
Never Alone

IT WAS A LATE SPRING AFTERNOON IN 1985. THE FAMILY had just finished dinner. My mother-in-law Dorothy and I chatted as we washed and dried the dishes. I glanced out the kitchen window and noticed about six crows perched on electrical cables high above the back of the property. Suddenly, one bird stiffened and dropped upside down—his claws still grasping the cable.

Electrocuted!

He swayed there a few moments and then fell to the ground.

What happened next left a lifelong impression on me. While most of the other crows flew off, one crow glided to the ground, next to its fallen friend. It hopped around the dead crow and cawed as if to say, “Come on! Get up. It’s time to go.”

After a few minutes of prompting, it gave up and flew off.

A crow—aware of a fallen member of the flock! A crow—trying to encourage the other to get up! A crow—somehow knowing its friend had died.



Two decades later, God used that memory to change one of my life views that was, oh, so wrong.

Our family had moved from California to Michigan during the winter of 1993. After nine years of not having to wrestle with snow, we were thrust into one of the worst winters Michigan had experienced. It was the year that Lake Michigan froze all the way across to Wisconsin. Whiteouts from swirling snow made driving treacherous. Our first winter there was definitely a learning curve. We tried to remember how to survive in Midwest winters including driving *and* stopping on icy roads. We shook our heads and wondered why God would send us from sunny California to the frigid temperatures of Michigan.

But we made it through that first winter and welcomed spring with open arms—and windows! Summer was beautiful, but then fall came—all too soon. One day on my walk, the trees displayed autumn's vivid oranges, reds, yellows, and rich browns. They put on their best fashion show. Gentle breezes nudged loosened leaves from the branches and sent them fluttering to the ground. Even the seagulls enjoyed the warm sunny day as they glided like kites in the currents of air.

However, thoughts of last year's dreary winter sky, freezing temperatures, and slippery walks through snow pushed away the joy I had just welcomed. Winter was on the move. Yes, there were two more months before winter's official beginning, but in my mind, I could see the wind ripping off the days on the calendar—laughing at me with a raspy caw-caw-caw.

Wait a minute! Was I actually hearing a taunting wind? Jolted from my poor-me sadness, I quieted my thoughts and looked around. Then I heard the sound again! Caw-caw-caw!

Squinting my eyes against the sun, I spotted three crows watching me from high in a pine tree. Soon a larger group announced their arrival, calling loudly to the first group and to each other. It didn't take long for a lively conversation to commence. What a ruckus!

Maybe *they* were bemoaning the coming of winter—but I honestly doubted it. No. They were definitely talking to one

another—maybe enjoying the view or savoring the warmth of the sun against their shiny black feathers.

And that’s when God reminded me about the dead crow. I had researched crows some twenty years earlier and learned they operate as a community. They fly together, eat together, nest together, and just enjoy hanging out with one another.

All. Year. Long!

Yes! Crows stayed in West Michigan for the duration of winter. They found shelter in the trees, scavenged the woods for food, and enjoyed their boisterous communications. But they wouldn’t do it as individual birds—they’d forge together as a community.

And like them, I would join my community of family and friends and anyone else who faced the snow and ice. Winter was coming—just like it did every year. But it wouldn’t be just me who would get stuck in the snow, have to scrape ice off the car windows, or deal with days and days of gray clouds. The whole neighborhood would experience the same things. And we would work together, with God’s help, to get through it all.



Why, when difficulties come, do I think I have to deal with them all by myself?

When Moses was near the end of his life, God chose Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the promised land. I wonder if Joshua felt pressured and overwhelmed when he got word he was being promoted. I can only imagine how the responsibility of filling Moses’s sandals and taking on the incredible task of leading an entire nation must have weighed on his mind. Would the people listen to him? How could he perform such a monumental task alone, without Moses?

Scripture says: “The Lord gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: ‘Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and *I myself will be with you*” (Deuteronomy 31:23, italics mine).

After Moses died, the Lord once again spoke to Joshua: “Haven’t I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don’t be timid; don’t get discouraged. GOD, your GOD, is with you every step you take” (Joshua 1:9 MSG).

God may ask us to persevere through struggles, go into unfamiliar territory, or hunker down for the snowstorms of life—but we don’t have to be the lone guide for our family or friends. They and others are all part of the circle of life—and even if they fail us, we have God who *never* fails and *never* abandons us.

On that glorious fall day, with Joshua in mind, I stopped fretting about the oncoming of the lonely days of winter. Instead, I sat on the asphalt, soaked in the beauty of the day, and eavesdropped on the crows.

So, when winter finally arrived, and I began putting seeds out for my little songbirds, guess who came to dinner? Three crows! *My* crows.

They didn’t abandon each other—and they didn’t abandon me either.

Seeking God—Finding Him through His Word

- Read Deuteronomy 31:23 NIV

The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.”

- Now read Joshua 1:9 in *The Message* version:

“Haven’t I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don’t be timid; don’t get discouraged. GOD, your GOD is with you every step you take.”

- When you read through the book of Joshua, you find that God kept his promise to be with Joshua. During difficult

times, you could pray the command God gave to Joshua. Something like:

Father God, I'm facing a tough time. Please, give me strength and courage to do what I have to do. Guide me and be with me. Thank you for loving me and helping me not only during the tough times but also through the good ones.

- Praying Scripture is a wonderful and powerful way to communicate with God. You don't need to use *King James* words—*thee, thou*, or words like *helpeth*, unless you are familiar with that version and it truly speaks to you. You don't have to use *The Message's* contemporary language either. Just be you! God loves you just the way you are, and he understands what is said from your heart.