

Though Desperate, Hang in There

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." Luke 1: 46-55.

The word *desperate* is related to the word *despair*. *Desperate* combines the prefix, *de*, with *sperare*, which is Latin for hope. A desperate person is one who is being de-hoped, one who is losing hope. And desperation is not uncommon. We may have difficulty holding on to the life we have given the many changes in our world. And out of our desperation, we may fall prey to ways of thinking or take action that leaves our faith behind. God has brought us safely thus far, but God no longer seems in charge. But is that really the case?

When I was in the 5th and 6th grade; my dad, who was a teacher/coach, had a summer job working on the staff of a camp for boys along the Guadalupe River in the heart of Texas, Camp Rio Vista. I got to go for free, and the first summer I was there one of the kids in my cabin was Mack Royal, the son of Darrell Royal, the University of Texas football coach.

One afternoon the kids my age began a flag-football tournament. We were on the athletic field getting ready to play when a car drives up and out steps Darrell Royal. He was there to speak to the whole camp that evening and spent a few minutes with us that afternoon. He asked us, "What would you do in this tournament if you won your first several games and were in the championship game? You're going to be playing a team that is better than any you've played before. Would you change your game plan or continue using the plays you've been using?"

One kid said, "Change to a bunch of new plays." Royal replied, "How about this. Add one or two new plays to see if you can surprise them, but always dance with the one who brung ya." Being 5th graders we had no idea what he meant by that, just that he had used poor grammar. But we came to know that this was his signature way of saying, don't abandon what's been working for you just because you're up against something really tough; which may be a debatable sports strategy, but is right on target spiritually. We don't stop relying on God and living by Jesus' ways just because we're desperate. We hang in there. We go into the future, no matter how scary and difficult, trusting and obeying God. We keep our relationship with Jesus intact.

I find the above scripture, the Magnificat, supportive when it comes to hanging in there with our faith. At long last, the messiah is coming! Things will change! Mary is the speaker, of course, and who would have imagined that a Palestinian peasant girl, a teenager at best, has been chosen to be the mother of the messiah? And notice some of what she says. God "*has looked with favor on me... has done great things...has shown strength...has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made...*" Let's not give in to feelings of desperation. Let's hang in there and see how we too might praise God one day. – DJ