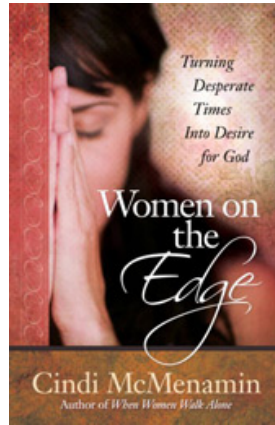


# When Life Drives You to the Edge

BY CINDI MCMENAMIN



Do you ever feel like you're about to go over the edge?

I remember a season of my life in which I was feeling desperate. My teenager was not giving me the verbal respect I felt I deserved. My husband, in hearing what was going on between us, was not intervening on my behalf. One evening I'd had it with that routine.

*I just want to go somewhere far away, I found myself thinking. I am not appreciated. I am not feeling respected or supported. I am not feeling understood or loved.* (Now did you notice how many times I used the word "feeling" and how many times I used the pronoun I? We get that way when we're on the edge.)

Aware of how much my thoughts were focused on me, and yet still feeling I had grounds in the battle I was fighting, I desperately wanted change - not just a change of circumstances, but *to* change. I desperately wanted wisdom to know how to respond to my daughter - and my husband - in a more mature way. I desperately wanted peace in my home. I desperately wanted to be able to re-do some arguments we'd had.

I realize now why I was succumbing to the meltdown: 1) I was depending on my *feelings*, not the facts of the situation; 2) I was expecting *everyone else* around me to change, rather than looking at my own heart and actions; and 3) I was listening to those voices in my head rather than being the one to do the talking!

Today, I have a distress call - an S.O.S. - when I begin to feel like I'm going to go over the edge because of certain situations that feel out of control. It's all about **S**orting the facts from the feelings; **O**ffering my own heart to the Lord for change; and **S**tarting to talk, rather than listen to, myself.

## Sort the Facts from the Feelings

In my moment of frustration, I had to ask myself: What am I believing about God that isn't true? (I could best answer that question by looking at how I was feeling, and lining up the facts next to it):

\* I was feeling that God had abandoned me as a mother and left me to figure this out on my own. But the fact is that God has promised that He will never leave me nor forsake me; therefore He had not abandoned me as a mother (Hebrews 13:5).

\* I was feeling hopeless in my situation. But the fact is that God promises He will work all things (even that difficult season with my daughter) for good to those that love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

\* I was feeling alone in my situation, like God was unaware and unconcerned with my pain at the moment. But the fact is that God is aware of what I'm feeling at every moment. He has searched me and He knows me (Psalm 139:1-4).

\* I was feeling it was impossible for God to give me the kind of wisdom I needed to be a better mom, but the fact is God is able to give me the kind of wisdom I need because James 1:5 says "if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." In other words, I had to look at the facts (about God's character) and not at what I was feeling.

### **Offer My Heart to the Lord for Change**

My prayer as I was feeling so lousy was not "*change my daughter's heart*" as it started out. It was not "*open my husband's eyes*" as it started out. But "*God, grant me the discernment and the grace to treat and respond to my daughter and my husband in a way that draws a loving response out of them.*"

I had to look at my own heart and say "God, show me what I need to do to be more like You" even though I was convinced that they were both the problem that day. My responsibility before God is to say: *In what way does my heart need to change so I can be more pleasing to You in this situation?*

The prayer: "*Change **me**, God, not all of them*" is usually where real change starts.

### **Start Talking to Myself**

Now you may be thinking "if I start talking to myself, then I really have gone over the edge!" But I found I needed to incorporate this principle in my life to keep me from going over the edge!

We are told in Second Corinthians 10:5 to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" and to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." The reason we are to take every one of our thoughts captive is because our thoughts will wreak havoc in our lives if they are allowed to run loose. Bind them. Imprison them in the truth. Keep them from running rampant through your head!

In Psalm 42, instead of listening to his downcast soul, David started telling himself what he would do: "Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him" (verse 5)

As you send out your S.O.S. (Sort the facts from the feelings, Offer your own heart for change, and Start telling yourself what to do) you will be able to cling to the truth and not fall so easily over the edge.

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This article is excerpted from Cindi's book *Women on the Edge*.