

Book Excerpt

A Cup Of Chicken Soup for the Soul

'Overcoming Obstacles'

by Charlie Plumb

Several years ago I found myself a long way from home in a small prison cell. As a Prisoner of War, I was tortured, humiliated, starved and left to languish in squalor for six years.

It's important that you get a vivid mental picture of this scene. Try your best to smell the stench in the bucket I called my toilet and taste the salt in the corners of my mouth from my sweat, my tears and my blood. Feel the baking tropical heat in a tin-roofed prison cell – not that you'll ever be a P.O.W. But, if I am effective in these few moments we spend together, you'll see that the same kind of challenges you face as a teenager, a student, a leader, or a parent, are the same basic challenges I faced in a prison cell: feelings of fear, loneliness, failure and a breakdown of communication. More importantly, your response to those challenges will be the same response I had to have in the prison camp just to survive.

What qualities do you have within you that would allow you to survive in a prison camp? Please pause here, think about this question, and write in the margin of this page at least five different qualities necessary for survival. (If you've written faith, commitment or dedication, you've already broken the code.)

As I worked my way through the first several months and then years of imprisonment, I found I already had a foundation of survival tools learned in life from my parents, preachers, youth leaders, and teachers. And the life-saving techniques I used in that prison camp had more to do with my value system, integrity and religious faith than anything I had learned from a textbook.

Sound like your life? I suggest that the adversities you face in your life can be just as debilitating to you as six years in a communist prison camp could have been to me.

Now here's the test: the next time you have a huge problem facing you, turn back to this page and read not my writing but your writing in the margin. You'll find that the same factors you've written here, which would serve you well in a prison camp, will serve you even better in the challenge of everyday life.