

Forklift Encouragement for the “Road”

By Shari Miller

[Leader’s notes and Bible passages available online at www.lwml.org.]

“I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind.
Some come from ahead and some come from behind.
But I’ve bought a big bat. I’m all ready you see.
Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!”

~ Dr. Seuss

Introduction

Share with the group or in small groups what you think about this humorous quote. Can you relate this quote to a difficult time in your life?

Opening Prayer: Dear Almighty Father, we rejoice and thank You for creating and sustaining each one of us. We give You thanks and praise that, in spite of our daily failure to live as Your children, we have forgiveness and the

hope of eternal life because of Your Son’s victory over sin and death and the grave. Please send Your Holy Spirit to be with us today as we study Your Word. We love You, Lord! In Jesus’ great Name we pray. Amen.

The dictionary defines a forklift as a “self-propelled, tractor-like machine used for hoisting and transporting heavy objects by means of steel fingers inserted under the load.” In other words, the forklift carries the weight of a load that one person alone could not possibly lift. Let us consider the burdens each of us has and the way our Lord lifts the weight of those burdens from us.

Bowed down ...

David says in **Psalm 145:14**: *The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.*



A common phrase of commiseration offered in today's society is "You look as if you are carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders." Read **Psalm 38, verses 4 and 18**. What is the root cause of being bowed down?

Continue reading **Psalm 38:5–17**. Identify specific physical characteristics of being bowed down cited in this Psalm.

Share with the entire group or in small groups a time in your life when you have felt bowed down.

If time permits: Luther defines sin as "every thought, desire, word, and deed which is contrary to God's Law." There are two types of sin: original and actual. Identify which type of sin is referred to in the following:

Psalm 51:5

Matthew 15:19

Romans 5:19a

Galatians 5:19

James 4:17

Upholds and lifts up ...

According to **Psalm 145:14**, who upholds and lifts up those who are bowed down?

In each of the passages below, identify the burden and how the Lord lifts us up.

Psalm 40:1–3 (Psalm 46:1; Nahum 1:7)

Psalm 55:22

Psalm 94:19

Matthew 6:25–34

Matthew 11:28–30

John 3:16

2 Corinthians 4:13–18

Colossians 1:13–14

After reading all these examples of God's uplifting presence in the life of His redeemed, what words come to mind? Share a good word with the entire group.

If time permits: Comment on the following. "When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on for so long in the first place." *Unknown*

Show me the way ...

David prays in **Psalm 143:8**, *Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.*

How does God answer the prayer of David in your life? What encouragement does He give you as you continue down the road of life?

Acts 1:8

Romans 6:4

Romans 15:4–5

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

Philippians 1:14

1 Thessalonians 5:11–18

2 Thessalonians 2:16–17

Hebrews 10:25

Since we are encouraged, we can become encouragers. What are ways that you or your group can be encouragers for one another? Among your family? In your community? Into the world?

If time permits: **Colossians 3:12–17** gives a word picture of the family of God. What characteristics does Paul say that members of this dearly loved family have?

If time permits: Barnabas — whose name means Son of Encouragement (**Acts 4:36–37**) — was a faithful companion to Paul on some of his missionary journeys. In **Acts 9:26–28**, he told of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus and made it possible for Paul to stay in Jerusalem. Can you name other encouragers in the Bible?

To You [O Lord] I lift up my soul ...

In what ways do I, in turn, lift up my soul to the Lord as David says in **Psalm 143:8**?

Psalm 134:2

Psalm 141:2

Isaiah 40:9

Philippians 4:6

Can you think of other ways?

Just as a forklift relieves the weight and burdens of a heavy load, our Savior Jesus relieves the weight and burdens of our guilt and sin. Because of His redeeming work, we are encouraged to live godly lives to the glory of our awesome God. Thank God for His "lift" gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives, especially as we face difficult decisions, trials, and concerns.

Closing

End this session with a circle prayer. The leader should open and close this prayer. Every participant is encouraged to contribute a one-sentence prayer beginning with the phrase: **I praise You, Lord, for ...**

Sing "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" (*LSB* 739) or "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (*TLH* 457; *LW* 516; *LSB* 770). A CD of Psalm 145 or Psalm 148 could be played in addition to reading these Psalms during the lesson.

Shari Miller, wife of Rev. Larry and mother of Joshua and Johanna, is the President of the Montana District LWML. She lives in Helena, Montana, and has written various articles and studies for the LWML.