

How God Answers When You're in Trouble

Last week I lay on the floor of my laundry room trying to light the pilot light in our troublesome water heater. At the beginning of the month, my husband took an 18 percent pay cut. In an effort to cut expenses, we dropped, among other things, a handy insurance policy on our household appliances. And just five minutes before my daughter emerged from the shower announcing there was no hot water, my mechanic called with a \$1,300 car repair estimate.

My first attempt to light the heater failed. In the 10-minute let-the-gas-clear-out waiting period that followed, I told God, "I really could use your intervention right now. I really don't want to call the plumber again."

I thought I heard Him chuckle. "What is it you need Me to do?"

"Remind me that we're going to be OK," I said. "Remind me that You're real." And then I felt silly. "I know it's just a water heater. I know it's just money. But I need to know You've got us."

On an intellectual level, even that prayer sounded silly to me. There is no magic prayer that makes trouble go away. And I'm one who believes that not all of God's promises are for this life. In fact, Jesus promised this life would be hard, especially for those who follow Him. So what was I really asking for?

I think I was asking for Him to strengthen my faith. I don't know about yours, but mine is dynamic. On some days it's super strong. On others a faint breeze could blow it over. Circumstances (and, OK, maybe things like personality, brain chemistry and hormones) play a big role in what kind of day it is for me.

My new novel, *Afloat*, is a supernatural-disaster survival story about a motley bunch of people stranded on a river in a floating home. They are divided over how to get out alive, and two deaths expose hidden intentions and dark histories. In the story, God makes a promise to the hero, Vance, and then appears to break it. He promises survival to those who do a certain thing, but not everyone who does it lives. What's that all about? It puts Vance into a tailspin of doubt.

When life is painful, doubt is like a blister that puts a barrier between the wound and the world. The protective layer—maybe God isn't real after all—is undesirable but normal and maybe even part of our healing process. Because in my experience, God has the greatest opportunity to reveal Himself to us in the deepest valleys of life.

If you know a little about me, you know I've spent most of the last two years in various phases of a long crisis. During this hard season, doubt about God's love for me, care, and even His existence have breathed a hot fog around the edges of my mind. Doubt is never comfortable for me, but I'm learning to value seasons of doubt as a chance to know God more fully.

"You don't really need Me to prove myself to you," God said to me in the laundry room. "You're strong. You know what you know. Besides, you humans like to give My fingerprints other explanations."

I know. God is the greatest victim of identity theft that ever was.

"Still, it would be nice," I said.

That chuckle again.

The hot water heater lighted on the second try. That afternoon, the mail held a small tax refund from a 2011 adjustment and news of a small medical credit due to us from a bill paid last year. The sum was about the price I would have

paid the plumber if I'd had to call him. (Still had to pay the mechanic, though!)

Call it whatever you want. I call it evidence. And maybe a divine sense of humor. The troubles will go on, but so will faith.

How do you find strength for faith when doubts claw at your heart? Sound off on Facebook.

Erin Healy is an award-winning editor and bestselling co-author (with Ted Dekker) of the supernatural suspense novels *Kiss and Burn*. Healy delivers a unique take on suspense with a little decidedly feminine point of view, although she admits her latest release, *Afloat*, has more of the male point of view than her previous releases. She began her career as an editor and has worked with many popular authors in a number of genres. Healy currently resides in Colorado Springs, Colo., with her husband, Tim, and two children. She is a member of *International Thriller Writers* and the *American Christian Fiction Writers*.