

When Words Fail



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We pray in the name of the one who is the life and the light of all, Jesus Christ, Amen.



Life doesn't always go as we think it should. Have you ever gone to the store and somehow ended up with one of those shopping carts that has one bad wheel? You push it along and it squeals its presence to everyone. Every time you turn a corner you can imagine someone saying, "Oh no—here comes squeaky!"

Sometimes the shopping cart wheel makes a *thump*. I got one at the store just this week. Every time the wheel went around it went *thump*. Ninety percent of the wheel was okay, but then there was a *thump*. So there I went—*thump, thump, thump...*

Isn't that illustrative of life itself? A lot of life goes well but then there are the thumps. Sometimes I want to say to God, "Lord, just stop giving me real life

Do you ever get confused by life and not know which way to turn or who to go to for help? Does it sometimes seem that all you can do is gurgle some ungodly sounds from somewhere deep in your soul and you don't want anyone else to hear such awful noises?

When words fail and all we are capable of is moaning and groaning, can we expect anyone, even God, to understand? Yes, God hears our deepest hurts. God is always listening.

Consider this meditation and reflection on the moans and groans too deep to bear.

wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.



...sometimes all we can do is groan our pain.

...but the Spirit intercedes for us through wordless groans.



Scripture: Romans 8:22-27

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we

Prayer:

Oh God, there are times when we have unspeakable sorrow and hurt and no one understands or seems to even care. May we somehow find the light of your love shining in the midst of the dark moments of life.

illustrations! I can find them somewhere else!"

Sometimes life is much more serious than the illustration I've mentioned. Sometimes we use harsher descriptions, such as "the bottom fell out," "the rug was pulled out from under me," or "my world was turned upside

down” to communicate the depth of the painful side of life.

At such times, the noise becomes an overwhelming *thump, thump, thump* that never seems to stop!

At such times the ten percent of life that is “out of round” grabs our attention and will not let go. We limp through each day. Questions about survival, the fairness of life or how we could have prevented the difficulty fly rapid-fire through our minds.



Christians are not excluded from these dilemmas, as some would falsely have us believe. We too may feel that our world has been turned upside down. We too experience emotions that overwhelm us. We too can be angry at life or at God for the hand we’ve been dealt. We too can grope around in a stupor and have difficulty finding our way.

Our faith may be shaken, our

such pain that words failed. The pain was too great, the emotions too deep. We hurt and sometimes our hearts break but we can find no words to express it and no one who can even hear it. We struggle for breath and it feels like our life is being smothered.

Have you ever experienced this? Have you ever been there? I dare say some who are reading this are there right now.

Always remember that in any given group, some there are in the midst of such a hell. The person beside you, in front of you or behind you may desperately need your smile, a warm handshake or your embrace. Never forget that you can be a refuge for many a hurting soul.



During those times when we are speechless because of life’s tragedies, God hears our groans and understands them. When we recall the suffering of Jesus, we see

we talk to somebody who is nearer to us than we are to ourselves.”

Let that sink in for a moment. Tillich goes on to add, “It is God himself who prays through us when we pray to him. God himself in us: that is what Spirit means. Spirit is another word for ‘God present.’”

This is the faith we hold dearly, that God hears our groans and is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. God knows. God cares. God understands. God is present, groaning with us when actual words are not available.

The deepest and darkest nights of the soul are understood by our God. That is truly good news when there is nothing else to cling to.

This is the beauty of our faith!

“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Romans 8:26).

Sometimes our feelings are too deep for words. But there is a God



assumptions shattered, our peace disturbed. Our faith can assist us, but we are human as well.

In those times, sometimes all we can do is groan our pain. There are no words. Maybe you have not been through such a time and if so, I am glad. But I have been with those who faced

that God intimately knows our groans and exactly what they mean. *God knows the language of groaning.* The apostle Paul says the Spirit uses the language of moans and “intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Romans 8:24).

Theologian Paul Tillich wrote in *The New Being*, “When we pray,

in heaven who cares and understands.

Cry out to God, even if only with great groans, deep moans or the frailest whimper. Do so and the Spirit will speak for you! □

Adapted from J. LeBron McBride's new book, Coming Back to Faith.