

Chronicles of November  
(Depression and Holidays)

Frederick Mason #55487-056 USP Tucson PO Box 24550 Tucson, AZ 85734

There are a lot of people who go through some down times during the holidays, and inmates are no different. Sometimes life just beats you down, and even if you are positive for 6 days of the week, sometimes the seventh is a haymaker.

How do inmates deal with it? There are so many ways to address this, and in much more detail than here, but I wanted to share with you one of my journals when I had felt like I had hit rock bottom.

This entry is dated November 23rd, 2017, and at the time I had been pretty stressed about a number of things; it just seemed like nothing was going right for me. You'll read of my depression, and as I usually do in my journals, I will "Pause" in between to try to color in some details. Let's begin:

November 23rd, 2017: Near 4pm on Thanksgiving. I didn't go to chow, and because of that, forfeited not only my Thanksgiving lunch, but the sack dinner too. I'll go hungry tonight, but I refuse to participate in the Thanksgiving meal, when, to me, there's little to be thankful for. Personally, my family doesn't give me any encouragement.

("PAUSE: A few things here; in most prisons, they serve a Thanksgiving meal, FAR better than most meals they have. We get the turkey, the ham, the pumpkin pie and a lot of other dishes that you'd regularly get. It is quite a feast.

But on many compounds, like USP Tucson, because lunch is heavy, they give us "bag dinners", so that staff can go home after lunch. The bag dinner usually has light sandwiches and a bag of chips and a fruit. But this year, it was much better; a package of tuna fish, a chocolate bar, fruit and other treats.

So, if all this was in the meal, why didn't I go? Because as I said, I was depressed, and for a number of reasons. The first was that I was disappointed in my family.

Guys, I cannot stress enough how critical it is for family to not give up on their loved ones. Many times, we have nothing left in this world but family and friends, but when they don't write, or send a few dollars to help us buy what we need, we face doing time all alone. Some guys would rather die than live that way.

In my case, very very few of my family and friends ever write me. My mom always says, "but you're the writer in the family", but how hard is it to go to Walmart, buy a card and send it off?

Or, how hard is it to Western Union a few dollars so I can buy deoderant, and not hustle to make money to buy it? When you feel that nobody on the outside cares, it makes your life very

difficult. Ok, let's continue...)

Here at the prison, staff treat us like dogs, and inmates here are ungrateful, greedy and uncaring. Even my faith in God has been affected; why should I be thankful for my persecution? Where is the God of Elijah, the God of more than enough? Where is the God of peace and comfort? I've not seen much of that.

Yet, in my frustration, I talked to Mike, who was going through a spiritual warfare. He knows what it's like too. Yet last night, he found encouragement in our talk and has been led back to God. I'm not so easy to persuade.

("PAUSE: I was going through multiple levels of stress, the first was family. The second was how the prison treats us. It's bad enough we are in prison, THAT is the punishment. It is not <sup>for</sup> any officer, from the warden on down, to personally torment inmates, but they do it often here at USP Tucson. As far as treatment of inmates, they are some of the worst in the federal system. Not all of them are like that, but far too many.

I was also frustrated with the inmates themselves. Look, I know a lot of guys here deserve to be here, but sometimes you look at how some act and just feel like Hell itself can't be much worse.

For example, some guys here at USP Tucson are so greedy that they're not satisfied with anything. One guy that eats at my table buys food from other guys, and has a mound of food on his tray, yet he STILL complains about his portion, while eyeballing everyone else's trays.

"Lemme get your cornbread..."

"Lemme get your cake..."

"Lemme get your chicken..."

I call these kind of guys, "Lemmies", because they're always asking for food.

And on top of all this, then there's my frustration with God Himself. I am not saying I'm the most religious inmate in the country, far from it, but darn it, I pray, and I've seen God work miracles in my life, before prison and in prison. I KNOW there is a God. But where the heck is He, when I need Him?

I have been praying for inmates, for finances to I can buy the things I need (hygiene, snacks, shoes, ect), because my family has been so slow in it, and friends are too busy to deal with it, thinking inmates are taken care by the government...

don't be fooled by that...

So I was very frustrated that my prayers for finances have not been materialized. Maybe God has answered, but it has not come to fruition, and its frustrating being broke all the time...

So you start to wonder where God is, and if He really cares? Compound that with the holidays, and you see why I was bouncing off rock bottom.

I can deal with doing the time; I have for, at the time of this essay, 5 years. I can make a difference if somebody will give me a chance to do so. My writing has made a tremendous impact; my prayers have helped many guys, and as weird as it sounds, I am one of the more popular guys on the compound, because I can talk to anyone.

I'm trying to make a difference.

But it's so blasted hard when support dries up, and you have no one who is willing to help. Gosh, even \$20 a month helps me do a lot more than nothing for months...sigh, just venting, let's wrap this up...)

I'm frustrated, broke, discouraged and depressed. So, I skipped- protested- the meal. Not only to the prison- in addition to emailing the Warden- I also protest to God. I cannot... will not, proclaim God to others if God refuses to bless His OWN children. So my stomach will growl tonight... I'll live...

End of entry.

Let's back up a second. I mentioned "Mike", one of my friends here. It just so happened that he was in the same state of mind I was, and I talked to him out on the yard that night.

I had every opportunity to shoot at God, telling Mike that maybe God isn't fair, or compassionate... but stupid me could not bring myself to hurt his faith, so instead, I did the exact opposite, spending the hour encouraging his faith.

Gosh, what a fool I must have been.,.,.

Yet, what was going on was that deep inside, I was fighting for hope. And in that, I could not let my feelings on the temporal hurt another guy's faith. He needed encouragement, not DIScouragement. I would not want a person to give up on my faith, so I had to help Mike hold on to his.

I had a shot at God... and didn't take it. As bad as I was feeling, I should have "cursed God and died", as Job's wife advised him to do. But even then, broke, distressed, depressed and confused, I couldn't do it. Privately, I could voice my extreme frustration to God, but publically, to another person needing the same help I couldn't get from family, friends or even God, I was not going to let that guy fall without some help, and hope.

Anyway, that's all for now, until next time...

(Feel free to write me about any questions you may have)