Joshua 1:5-6

Nighttime is a symbol of danger. It is a symbol of withered strength, and it is a symbol of bad decisions and life regrets. This is the time when we all feel most exposed. Nighttime is when we feel most vulnerable. Nighttime is when we feel most alone. It is in the night that strength seems to evaporate. Nighttime is the time when we feel most abandoned. During the day, we can fight the good fight. But the night is a strange phenomenon. Bobby Womack sings a song, "**If you think you're lonely now, wait until tonight, girl.**" What is it about the night that makes her feel so lonely? Why does the consequence have to come at night? In darkness. What is it about the night that magnifies our loneliness? It seems like the darkness is the place where the mysteries of life hang in the air and dares us to face them. The night is when the uncertainties we face come crashing in all around us all at once. It seems the night is the time when our vision is blurred both spiritually and physically. I know we have felt alone during the day. We have all felt those moments when we had no answers during the day. However, they seem to be magnified at night.

Darkness brings a kind of loneliness and dread that paralyzes us, and it stifles our ability to fight the good fight when we need to fight it the most. Loneliness is an emotion even Job found daunting. In chapter 2 of Job, Job is alone. He sits on a rubbish heap, and his wife has come and gone after an argument. His only companion is a piece of a broken shard of pottery he uses to scratch scabs off his body. He is a broken man.

But no one can explain the power of darkness that accompanies his loneliness. No one can explain how these two imposters grip our lives and move us into realms of action we later regret and must repent of. Not even the wisest of us can comprehend the power of these moments.

The night seems to breed a loneliness that suffocates. It is a loneliness we can't seem to detach ourselves from. I know tears of sorrow have been shed in the daytime. But tears in the night, tears in the wee hours of the morning seem to overwhelm sometimes, even destroy. This nighttime thing seems to find the kinks in our armor and push and turn the knives of pain and loneliness deeper into the already painful crevices of our memories and regrets.

One of our renowned artists sings of the desperation of getting through the night. She sings of the pain and emptiness that is felt during those moments when the strength we need from God seems to be missing. Gladys Knight sings about the war we wage with loneliness in the night. She tells the story of how nighttime seems to highlight humanity's weakest and most horrendous moments. She paints a picture that appears initially to be warm and comforting. However, as she moves through her lyrical portrait, it changes, and darkness seems to engulf her. She becomes overwhelmed by the dark and finds herself just another individual struggling and failing to overcome the ugly side of life and living. She says, "**Take the ribbon from my hair. Shake it loose and let it fall. Lay it soft against my skin, like the shadow on the wall. Come and lay down by my side till the early morning light. All I'm taking is your time. Help me make it through the night. I don't care what's right or wrong. I won't try to**

understand. Let the devil take tomorrow. But tonight, I need a friend. Yesterday is dead and gone. And tomorrow's out of sight. And it's sad to be alone. Help me make it through the night. And it's sad to be alone. Help me make it through the night. I don't want to be alone. Help me make it through the night."

But her struggle is not the only nighttime struggle. The Son of God was at His weakest moment in the night. It was in the nighttime that Jesus wanted to give up. It was nighttime when the weight of the world seemed to come crashing down on Him. It is in the night when our Lord felt the emptiness of human loneliness. It is in the nighttime that Jesus felt all alone and abandoned by God. It is in the night that Jesus wanted to forsake His mission. It is in the night that Jesus says yes to God. Yes, to the His assignment. Yes, to the pain of the cross. Yes, to the emptiness and fear that seem to control Him momentarily.

Yes, nighttime can produce moments of great fear, but it does not have to become a moment of defeat. Nighttime can become a time when loneliness can eat away at you and cause you to stumble, but you do not have to fall. Nighttime can be a time when our strength is vanquished by the obstacles of the moment. It does not have to be our undoing. The same God who came to the aid of Jesus is available to each of us. The same God who stilled the waters of confusion on the Galilean Sea can calm your moments of trial. The same God who helped Job overcome can be your overcomer as well.

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage." ~Joshua 1:5-6