recourse is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Christ alone is our only hope.

Don’t Be Surprised

Jesus forewarned His disciples of the dark valley moments. In preparation for His death, He spoke words of hope to His followers:

“Truly, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will

grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy when you see me again. It will be like a woman experiencing the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives place to joy because she has brought a new person into the world. You have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy.

At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. The truth is, you can go directly to the Father and ask him, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy." (John 16:20-24, NLT)

Peter and the disciples should not have been surprised by the valley moments, as Jesus had taken care to prepare them. In fact, He told them that as a result, they would have a new level of access to the Heavenly Father in their prayers. He promised that their grief would turn to joy, and that they would see the purpose in their pain, just as a mother understands the place of pain in childbirth.

Yet, when the valleys overtake us – even when we know the truth of Jesus' promises to us – we can still be surprised by the intensity of the darkness and the feelings of hopelessness. Jesus knows that, and not only does He prepare us for the valleys – ***He also prays us through them!***

Jesus Intercedes for Us

Peter most likely did not realize the significance of Jesus' prayer for him. But even before Peter stepped into his dark valley, his Lord, Savior, and friend Jesus had already prayed:

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31)

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would remain strong in the midst of the valley. And when Peter repented and returned to the Lord, Jesus prayed that Peter's redemption from his valley experience would in turn bring hope and strength to other followers of Christ.

We know from the rest of Peter's life that Jesus' prayer resulted in a transformed man who fearlessly championed the cause of Christ the rest of his days. The depth of Peter's valley was in direct proportion to the breakthrough that was on the horizon!

If you are experiencing the dark valleys of despair, know that Jesus is also praying for you! The depth of your dark moment is an indicator of the greatness of the glory of Christ that will shine through you as you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. He is your personal Intercessor who pleads with God on your behalf:

But Jesus remains a priest forever; his priesthood will never end. Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save everyone who comes to God through him. He lives forever to plead with God on their behalf. (Hebrews 7:24-25)

As the world grows darker, be encouraged that Jesus is interceding for us to have the faith to keep praying and seeking Him. The darker the valleys, the greater His glory will shine in heaven-sent revival!

"Dear Heavenly Father, we praise You in the midst of the dark valleys. We believe that a day is coming when our fears will turn into courage and our doubts will be replaced with greater depths of faith in You. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for interceding on our behalf. We pray for the faith to pray toward the hope of revival and Your glorious presence in our midst. In Jesus' name, amen."

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