



CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

WHAT IF THESE 12 SECONDS ARE ALL WE'VE GOT?

By Cindee Snider Re

... *My God turns my darkness into light.* (Psalm 18:28)

Sometimes, no matter how often we read the Word or pray, the darkness of illness and pain is all we can see. Yet even in our darkest moments, there is hope, for God is with us every step of the way.

It's late. He tells me
he doesn't want to live,
how he'll take his life.

I will my heart to slow
as he pours out his pain,
crushed beyond caring.

"Wait one hour," I plead.
He offers me two. I ask
for a month. He shrugs

and sets the alarm on
his watch, 30 days counting
down on his wrist. I am

desperate for dawn.
"God, help us!" The sun
slips over the horizon

and I burst into tears.
His shoulder is warm.
He is still here!

Then I see the knife under
the sheet and angry black
letters sharpied across

both wrists: *faith* and *trust*.
"To remind me," he says,
"not to use the knife."

Bile crawls up my throat as
Isaiah's words spill from my
lips: *LORD, you are my God ...*

*a refuge to the needy ...
a shelter from the storm ...
You will swallow up death*

*forever ... and wipe away
the tears from all faces ...
because surely You are God!**

Last week, as my husband
was leaving for China, he kissed
me and said,

"Cherish these 12 seconds,
because someday these 12
seconds might be all we've got."

(*Paraphrase of Isaiah 25:1,4,7-9)

WHEN HOPE FADES: DEEP GRIEF

Illness and pain can strip the hope from our lives, shrouding us in darkness no matter how often we pray or read the Bible.

This is where I found my son. We had all spent the day together on his college campus. We'd walked along the bluff, talked about everything and nothing, and even laughed a little. I knew he was down, but I was unprepared for the call we received just minutes after we'd gotten home. My son was despondent. Seconds later, his brother jumped in the van to go get him, while I stayed with him on the phone. He was desperate for the pain to end.

As I sat with my suicidal son long into the night, I read aloud the descriptions of dark nights in the Psalms, Job, and Ecclesiastes. We talked about the incomprehensible pain Jesus must have felt to cry out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46)

IN GOD THERE IS NO DARKNESS

I clung to the words of 1 John 1:5, and they became my refrain: "*God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*" My son was in a deep, dark valley. I silently repeated to myself, "As long as there is breath, there is hope." Aloud, I said, "I will hold onto hope for you until you are ready to hold it on your own. You are not alone." Together, we read the words of John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... Through him all things were made ... In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

That night wasn't the end of my son's struggle against suicide, but over time, he grew stronger and could remind himself that he'd been in this dark valley before and had survived. He could do it again.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Are you desperate for pain to end?
- What kind of pain are you in?
- Which verse can become your refrain?

PRAYER

Lord, walk with me through this dark valley. Remind me You are light, and that in You there is no darkness. You are allowing this suffering for a reason. It is not senseless, and it isn't the end. Even here in this deep valley, *there is hope*, because *You are my hope*. In Your Son's name, amen.