

# Despair Defeated

**E.T.S.:** Jesus traveled from Capernaum to Nain where, upon encountering a funeral procession, He raised a young man to life.

**E.S.S.:** Luke 7:11-17 represents an example of despair. Jesus's work to raise the young man to life shows that He can help you overcome every occasion of despair.

**Christ Follower:** When you experience despair in life or a specific situation, focus your heart and mind on Christ.

**Christ Seeker:** Come to Jesus. He's our only hope in life and death.

## Introduction

I am sure you have seen the motivational posters and billboards that show up everywhere.

They usually include a word or short phrase with a statement to affirm or encourage. Here's an example:

However, one company has changed the model drastically. On the homepage of the company's website, this is how they describe themselves:

"No industry has inflicted more suffering than the Motivational Industry. Motivational books, speakers and posters have made billions of dollars selling shortcuts to success and tools for

unleashing our unlimited potential. At Despair, we know such products only raise hopes to dash them. That's why our products go straight to the dashing. Enjoy!"

On the page listed as having "demotivator® products", they state:

"Motivational products don't work. But our demotivator® products don't work even better."

Here are some examples:

Clearly, this company practices satire and tries to influx humor. If you are not actually experiencing despair, you may laugh at them. However, suffering despair is not a joke. If you do are experiencing despair, then you likely won't find humor in these things.

Suffering despair happens generally in life, or in specific situations. In other words, a person can feel completely hopeless about life. Often, this includes feelings of loneliness, passivity, and estrangement (Iskra Fileva,

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-philosophers-diaries/202006/despair>).

Unfortunately, despairing of life generally regularly leads to suicide and self-harm. Despairing in specific situations means being hopeless of a particular area such as not landing your dream job, never finding the one, living with the wrng one, never getting a handle on your finances, etc. Any of these situations and others are capable of producing hopelessness.

All of us face situations in life that can lead to that place. If you are of the human race, then you will experience things that could lead to despair, to hopelessness.

After Jesus interacted with the centurion whose servant was sick, He left Capernaum to travel

to Nain. As He arrived, He walked upon one of these experiences of human despair. Follow along as I read the account of it in Luke 7:11-17.

## **Bible**

*(11) And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. (12) Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. (13) And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. (14) And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. (15) And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. (16) And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. (17) And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about.*

*Luke 7:11-17 - KJV*

## **Introduction**

Is there anyone in the house today who can identify with the experience of despair found in this text? How about those of you watching or listening online?

The experience of despair recorded in this text reminds us all of the experiences of despair that we face in our own lives. I, too, have had my own battles with despair, most recently with the

birth of my son. You ask, "Why would that be a reason for despair?" Because our pregnancy began with two babies, not one. For my wife and I, there were moments of sadness and grief throughout the pregnancy. We wondered how it would affect the experience of Noah's birth into the world. During labor, it came up in conversation with the medical personnel. Then, when Noah was born and they laid him up on his mother, I sat next to her wondering at him. But, for a few moments, I suddenly imagined the body of a second baby on the other side of his or her mother and knew I would not actually see it. I hid my face for a few moments to collect myself so that Stephanie would not see the pain on my face. I had another experience of it last Sunday morning here at church as we sang praises to God. I cannot even tell you why, but as we sang in worship, the thought of the twin we did not have here suddenly came to my mind and it took everything I had to keep myself composed.

Many of you can relate to similar experiences that can lead to despair, or have led you to despair. Some of you sitting here today, or watching or listening online, despair of life or some situation right now.

As we consider Luke 7:11-17, I want you and me to see that Jesus's work in this text shows us that He can help us overcome every occasion of despair.

What did Jesus do in the text to help them overcome despair?

He raised someone to life!

Wait, what?!

Jesus raised someone who was dead to life!

If He can do that, then there is nothing you will face that would lead you to despair that He cannot help you overcome.

# **1...The Reasons for Despair**

## **Explanation**

As Jesus approached the city of Nain, a funeral procession was on the way out of the city. In that day and culture, burials typically took place within 24 hours of death. So, the young man's death was recent.

## **A...Death**

## **Illustration**

In the past week, I have listened to several people talk about death in different ways. Prayer needs were shared about the death of a young father, the suicide of a pastor's daughter, the tragic and unexpected death of a teen daughter. I spoke with one who had a near-death experience, and the corresponding fears and struggles produced by it.

## **Application**

Many of us can relate to the despair of death. Maybe, you fear your own for one reason or another. Perhaps the impending death of a loved one has left you hopeless. Or, maybe you're

still drowning from a death that has happened.

## **Explanation**

The text introduces a young man who died, but the experience of death was not so much his to bear, as it was that of his mother. She'd already had run-ins with death. Luke reveals she was a widow. Her husband had at some point in the past died and, now, she faced it with her only son. I'm not sure that a woman could endure more than the death of a husband followed by the death of an only son/child.

## **B...Destitution**

### **Explanation**

There was more to her grief than the death of her husband and only child. Without the social safety nets that one may have access to today in our society, a woman who lost her husband and only son faced destitution. She could not get a job. She had no source of income. She would have to depend on the kindness of others to sustain any type of life and existence. Certainly, those thoughts were already creeping into her mind, even as the party made the way to the gravesite outside the city.

### **Application**

Do these examples of reasons for despair speak to you? Has death or destitution, or the fear of them come to your life somehow? There may be other reasons...

## Illustration

A similar Old Testament narrative occurs in 1 Kings 17. A widow, who provided for God's prophet Elijah in a time of need, lost her only son. She came to the man of God with her plight, and listen to what she said in 1 Kings 17:18.

## Bible

*(18) And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?*

*1 Kings 17:18 - KJV*

## Explanation

Here's another common reason for despair, sin. David declared this in Psalm 40:12.

## Bible

*(12) For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.*

*Psalm 40:12 - KJV*

## Explanation

David, in the middle of other troubles, became captive to the memories of past sins. So much so that his eyes were constantly downcast and his heart failed him. This identifies the problems

of an improper focus and fear in life.

## **Application**

Can you relate?

## **2...The Response to Despair**

### **Explanation**

Follow along as I read verses 13-15 again.

### **Bible**

*(13) And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. (14) And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. (15) And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.*

*Luke 7:13-15 - KJV*

### **Explanation**

From the text, there are three truths to draw comfort from when you face despair.

## **A...Draw Comfort from the Character of God/Jesus.**

### **Explanation**



He saw...He loved.

When the Bible says that Jesus saw her, it means more than Jesus saw her. The word used in the Greek language essentially means to see and know. In seeing her, Jesus knew her. He knew her situation. He knew her mind. He knew her heart. He knew her grief. He knew her pain.

## **Application**

Friends, Jesus sees and knows you. He knows your mind. He knows your heart. He knows your situation. He knows your grief. He knows your pain. In Psalm 139, the Psalmist indicated that there is nowhere he could go from God's presence. His expression was not one of frustration about that. It was one of hope, encouragement, and peace.

God sees and knows you.

## **Explanation**

Add to that His unfailing love. Jesus, Who knew everything about the widow, had compassion on her. He knew where she was and what she faced, and He loved her.

## **Application**

Friend, Jesus knows where you are and what you face, and He loves you.

**B...Draw Comfort from the Word of God/Jesus.**

## **Explanation**

In the text, Jesus said very little. He spoke to the mother to exhort her to not weep. He spoke to the dead man to command him to get up. Jesus, by His word, comforted and changed the context of the lives of the people He spoke to.

## **Application**

I am not saying that if you are facing something that breeds despair, you just need to read your Bible more. I am saying that the Word provides comfort. Don't give up the Word. If you're not in the Word, get in the Word. Focus your time in the Word. Consider what your despair stems from and read to meet the need. Listen to good Biblical preaching or teaching on the subject. Talk to a counselor whose practice is informed and/or guided by God's truth. Listen to God-honoring worship music. All music has the ability to change moods and emotions, but only music filled with God's truth can transform your life for the good.

## **C...Draw Comfort from the Power of God/Jesus.**

### **Explanation**

How is the power of God/Jesus revealed in the text?

He raised a dead person to life.

### **Application**

If He can do that, what would you and I face that He can't enable us to overcome?

I don't mean that He'll step in and do what you want Him to do in every situation.

## **Illustration**

Can I share with you my experience related to our unsurviving twin? The day that we found out the pregnancy was a twin pregnancy, but that one of the twins did not have a heartbeat, I began praying for a miracle. I prayed that God would raise that twin to life. I told God that if He would do that, I would worship Him for it. The doctors would say that the ultrasound had some malfunction, but I would worship God for miraculously raising my child to life. Well, God didn't answer my prayer the way I asked Him too. But I want you to know something today, I worship Him today for answering my prayer. That child may not be here with me the way I want, but that child is alive today in the presence of God.

That's the power of God!

## **Application**

Death will not lead me to despair, despair is going to die. I choose to draw comfort from the character, the Word, and the power of God/Jesus.

Is He powerful enough to change what causes you to despair?

Yes, He is.

But He's also powerful enough to carry you through what causes you to despair. That miracle

is as miraculous as changing it.

## **Bible**

*(9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

*2 Corinthians 12:9-10 - KJV*

## **Conclusion**

**Christ Follower:** When you experience despair in life or a specific situation, focus your heart and mind on Christ.

**Christ Seeker:** Come to Jesus. He's our only hope in life and death.