

## THE THRESHING FLOOR

David bought a threshing floor (2 Samuel 24) to build an altar to God. As it turns out, threshing is an apt metaphor for our dealings with God.

When threshing wheat, the grain is crushed to loosen its outer shell. The threshing floor is a smooth, hard surface – often it is rock. Applying another hard surface, like a round stone, crushes the grain. We may often feel we are being crushed by life, as if we are “between a rock and a hard place.”

After the crushing, the grain is tossed heavenward. As it falls back down, the wind separates wheat from chaff. The chaff is the surface layer, the husk that protects the kernel of wheat as it grows. To be useful, the wheat must shed the husk – its protective shell.

Scripture tells us to “Cast your cares upon the Lord” (Psalm 55:22). The word we translate *cast* does not refer to a casual toss. It is more of a heave. As we launch our prayers heavenward, like threshing grain, the wind of the Spirit can blow through, separating wheat from chaff.

God wants us to release the chaff to Him, so we retain only the kernel, the vulnerable part of our communication. This truthful seed, exposed and vulnerable, we sow back into our lives and other relationships. The rough husk gone, the seed is now fit for use.

Each person must claim responsibility for his/her own emotional state. God wants our hearts to be at peace. He wants us to come to Him when we are upset, allowing His Spirit to blow away the chaff.

When Cain was angry, God approached him. Although Cain was focusing his resentment on his brother, God knew he was feeling rejected and cheated. He invited Cain to be open about how he felt and asked him to take a look at what was in his heart.

Unfortunately, Cain refused. Instead of opening up to God, he took his anger out on his brother. He attacked and killed his brother, Abel. When God approached him again and invited him to fess up by asking where Abel was, Cain again rejected God’s invitation. His famous question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” reflects how all of us try to avoid responsibility in relationships.

While we may not resort to murder, raw emotion can produce deadly results. We must be willing to process our feelings in the light of God’s love. We need peace in our hearts before we go to someone who has stirred up our negative feelings.

Writing down feelings clarifies them. It helps us go deeper. Getting them on paper can be cathartic. Seeing them written in black and white gives perspective.

As long as feelings remain inside, they are often jumbled together. Sometimes, conflicting emotions confuse and paralyze us. We can't find a proper course of action until we sort them out.

Because negative feelings activate emotional defenses, a "knee-jerk reaction" is likely to be self-protective rather than restorative for relationship.

Lashing out gives temporary relief, but it does not satisfy for long. Like an addictive substance, it promises more than it delivers; yet we will keep going back for more.

In order to become skilled at processing negative emotions, we must confront our tendency to avoid pain.

It is not a bad thing to overlook a minor irritation. This can be very healthy. However, neglecting recurrent or longstanding negative feelings can be like putting off a needed visit to the doctor. The problem will likely get worse.

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## Letter to God – GRIEF

Write a letter to God about your life to this point, specifically expressing any negative feelings you can identify. For some, this will be easy. For others, it will be very tough.

Some of us are comfortable being honest with God, but others not at all. Very few of us take the time to write down our feelings toward God as David did in the Psalms.

God placed the Psalms in the very center of the Bible. As much as He wants us to remember His words to us, He honors our words to Him by placing them in the middle of His precious book.

Not all Psalms are sweet. Many express intense negative emotions, often directed at God himself. But He values what we share with Him, even when we are in a terrible place emotionally and spiritually.

Those who have children know how much it means when they trust you enough to

come and share their feelings, even if they're mad at you.

When we pour out our hearts to our Father, He listens. We become more aware of our feelings and clearer about them.

We honor our own souls and the relationship with Him by absolute honesty. We gain perspective by sharing our hearts and there is relief when we get things "off our chest."

Harboring negative feelings limits trust. For God to work freely in us we must come to believe that He loves us completely. There is nothing we must hide. Though we are puny, perverse and petty, we can trust Him body and soul. Dig deep and clean out all the pus. Getting it out may be agonizing, like lancing a boil. But if you don't shrink back, you will find it healing.

And don't try to sugar coat things with God. It doesn't work to play nice with Him. At your core is where He chooses to live. The grit and the guts are part of it, and our God is not squeamish. If you don't believe me, just read His book! Our emotions, especially grief, will allow us to reconnect as we learn to wait on Him. Engaging God honestly and fully forges a powerful bond.

In your letter to God, be rigorously honest. Go deep! Express all the negative feelings you can possibly uncover regarding your life and God.

Don't try to get spiritual. **GET REAL!**

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## THE VIEW FROM HERE

Once we have given our feelings to God, it is still sometimes necessary to process and share them with those we are in relationship with. Even if we choose not to share a letter or conversation, writing our feelings out brings clarity and calm. The following prompts may help you do a better job of digging deep.

### **FRUSTRATIONS**

I'm frustrated that...

I feel angry when...

I hate it that...

## **FEELINGS**

It hurts me when...

I feel sad that...

I feel empty when...

## **FEARS**

It makes me anxious when...

Sometimes I'm afraid that...

I am tempted to give up when...

## **FAILINGS**

I regret...

I feel badly that...

I'm sorry for...

I'm ashamed because...

## **FANTASY**

What I really want is...

I wish we could...

I would love it if...

I need...

## **FAITH**

I believe that God...

The most important thing is...

With God's help I will...

I am committed to...