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**Not their real names*

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**Not their real names*



RECOVERING LOST TERRITORY

*You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will
restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of
the earth.*

—PSALM 71:20

Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.¹

—AUGUSTINE

My mother taught me never to put my elbows on the table. But there in the restaurant, I did it anyway. As I rested my forearms on the table, I leaned over my salad as if to say that the lunch part of our time together was beside the point.

My friend was as engaged as I. We talked about God's power to restore and renew. "I've seen God do amazing things in my life, but I feel as though I've only scratched the surface with what He wants to do. Do you ever feel that way?" Sheri asked.

"Yes. Absolutely!" I replied. Then I picked up a napkin and held it for Sheri to see. "Pretend this napkin represents my life. I started out with a trusting heart and a concern for other people." I tore a piece of the napkin and tossed it on the table. "But when I was a child, I learned that my grandpa died of a brain hemorrhage from a severe beating he endured in the inner city. His story and others made me afraid to go downtown."

I tore another piece. "And when I was young, teenage boys

pinned me down and took advantage of me. I lost my voice and my sense of value.” I tore another piece. “When I was young, I dreamed of using my life to help others, but then a group of older boys beat me up. That was the day my fear grew and my heart shrank.” I tore another piece of paper and tossed it on the table; it landed on my salad.

One by one, I watched pieces of my heart flutter to the table as I described to Sheri all of the painful memories that had shrunk my world. With tears streaming down my cheeks, I held up what was left of my napkin—a tiny remnant—and with a trembling voice said, “I

want my land back!

“My conviction is the size of this whole table, yet my courage is as small as this torn bit I hold in my hand. I feel a huge disconnect between what God has promised and what I experience! I was created to live an abundant life, but the Enemy has managed to lie, cheat, and steal it from me. I want my land back! And I want to help other women to recover their land and to



Follow justice and
justice alone, so that
you may live and
possess the land the
Lord your God is
giving you. (DEUTERON-
OMY 16:20 NIV)

restore their heart.”

Teary-eyed, my friend Sheri reached across the table, squeezed my arm, and said, “I don’t know what to say except this: I have to go home and spend some time with God. I too have some land to recover.”



Has the Enemy bullied you off of your “property”? Has he used intimidation to keep you from laying hold of all God has promised you? Maybe you’ve lost “land” in the area of relationships or health or finances. Maybe you’ve lost trust or peace or security. Though many believe otherwise, God cares deeply about every loss and in-

justice; He is in the restoration business. Maybe the land God wants to restore involves your identity or your ability to embrace hope.

Jesus says, “Don’t give up! I’m about to do great things in and through you! Look up! You are Mine and I love you! Keep on believing. Keep on walking!”

Put your hope in the Lord. Travel steadily along his path. He will honor you by giving you the land. You will see the wicked destroyed. (Psalm 37:34)

Has your holy tenacity waned a bit? Begin by thanking God for the blessings you enjoy and the land you currently possess. Walk the boundaries of your home and count every square inch a treasure. Look at the pictures on your wall. They’re yours. Trace the outline of the windows that allow you to look out where the birds sing and the sun shines. If you have children, place your hand on their heads and whisper a prayer of thanks. Next time you go to church, look around. Be amazed that you are free to come and go as you please.

Notice your portion of land; be thankful for it. Simply by expressing your gratitude to God out loud, you’ll bring courage to your heart and strength to your soul. When you start counting your blessings, you’ll feel the wind in your sails once again.

Always be thankful. In *every* situation. No matter how you feel at the moment, you’re always surrounded by God’s mercy and goodness. We won’t fully appreciate all these treasures until we’re in heaven, looking down on the time line of our life.

On that day, I know I’ll gasp as Jesus tells me about all of the ways He intervened on my behalf. I’ll be speechless, moved to tears by all of the times He rescued me from a sin or a scenario that could have cost me my life or my ministry.

But even now you can point to tangible ways He has worked on your behalf and say, “He did that. My God provided that for me. It’s

because of Him that I'm in this house, or that I'm married to this man, or that I still have my best friend, or that my child still lives." God has come through for you and me in ways too many to count.

Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Gratitude awakens our heart to the movement of God around us. He loves to give good gifts to His children, and He has been good to you and me.

Ask Him to awaken your heart to bigger faith and broader horizons. Pray too that He'll increase your awareness of those who need fresh faith and newfound hope. Look around. Whisper a prayer for wisdom. Open your ears. God is breathing. God is moving. And He'd love for you to join Him.

When every past hurt and offense are covered in Calvary love, victory happens. When every fear is conquered by God's perfect love, freedom happens. And when freedom happens, we live and breathe and impart freedom to almost everyone we meet.

Now look around at your sphere of influence. Do you know someone who has been bullied out of her inheritance? Or someone for whom you can stand in the gap? Write a letter, bring a meal, say a prayer, or send some money. Do something today for someone who needs an advocate.

Ask for more! Expect more! Instead of asking for a drink of water, prepare for God's raging river to sweep you off your feet and take you to your next place of promise! Please Him by raising your level of belief and expectation. May you be like a tree, planted by Living Water, bearing fruit in each season *without fail*. And may whatever you do prosper! May you be like a well-watered garden and an ever-flowing spring receiving His blessings and sending them out again (see Psalm 1 and Isaiah 58:11).



Precious Lord,

You are all I need. Forgive me for hiding, for making excuses, and for believing a lie when I should have

believed You. Give me a hunger for wholeness and restoration; help me to want it as much as You want it for me. Show me the land You want to recover for me. Give me boldness to believe that You want to increase my heart and my horizon. I know the Enemy wants to steal it from me. I will trust You, Lord, and I will not be afraid. Lead me to the next place You have for me.

And now, Lord, I pray for the twenty-seven million slaves held in captivity. Hear their cry and answer their prayers! Let them feel Your presence and bring them an advocate. For those who are in desperate need, Lord, please be their provider. And for those who put themselves in harm's way to do Your work, surround them with an abundance of protection and provision.

Finally, I ask that You would use me today. Open my eyes to the needs around me. Grant me faith to see Your Kingdom come right where I live. Lead me to those You've appointed me to bless. In Your precious name, I pray. Amen.

initiate your freedom

1. Read Psalm 37:23 and ponder its truth. God cares about every detail of your life. Have you surrendered some “land” God wants to restore? Explain.
2. Write a prayer reflecting your desire for freedom in a particular area. Find a Scripture that matches your situation; write that promise at the end of your prayer. Tuck the prayer in your Bible and come back to it again and again, bringing your request to God until freedom becomes your reality.
3. Think about a time you set a goal and worked hard to reach it. What obstacles did you overcome? Write them down. What positives came out of this challenge? Write them down. Those attributes will come in handy on this journey.
4. Ultimately God brings the victory, but we most certainly work alongside Him in this battle. That’s why He provided us with armor. Read Ephesians 6:10–18 and then reread it.
 - God gives very clear directives in this passage. List them one by one (e.g., “Be strong in the Lord’s power”).
 - Think over the various pieces of armor and list the one you’re least comfortable “wearing” (e.g., breastplate of righteousness, sword of the Spirit).
 - Time for growth! Determine to study why each piece of armor is necessary. Ask the Lord for more insight. Search the Word for His promises and provision. Educate yourself. Put on the whole armor of God!
5. Read Psalm 41:1–2. Take a minute to look inward. In what ways have you regarded the weak? Write them down. Why do you suppose God connects your concern for the weak with His promise to protect you? Share your thoughts.

“God works in wonderful ways—he chooses the weakest and does great things through them. My experience with IJM has taught me that I can put my best effort in everything and leave the rest to God, knowing that He will surely honor my efforts.”

—A., ATTORNEY, IJM SOUTH ASIA