

"Why God? Why did you take her? She was so close to life, why did you take her but spare me? Why do we have to live with the pain of not knowing her? Why God do I have to go through all this physical suffering when my family needs me?"

These are some of the questions I've asked myself over the past month. When bad things happen, it's our nature to question God and ask him "Why?" "Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do innocents, especially little ones, have to suffer from tragedies of this world? Why does a loving God seem cruel at times?"

I'm not sure there's a perfect answer to these questions. But I have learned two valuable things through my own personal difficulties lately: 1 - it's okay to ask "Why God?" and 2- when we don't know the answers we're instructed to turn to God's Word. There are many examples in the Bible of strong people asking God "Why?"

Moses was sent by God to insist Pharaoh free the Israelites from slavery. Instead of releasing them, Pharaoh expected more labor with fewer materials. In Exodus 5:22 it says, "Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.'"

Have you ever asked God "Why am I here? Why did you send me here? I've done what you've asked but why are you not keeping your promise?" Even when the Israelites were given their freedom and were being pursued by Pharaoh's army, they chastised Moses by saying "Why did you bring us out here to die when we could live as slaves?" But Moses' answer to them was "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

Maybe that's an answer to "Why God?" ...to be silent. Maybe God is trying to teach you to be silent, go to Him, immerse yourself in His Word, and let Him fight this battle. I've had to learn that lesson. I've gone through the chaos of hearing my sister's gut-wrenching scream "She's gone! I've lost the baby!" Running down the hallway to retrieve my dad as my mom frantically tried to calm down my sister to get more information. Her falling to floor once she realized what was happening. Then desperately called anyone and everyone she could to go be with my sister as quickly as possible.

I've experienced the chaos of a hospital triage room with a lodged kidney stone and sepsis overtaking my left kidney. The bedlam that ensues when the septic alert button is pushed and there are nurses & doctors from multiple departments giving orders, putting sticky tabs all over my chest, hooking up wires placed on those tabs to machines, reading vital stats quickly, explaining in as simple words as possible the plan for the near future, trying to understand exactly what's going on with me, and was terrified that the sepsis infection was spreading past my kidney. It wasn't until there was silence that I could process what was occurring to my family and me. I had to just be silent and let God work through the doctors to save my life.

Job had every right to question "Why God?" Everything was taken from him: his land, his children, his health, his everything. In Job 10:1-2 he cries "I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me." After his friends tried to convince Job to curse God, he refused. Job never gave up his faith and hope in the Lord.

Maybe that's another answer to "Why God?" Maybe He's testing your faith and teaching you to put your Hope in Him. We've all felt at one time or another that we're more cursed than blessed. Sometimes it's easier to count the failures or bad things than the blessings or good things.

These past 2+ years have been very difficult on me and our family. My kids have struggled with health issues, which have led me to live in "survival mode". Once they finally got healthy, it was time for me to

start focusing on my own health. Now it seems like everything I do to fix the damage to my body; I fall even further apart. I tried to start exercising again, and ended up dealing with a bulging disc in my back. When I tried to eat healthier, I have setbacks of migraines, kidney stones, and sepsis in my kidney. I've been diagnosed with anxiety. My sister & her husband had their daughter taken from them just 1 month before she was to be born. They've experienced heartbreak no parent should have to face. It's easy to fall into the "Woe is me". We can relate to Job. We know the times when it's easier to count the heartaches than the blessings. But his story reminds me to keep my faith and hope in Christ. He will give us blessings far greater than anything we receive on this earth.

Finally, Jesus knew his purpose. He knew his destiny. He knew why he was sent to Earth as a baby. In the end, He knew God's plan for his suffering & death. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

When we pray for God's will to be done, it makes it difficult to question "Why God?" But as he was hanging on the cross, God had to turn away from Jesus. God is so Holy, that He couldn't bear to be around all the sin that Jesus was enduring. Jesus suffered His Father's distance for 3 hours as he agonized over the weight he was carrying. Matthew 27:46 says "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Jesus prayed for God's will to be done, yet he still questioned why he felt forsaken by God.

To "forsake" another person means to leave them entirely, usually in a moment of need. Has your "Why God?" ever been cried out at time when you didn't feel His presence? Have you felt like your prayers didn't go higher than the ceiling and never reached His ear?

Maybe another answer to your "Why God?" is silence from Him so you can find your own strength, or He's teaching you to seek Him through His Word, or He's using others to help you. That's what He's also done for me through my story lately. Even though I've felt His presence in the hospital, there have been times when I've felt all alone in my struggles. Only 1 person outside of family was able to visit me in the hospital. My pastor wasn't able to come see me. I felt like I pleaded for people to talk to me, but very few heeded my words. It wasn't good timing for others to be there physically for me. At times, it's been hard to pray, hard to know where to go in His Word. But it's been through friends and my fellow Christians who have guided me to certain verses or who have prayed for me on my behalf that have given me the confidence to be secure in the Hope of Jesus. It's been my Chapel Family being there for me spiritually, who have brought me up and given me strength. Through times of being alone, God has continued to speak to me; to help me bear my own burden and to seek Him myself.

So how do you get out of the "Why God?" slump? Through my experience, the answers only come when I started changing the "Why God?" prayer into the "How God?" prayer. "How God can I use this bad situation for YOUR good? How God can YOU be glorified **through me** in these difficulties? How God can I use my suffering to make good for You and be a testimony to others?"

When Moses changed his attitude from "Why God did you ever send me?" into "The Lord will fight for you, all you need is to be silent." He was able to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. He altered his way of thinking and chose to completely trust God so that God could utilize Moses to show His power and to be a testimony that He is the Lord God Almighty. God used Moses to write an amazing story which is still being told today.

It's in the silent times when God speaks the loudest. On the drive to the ER clinic riding in silence, thoughts of death and being with my niece in heaven took over, but God interrupted to say "Nope! I'm not done with you yet, Child!" After being rushed to have a nephrostomy tube (kidney catheter) placed in my back to begin draining the sepsis infection and then taken to ICU, it was in the quietness I was able to hear my Lord's voice answer my "How God can You use my suffering". He told me, "What I'm going to

do with you will be amazing. This will all add to your story, your testimony, to show that I am God. You will be a living Miracle and you will help others. Tell your story." I've had to be reminded during my recovery to let go of my schedule, my expectations, my plans and to let Him fight for me. For when I do, He writes another beautiful chapter in my journey.

Job struggled with "why God?" but he used his faith and hope to Glorify God by being an example to his friends. He didn't stay in his pit of misery and suffering, but tried to make good by preaching to his friends of God's love even through his trials. In the end, God condemned Job's friends for their lack of faith, and blessed Job with more than twice what he had before.

I don't share much about my private life on social media. I've learned lessons from posting too much or sharing more than I needed. I struggled with whether I should share my situation with those on my "Friends List". How would they view me? Would I come off as looking for sympathy or being boastful? Would I be sharing this for the right reason, and what would that reason be? But when God instructed me to share my story, I was given the confidence that it's okay to let my friends and family in on my situation. But I also knew that with whatever I decide to post, I needed to point everything back to God.

I hadn't learned that lesson when I shared my hatred for kidney stones after my first ER clinic visit. When I shared the obituary of my niece, whose first sight was of Jesus' face, I only quoted one small verse. I was fortunate enough to have the mental capabilities to share that I was in the ICU and needed prayers. God knew I was weak and prayers were what I required at the time. From then on, I did my best to praise God for healing, ask specific prayer requests, share a Bible verse, or tell my story to encourage those who are also struggling. My goal from now on is to Glorify God in all my social media outlets.

Jesus never guaranteed the "easy life" for believers; in fact, He promised affliction and pain. But the Good News is that Jesus also confirms blessings through Him for those afflicted when they change their attitude from "why?" to "How?". Matthew 5:2-6 reads, "And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.'"

He knew there would be times when we're poor in spirit and ask "why God have you forsaken me?". He knew we would mourn and ask "why God do you contend against me?" He knew there would be times of hunger and thirst longing for satisfaction asking "why God did you send me?" But the Bible provides promise after promise that we will be given the kingdom of heaven, be comforted, shall inherit the earth, and be satisfied when we ask, seek, and knock. Ask God "How" instead of "why", seek Him through His Word & fellow believers, and knock on his door because Jesus' last declaration before ascending into heaven was "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Once you are able to turn the "why God" prayer into the "How God" prayer, over time you can look back and see the true answer to "why God" because of all the ways He'll use you. God will be always there for you as He has for me and my family. He will always show up to teach you how He's the best-selling author of the greatest story you'll ever know...your personal testimony.

Kristi Kingsolver

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