

## Springs and Sponges

By Shelley Tvedt

Do you remember the old-fashioned spring beds – the metal frames with hard springs on which mattresses were placed? Which do you think is the better place to sleep—between the springs and the mattress or on top of the mattress? Of course on top of the mattress is the answer; yet often, I find myself between the springs and the mattress.

The election, the moral decline of our nation, the future for my children, making ends meet, the daily concerns of life...the circumstances of life keep piling up into a huge mattress, and there I go...under. I'm uncomfortable, worried, restless, hurting, troubled. And then God gently says, "Shelley, you're under the mattress again!" He lovingly reaches for me... *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

I turn to look in His Word and I begin to read... *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah"* (Psalm 46:1-3). I think about that, and as I do, I realize I'm on my way out from under the mattress.

I continue to read... *"The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah"* (Psalm 46:7-11). I lie down on the mattress. Nothing impedes my view of God. Before, all I could see was the mattress of my circumstances, not God. I had a heart in turmoil - discouraged, weighed-down, and blinded because I had crawled where I could not see God. Now there is nothing to hide the view of the LORD my God, and I can rest. What Peace! For my resting is on the only One who can provide peace amidst the circumstances of life. Isaiah reminds me that God *"wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee"* (Isaiah 26:3). He goes on to remind me to *"be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Philippians 4:6-8).

Peace is restored to me and life seems good again...until the next time I see the raging sea, and like Peter, I sink beneath the mattress. But praise God, for He loves me and ever reaches beneath that mattress to draw me out.

I have yet another conflict. I battle with a sponge. When I let the sponge be filled with what it was created to be filled with, then I know peace. But when I take hold of that sponge and begin to squeeze it according to my pleasure, peace departs, and I become filled with tension. I often don't notice until my "hand" begins to ache from the tension of squeezing the sponge. It is then that I recognize I have been trying to squeeze God off the throne of my heart and to place myself in command. It is disobedience to the will and commandment of God.

*“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:13-14).*

*“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).*

*“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19).*

*“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:12-13).*

I hear my Heavenly Father say, “Shelley, let go of the sponge...yield...obey.” I hear the words of an old song:

*Let go and let God have His wonderful way.  
Let Him be the Potter and you be the clay.  
He'll mold you and make you what you ought to be.  
Let go and let God have His way.*

Let go of the sponge and let God have His throne. Present *“your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).* *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:30-32).* Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).*

Again, I must choose to let go of the sponge and as I do, I find the Truth of God's Word and the Way in action in my life, *“for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:17; 22-25).*

Whether I am struggling with the mattress or the sponge, I have robbed myself of the peace that God intends for me as His child. As I yield my will to His will, taking my eyes off the circumstances of my life and placing them back on Him, I find that *“the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place” (Isaiah 32:17-19).* The storms and struggles don't end...I just *“know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12b).*

Today, like me, crawl out from under the mattress, and let go of the sponge.