



The Better Half

Jean, mother of three grown children, was hurrying to her sister Mary's home some forty miles south of her own town. Jean was once again rushing because Mary's doctor appointment was only one hour from now. Although the physician's office was close to Mary's house, Jean was seasoned with caring for her sister. She knew it often took fifteen to twenty minutes just to get Mary ready to leave and out the door to the car. If only I hadn't taken that phone call, Jean fretted. I know how much Mary hates to be late to these appointments—anywhere for that matter. Lord, how you took two people so opposite and stuck them in one family, I'll never understand. And us being twins to boot!

Driving along the highway, Jean tried to calm herself but with Mary's check-up this morning and a full afternoon of errands to run for her sister after lunch, Jean felt exhausted. "I'm spent, worn out, no more energy," Jean said aloud to no one present. "God, help me. Mary's the one who been through the wringer. Cancer six years ago, then a recurrence last fall. She's just recovering now and her strength certainly isn't coming back like we'd hoped. I wonder if she'll ever be the same vivacious Mary we all knew?" Jean felt the burning behind her eyes. I will not shed a single tear

today. That's all Mary needs is to see my emotional side kick into gear right before we head out. Oh, God, I don't know what it is that I'm lacking, but I definitely am in need. I'm so frazzled with everything that's happening. Nothing I've planned has worked out. This whole year has been full of unwanted news and bad surprises. Help me carry on through these next stressful months. I want to be there for Mary. Sometimes I just don't know how I'll manage it all.



Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.

—ROMANS 12:12

Dear Lord, there is a part of me too tired, too discouraged to pray. I don't want to spend my quiet moments with you whining, complaining, or worrying. I want to enter your presence full of thankfulness and so very aware of the many blessings you've bestowed on my life. Yet my heart is so heavy. I am burdened within and without. Life just seems too difficult for me now. I am hurting more deeply than I ever recall. The irony is that it's not me who's suffering. It's someone I love more than life. And there's nothing I can do to ease her pain. I can hold her hand, listen to her speak, and cry with her. But I feel so out of control. Nothing prepares me for the bad reports the doctor doles out with such regularity. If anything, I'm the one who's being ministered to. Something is askew here. I want to be the strong one. I have to be there for my loved one. Lord, why did you form me so weak? Why am

I so fragile? They're counting on me to be strong and steadfast. Lord, I'm not able to carry this burden. Will you? Show me how to hand over the hardships I'm struggling with to you. In my heart, I realize this is something I should have done long ago. But, no. I tried to be the mighty one, the pillar of strength. And how long did that last Lord? A few months maybe? I beg you to take away my fears, my distress, and my worrisome heart. Remake me. Give me your peace and the reassurance I long for. I understand that I will not be privy to the future and that is a blessing in itself. Still, I must know that you are caring for those I love. I have to have confidence that everything you do—you do well. Hold me close today, Lord. Minister to me in my frailty and lift me up. Amen.

God always seems bigger to those who need him most. And suffering is the tool he uses to help us need him more.

—JONI EARECKSON TADA WITH STEVEN ESTES IN *Christianity: A Follower's Guide*