

“Tethered” – Christy Willard

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION #1: Malvern, PA Weekend, May 14-16, 2021

One day, a few years ago, we had a terrible windstorm. The gusts were strong and relentless and nothing that wasn't nailed down was safe from blowing away. We have an old aluminum awning attached to our house above our side door. From inside the house all I could hear was a horrible banging sound. It took me awhile to realize that the wind had been so strong and so unrelenting that the screws holding the metal awning onto the side of my house were coming loose. Sections of the awning itself had already been ripped off and it wouldn't be long before the whole awning went flying off. I remember calling my husband at work in a panic – “what do I do?” He told me to find a rope and tie the awning down somehow. And I'm thinking, “you want me to go outside in the storm, like on purpose? Then you want me to try to grab the awning that is flailing up and down and banging against the house and somehow tie a rope around it and attach it to something?” Without a lot of options, I went out there. It had to be done. I couldn't find a rope, but I did find an extension cord. Long story short, I managed to secure one end of the cord to the awning and attached the other end to our metal backyard fence nearby. Though the wind continued to move it, the awning stopped banging and the threat of it ripping off and flying away was averted.

This awning incident happened to coincide with a particularly challenging life season I was in with one of my kids. Feeling out of control and unable to improve the situation I had started to lose hope. Doubts and frustrations were swirling in my mind and my helpless thoughts were stealing my joy. I knew God was in this situation, but it didn't take much for worry and fear to take me down a dark and hopeless path. Enter the wind and the awning.

Safe inside my house I was amazed at how simply tethering the awning to something immovable kept it from blowing wherever the wind wanted to take it. Anchoring it down relieved my worry because I knew that even if the wind blew the awning off the house, it would only go as far as the length of the extension cord and the fence it was tied to.

Was I not like the awning? The winds of life were blowing strong and relentless and I felt untethered, at the whim and mercy of my situation. Untethered, my own thoughts convinced me I was powerless, and I felt afraid, like I was knocked off my feet by a big ocean wave, disoriented and tossed around, my feet desperately searching for the sandy bottom.

A tether holds objects firmly in place. Anchored. Rooted. Grounded. Settled. Secure.

Psalms 28:7 (AMP), which is our theme verse for the Weekend, says:

*The Lord is my strength and my [impenetrable] shield;
My heart trusts [with unwavering confidence] in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I shall thank Him and praise Him.*

When I tether myself to God I am grounded in His Word and His promises. I no longer carry my burdens alone (1 Peter 5:6). I can stand firm in faith, knowing that He has it all under control.

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Tethering myself to God is an act of dependence and trust. I know that I am hardly adequate in my own strength, to meet my needs, let alone the needs of others. But Psalm 28:7 tells me that I can trust in, rely on, and **confidently lean** on God and He helps me.

When the wind blows, the tether holds me steady. It is a reminder that I am not alone. It doesn't shield me from the wind and the storm, but it keeps me from blowing away. Away from hope. Away from Him.

~~In the wise words~~ of Annie F. Downs writes in her book, *Remember God*, “Hold on to the One who's got it --- if you're **not** the one who's got it (167).”

Hold on to God, sisters, with unwavering confidence and He will help you.

So we're about to staff a Weekend. Maybe it's your first time or maybe it's your 50th! Either way, we enter in tethered to a sovereign, powerful, loving God. The work we can do to prepare for the Weekend is simply to remain tethered. And if you feel like you're at the whim and mercy of your life circumstances, it's time to secure the rope to your immovable, faithful Father.

With love,
Christy

Preparation:

Lectio Divina (literally *divine reading*) is a way of becoming immersed in the Scriptures very personally.

Spend some time each week leading up to the Weekend meditating on **Psalm 28:7**. Read it at least 3 times.

- **READ:** The first time read it out loud. Get to know the passage. Let the words sink in. Do any words or phrases jump out to you?
- **REFLECT:** The second time read it silently to yourself. What might God be saying? Again, sit with it.
- **RESPOND:** The third time read a line and prayerfully pause. Sit silently for a minute or two before moving on to the next line. Listen. What has God shared with you? Write down any new awareness or thoughts that God gave to you. Respond to God in prayer or with thanksgiving.

Share with your Prayer Partners: *What keeps you from trusting that God will help you? What might you need to do to tether or to resecure your tether to God before this Weekend?*

Listen to the Song: “Tethered” by Phil Wickham https://youtu.be/1T_pgG3xHR8

Lyrics: I don't wanna miss the beauty / Of heaven all around me / Your power and Your mercy / The greatness of Your love / I don't wanna lose the wonder / Of being in Your presence / Of knowing such a friendship / To be with You, my God / Everything I am / I throw into Your hands / I just want my life to ever be **entwined with You / Tethered to Your heart** / I just want my soul / to ever stand in awe of You / **Tethered to Your heart / tethered to Your heart** / What more could I desire / What greater thing to treasure / I'm convinced there's nothing better / Than living in Your love / Caught up in the wonder / Of being in Your presence / Of knowing such a friendship / To be with You, my God / Everything I am God / I throw into Your hands / I just want my life to ever be **entwined with You / Tethered to Your heart** / I just want my soul / to ever stand in awe of You / **Tethered to Your heart / tethered to Your heart** / Tethered to Your heart / **Tethered to Your heart** / Draw me closer / Take me deeper / I wanna be where You are / I wanna be where You are / Draw me closer / Take me deeper / I wanna be where You are / I wanna be where You are / Draw me closer / Take me deeper / I wanna be where You are / I wanna be where You are / I just want my life to ever be **entwined with You / Tethered to Your heart** / I just want my soul to ever stand in awe of You / **Tethered to Your heart / tethered to Your heart**

SPIRITUAL PREP #2: (with final staff communication email)

*The Lord is my strength and my [impenetrable] shield;
My heart trusts [with unwavering confidence] in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I shall thank Him and praise Him.*
Psalm 28:7 (AMP)

Preparation:

Hopefully you have been able to spend some time meditating on **Psalm 28:7**. I encouraged you to read it atleast 3 times and invite the Holy Spirit to share some thoughts with you about it. As you prepare this week to staff the PA Weekend:

- Meditate: Read again Psalm 28:7 focusing particularly on the last phrase, *“Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I shall thank Him and praise Him.”*
- Thanksgiving: Write down some things you are thankful about. Thank God for who He is, what He’s done, what He will do, and how He cares for you, your staff sisters, and the missionaries He is bringing to the Weekend.
- Worship: Rejoice in song and praise by spending some time in worship. Listen again to the song, [“Tethered” by Phil Wickham](#). Here are a few other songs that connect to the theme of being **tethered to God**:
 - [“Come Thou Fount” by Audrey Assad](#)
 - [“Anchor” by Hillsong Worship](#)

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- [“Do It Again” by Elevation Worship](#) (acoustic sessions)
- [“My Anchor” by Christy Nockels](#)
- [“Promises” by Maverick City Music](#)

Make sure to check in with your Prayer Partners.

SPIRITUAL PREP #3: Friday AM staff meeting

Today I want us to focus on securing our tether to God. We have talked about what it can look like and feel like when we aren’t tethered or anchored to Him. And today I want to solidify the tether by grounding ourselves in who God is and what He promises.

Pastor and hymnodist, **Robert Robinson**, wrote in the hymn, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” one of my favorite hymn verses – maybe you know it? (*sing it*)

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let thy goodness like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it
Seal it for Thy courts above.*

In this hymn Robinson uses the word **fetter** which is a chain or restraint, a way of confining something to a place, and he also uses the word bind and when we **bind** something, we tie or fasten it to something – sort of like a tether. So I think he’s saying: “Let God’s goodness tether my wandering heart to Him.”

Like strands of a rope, who God is and what He says binds us to him and the more we focus and ground ourselves in Truth the harder it will be for our hearts to wander.

Robinson also captures the real struggle of our human heart – it is prone to wander from God, to leave, to drift, to “blow away” wherever the wind may take us. So we must choose to tether, to cling to Him, to be intentional about securing the tether, again and again. When it’s hard AND when winds are calm.

Are we willing to let God’s goodness tether us to Him? Do we believe He is good? That He will do what He says He will do? Psalm 119:68 (*You are good, and what you do is good*) says that God's character is good and His actions are good – he is kind, merciful, generous, and loving.

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Our theme verse for the Weekend was:

*“The Lord is my strength and my [impenetrable] shield;
My heart trusts [with unwavering confidence] in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I shall thank Him and praise Him.”*

Psalm 28:7 (AMP)

I don't know about you, but this verse is so encouraging to my heart. He is my strength and my impenetrable shield! So leave behind the stresses, concerns, and anxiousness you might be carrying into this staffing. You are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which He has prepared in advance for you to do (as it says Ephesians 2:10).

May we ground ourselves in this verse from Lamentations 3:19-24 (MSG):

*“I keep a grip on hope:
God's loyal love couldn't have run out,
his merciful love couldn't have dried up.
They're created new every morning.
How great your faithfulness!
I'm sticking with God (I say it over and over).
He's all I've got left.”*

And from Hebrews 6:18-20 (msg):

“We who have run for our very lives to God have every reason to grab the promised hope with both hands and never let go. It's an unbreakable spiritual lifeline, reaching past all appearances right to the very presence of God...”

So this Weekend let's rest in His goodness and stand firm in the faith (as it says in 1 Peter 5:6-10). Tethered to God, with hope as your anchor (in Hebrews 6:18-19), you will have all that you need. Let us fully surrender and be grounded in God's promises to you. Knowing that what God says will come to pass. Promises of provision, strength, protection, wisdom, guidance, peace, healing, salvation, and eternal life. They are all yours among many others!

God's got this Weekend, each missionary, and you, His precious daughter.

Share with your prayer partner: *What, if anything, did God share with you as you meditated on the theme verse? What's keeping you TODAY or what do you need to do RIGHT NOW to tether yourself to God this Weekend? Pray together and ask God for what you need.*

VISUAL:

I prepared this spiritual prep in 2020, prior to the Malvern Weekend that was eventually cancelled. During the last year I've had a lot of time to reflect on the theme of tethering myself to God. I wanted to give everyone a tangible reminder our connection to God and our need to

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cling to Him. I am giving every staff woman a wooden cross called a Clinging Cross. It fits in the palm of your hand and can be a reminder to cling to, to hold on to, to remain tethered to God. Pass them out as we listen to the theme song.

LISTEN: Play the Phil Wickham song “Tethered.”