

I'm in trouble . . .

1. I've said those words. Troubles - sorrows - tragedy - death . . . you're not alone. At one time or other, most of our families have experienced what Jesus called, "in this life ... tribulation." I think I would define tribulation as "trouble when it boils."

How I wish I could give easy answers to you. I've often wished prayer was more like that lovely lady of 1960's television who "twitched" her nose and suddenly everything was as it should be. No, the reality of prayer isn't like that at all -- but there is a *reality*.

I'm not talking about a little psychology or belief that will hopefully make you feel better as you muddle through. I'm speaking to you of the reality that is in my own life -- and the lives of others -- people you will meet if you happen to attend one of our services.

Fanaticism doesn't interest me in the least. This is something that works in everyday life.

At some point, I think every person is destined to come to the end of their abilities -- to face something bigger than you are. I remember lying on a hospital gurney when a birth defect in my heart kicked in -- a very rare syndrome called Wolfe-Parkinson White Syndrome. Simply, I was born with an extra electrical path in my heart. Usually it shows up when you're young - or it doesn't show at all. An electro-cardiogram should reveal its presence. My condition was the rarest of the rare -- it was hidden on the electro-cardiogram. I lay in the ER with my heart rate at 238 beats per minute -- unpleasant to say the least. Doctors were treating me for something much simpler - tachycardia. I now know the medicines they were pushing into my veins in an attempt to correct my heart's rhythm might have killed me. The meds didn't work - and sent my heart into fibrillation - another unpleasant experience (like having a car engine misfiring in your chest). That was the first real medical crisis I personally faced in my 45 years. Strange things go through your head as the doctors ask what you might be allergic to. "We're about to find out," I thought. In the midst of all that unpleasant physical experience and the chaos of the procedures and the ER I remember thinking, "Lord, if I'm to die -- I'm yours. Lord Jesus, forgive me fresh and new right here." There was the strangest sensation -- peace - calm - assurance. Whatever happened, it would be all right -- but there was the knowledge that He wasn't finished with me. I can't explain that. But it was as real as I am sitting here writing this -- as real as you are sitting there reading.

Although we have prayed for others and seen miracles - the Lord used a wonderful heart surgeon with what today is an "angiogram" style procedure to burn out the extra path in my heart - and I'm in good shape today.

I'm sort of taking the lid off my inner-most self and sharing with you a very personal experience in hopes that it will help you in your difficulties.

One thing's for certain - I'm nothing special. I've made plenty of mistakes (I think the Bible calls what I'm talking about "sin"). When I asked His help and forgiveness, He was right there. His power was tangible -- in the middle of an ER with doctors and nurses bustling about -- and me lying on that gurney with nothing between me and God but a sheet!

Your concern may be the death of a loved one, financial distress, marriage, it doesn't matter, not really. He wants to help. For years we had a radio broadcast in the Permian Basin and I began with these words, "How Big is God?" You see, one of His names in scripture is: El Shaddai (The God of more than enough -- the God of plenty). That means He's bigger than the problem. He's proven that to me time and time again.

Father, here is your precious child, and we need YOU! In this moment, forgive every mistake, every failure, every misdeed, every sin. Your Word says that if we ask - YOU will answer. We're asking for your help. In Jesus' name.

Now, remember something. If we went to the doctor's office for a shot of antibiotic -- and he just administered it, you'd think me silly if I complained that I felt no better. I can hear you say, "It just takes time for antibiotics to work. Be patient. Give it a day or so." And of course, you're absolutely right. I think you get the message. -- I'm praying for you. -- **William Mark Bristow**