

the rack



SOMEBODY

SOMEBODY

AT the time, a lot of people expected me to fail. They made me feel kind of inadequate. They figured it was only natural that I would fail. The stereotypes—"that girl from that neighborhood; those people; you're not college material; you're just like 'so-and-so'"—only added to my frustration. Other kids my age wondered what was wrong with me, why I didn't hang with their cliques or gangs like almost everyone else. It was their only comfort zone, and I had no intention of being a failure in life. Furthermore, I had no intention of joining somebody's group and losing my individuality, my identity, or my values.

I had been taught by my grandmother that I could do anything. Every day before I headed into the streets bound for school, Grandmama told me the same thing that Great-great Aunt Lula Clemmons had taught my grandfather when he was young. "In God's eyes, you're as good as anybody."

I believed what Grandmama said. She never lied to me. I didn't need those gangs of girls and guys to make me feel like somebody. I knew I was somebody.

Grandmama's words were like

bandages against the wounds of hurt from being called and treated "out-of-it," "different." I also had the memories of granddaddy who had started his own business, been successful, and put seven kids through college, even though he was never accepted by the community he grew up in. He got looked down on a lot. His only real friends were his own brothers and sisters. He used to get rocks thrown at him when he headed home from school. Granddaddy always did have some obstacles he had to overcome.

I guess I did have a few acquaintances. I call them "acquaintances" because we weren't really friends. The only thing that tied us together at all was the fact that they were looked down on also. "Rejects," you know.

There was Emma who was almost legally blind without her thick glasses. She always got picked last when sports captains lined up their teams in gym class. The other girls would make fun of her every time she went to the free throw line to try to make a hoop. She got fouled a lot by the other girls. She'd had to deal with that her whole life.

Then there was LaShandra. She had no trouble getting picked for girls' basketball. She was the



tallest girl in junior and senior high. She was also real skinny, which earned her a special nickname from the boys—“bean pole.” Her clothes always looked too small on her. LaShandra had no hope in life of getting asked for a date or asked to dance or asked anything by any guy.

There were others like us—a minority of girls and boys who were “rejects.” We would watch for each other in the school cafeteria, school assemblies, in the library. We’d stick together at those times because we were our only company. There were no games between us. We could relate. We were all unpopular because we were different from the crowd, the gang, in how we looked and the way we acted. We could appreciate each other for who we were and for the fact that we had to struggle to be somebody for real. Emma, for instance, spent all her afternoons in the library while others only played after-school sports. LaShandra’s mother sent her to modeling school to help her with her poise. She even got to model in a local fashion show. I became secretary of the school business club. These things may not have meant much to anybody else, but they meant a lot to us.

Time has passed since then. I’ve gone to school reunions

and heard from Grandmama about what’s happening in the old neighborhood. Some of it’s sad. Some of the kids I grew up with who accepted that they were good for nothing without some clique or gang have ended up dead or in prison from going along with the crowd. More than a couple of the “popular” girls and guys who dropped out of school to have babies have themselves

become grandparents already. It’s sad.

But there’s good news from the old neighborhood too. Emma has just finished medical school and has become an eye doctor. LaShandra lives in California where she’s

married to a pro-basketball player and has a successful modeling career. And I’ve taken over my granddaddy’s business and expanded it. Things are going really well.

In a real way, being “different” and expected to fail made me try my hardest to be better than the best. I really wanted to succeed in my life in a large part because of the problems I faced as a kid. My effort along with the encouragement from some select older people gave me the help I needed. I will always remember that in God’s eyes I am as good as anybody else.



NOAH'S OBEDIENCE

NOAH OBEYS GOD
IN SPITE OF THE
DIFFICULTIES.
FROM GENESIS 6-8.



STARTING OUT

God gave Noah a tough job. **Skim Genesis 6:5-22 for background.**

1. How was Noah's family different from other families?
2. How do you think other people treated Noah's family?
3. What problems could come up while making an enormous ark?
4. How could other people make the job more difficult?
5. What special problems might Noah have in storing the animals on the ark?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Genesis 6:9-10

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

¹⁰Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Genesis 7:1-5

¹The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. ² Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, ³ and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth.

⁴ Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."

⁵ And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

Genesis 8:18-22

¹⁸ So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. ¹⁹ All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹ The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

²² "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."

SETTING THE PACE

When Noah finished the ark, God spoke to him.

Read Genesis 7:1-5.

1. How did God feel toward the world He'd made?
2. What did He think of Noah? Noah's response was simple and direct. Read Genesis 7:5.
3. How do you think Noah felt while God was speaking to him?
4. It took Noah seven days to carry out God's orders. What thoughts might have been going through Noah's mind as he worked?

Noah's difficulties weren't over.

1. What may have been some of Noah's difficulties during the flood?
2. How do you think Noah and his family coped with the situation?

FINISH LINE

Dry land at last! The flood was over. **Read Genesis 8:18-22.**

1. What was the purpose of the altar? What do you think Noah was trying to say to God?
2. What did God think of Noah's offering?
3. How do you think Noah felt about God's promise?
4. How can this promise encourage us today?

REPLAY

Read Genesis 7:1-5 and 8:18-22 again.

1. How would you describe Noah's relationship with God?
2. What actions of Noah's gave evidence of this relationship?
3. How did this relationship help Noah cope with difficulties?

Bible Study



Bible Art: © Sergio Carrello

GET A GRIP!

TIPS FOR SURVIVING WHEN LIFE GETS TOUGH

During your middle school and high school years, there's always the question of whether you really fit in. And if you manage to fit in, the pressure from those around you still can be overwhelming.

Fortunately, God has given you ways to cope when your circumstances seem more than you can deal with.

WAY TO COPE #1: PRAY.

Even though God already knows what's going on in your life, He wants you to tell Him about it anyway. Confiding in Him shows your faith in His love and concern for you and in His power to help you. Prayer can also help you see your problems more clearly when you allow the Holy Spirit to quiet your mind and calm you down.

1 Peter 5:7 says it best: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

WAY TO COPE #2: TRY TO LOOK AT YOUR PROBLEM FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW.

There are problems and then there are *problems*. The wrong clothes, a bad grade, playing a bad game of ball are not the end of the world. These kinds of problems can be discouraging, frustrating, or inconvenient, but you can deal with them. "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear" (1 Cor. 10:13). So try to keep your perspective, and save your energy for the big battles.

WAY TO COPE #4: PRAISE GOD FOR WHO HE IS.

Never forget that God is in control and that He cares about you. He even knows the number of the hairs on your head (Matt. 10:30). Praise Him for who He is and for the way He cares for you, and remember—"My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus"—Philippians 4:19.

WAY TO COPE #3: EXPECT GOD TO TURN THE NEGATIVE INTO POSITIVES.

Don't just suffer through your problems—prevail over them. Expect God to use anything life hands you for your good. Joni Eareckson was 17 when a diving accident left her paralyzed from the neck down. For therapy, she began drawing, holding the pencil with her teeth. When her drawings sold, Joni became an inspiration to thousands of disabled people. Today she is the head of a worldwide Christian ministry and a famous artist, author, and speaker. It wasn't easy leaving her self-pity behind. She is still paralyzed. She will never be able to do the things an able-bodied person can do. But she took a devastating problem and allowed God to use it for her good.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"—Romans 8:28.



every day devos

God is always

worthy of our trust, no matter how bad things might seem.

We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

Psalm 33:20-21

MONDAY Read Psalm 33:20-21. Have you been praying about something for a long time? If so, you might be wondering if God is hearing your prayer. Write these verses in your own words as a prayer asking for patience and trust.

TUESDAY Looking at Psalm 33:20-21 underline what you think are the key words. Create a poster using and illustrating those words.

WEDNESDAY Fill in the blank: "Today I will trust You, Lord, to help me with _____." Write this sentence down and keep it with you during the day as a reminder.

THURSDAY Do a character study on trust. Find situations in which a person in the Bible had to trust God. Some suggestions are David, Noah, Daniel, Joseph, Paul, and Abraham.

FRIDAY Talk with an adult you respect about a time when he or she had to trust God in a difficult situation. What was the outcome?

SATURDAY Read Psalm 13:1-4. Think back on times when you have felt like God wasn't hearing your prayers. Now read verses 5 and 6. Think back on times when you know God has answered your prayers. Tell God thanks for those times.

