

When

BY THOMAS LINDBERG

Life

doesn't
make
sense



"Why did this happen to me?"

a lady asked me. "I just don't understand some things."

Then there was the confused man who sat in my office and asked, "What's going on? I just can't make sense out of life."

Everyone, regardless of age or background, asks similar questions when life deals out harsh surprises.

I read a story in the paper once about two sisters in Alabama who simultaneously decided to visit each other. Unknowingly, they were headed toward each other on a two-lane road. One of their vehicles crossed the centerline. The head-on collision killed them both. I'm sure family members asked why.

If ever there was a person who struggled to make sense out of life, it was Hagar (Genesis 21:8-21).

Hagar had been a faithful servant to Abraham and Sarah. She had gone above and beyond the call of duty. She was literally a part of their family. Yet one day she and her son were driven out of their lives and away from all she called security.

Life for Hagar made no sense.

So what should you do when the questions are hard and the answers elusive?

Talk to your Heavenly Father

God is waiting for you to take your questions to Him. In Genesis 21:17 God asks Hagar, "What's wrong?" She didn't hold anything back. She unburdened her heart to her Lord.

God knows your thoughts. He hears every fearful beat of your heart. And He's big enough to handle your questions and confusion.

God opens His arms in His Word and says:

- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NIV).
- "Cast all your cares on Me." (See 1 Peter 5:7.)
- "No one who comes to Me will be turned away." (See John 6:37.)

Reject Satan's messages of fear

"Do not be afraid," God said to Hagar.

That's easier said than done. Fear in our lives attacks again and again. When life's pain doesn't make sense, the devil will compound our trouble by

When life doesn't make sense

whispering in our minds, *It's only going to get worse. You'll never recover from this. It's all over for you.* Satan's lies create fear.

You need God's Word to replace that fear with His peace. When you immerse yourself in the Bible and allow God to fill you with His truth, there's little room for Satan's lying messages of fear.

When life doesn't make sense, remind yourself of the eternal truths of God's Word. You belong to God. He will make the difference in your circumstances today.

See the good around you

As Hagar sat in the desert dying of thirst and contemplating the worst, she looked around and saw a well (Genesis 21:19). What would have happened if Hagar had failed to see that well? Think of the fatal tragedy if she had become so consumed with her sorrow that she couldn't see the solution.

Some years ago, life did not make sense to me. My wife, Sandi, sensed my frustration. She made a list of more than 25 good things happening in my life and ministry at the very time that I was feeling despondent.

I read that list. Then I read it several more times. *She's right*, I thought. *Why didn't I see all those good things in my life?*

Recognizing God's goodness to me changed my entire attitude.

The hymn "Count Your Blessings" says it so well. *When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*

Keep praying

Voice your fears to God at the moment of crisis. But don't stop there. Build up the communication line with God through faithful prayer. Exercise the power of prayer throughout your life.

Hagar must have felt so alone in that desert. She was probably convinced no one knew where she was as she and Ishmael wandered aimlessly. But God had Hagar on heaven's radar screen. He knew where she was, and He was as close as a prayer.

The same is true for each of us in life's darkest moments. When life doesn't make sense, realize there is

no desert big enough, no hurt deep enough, no confusion great enough to separate you from God.

The Book of James was written to people weathering life's storms. What did the Holy Spirit say to them through James' pen? "If any of you lack wisdom [or if any of you can't make sense out of life] exercise the power of prayer. God will help you, and He won't be angry that you asked for His help." (See James 1:5.)

Trust God

Trust God to make a way for your future. Had you asked Hagar what she thought about her future when Abraham sent her into the desert, her answer would not have been promising. The truth is, God had a plan for her. Just read Genesis 21:20. Hagar not only survived, she thrived.

Today you can put your trust in God, knowing He will make a way for you when all seems lost. **tpe**

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E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

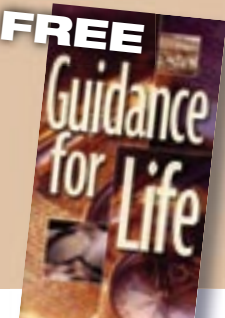
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

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I OPENING

Sunita:

- Rejected by her parents who longed for a son
- Forced into an arranged marriage at age 12
- Uneducated and unloved, she believes her sad life is punishment from the gods
- No one has ever told her otherwise

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