

3 Keys to Praising God Even When You Don't Understand

I remember that night so well. Swatting unwelcome mosquitoes, I knelt and prayed in the African hospital next to my 18-month-old daughter's crib. Bethany was sick—very sick. The doctors at the hospital felt baffled and unsure of what to do next. I felt panicked and uncertain prayer would help. Steve felt anxious and unconvinced that doctors knew what they were doing. The whole situation felt like a nightmare.

There next to my daughter's crib, the tears flowed freely. I don't know that I had ever felt so alone. I remember my faltering prayer: "God, where are you?" As I listened for some sort of response, I clung to truths I had memorized years prior. *God is good. God loves my child. God's plans are always best.* Really? Doubts pummeled my faltering faith.

I knew what God was inviting me to do, but it felt impossible. Surrender my child? Ludicrous! It was too hard. It didn't feel right. God was supposed to heal.

My mind went to Abraham (Gen. 22). God had promised him a son. He fulfilled His promise, but it took a long time. Finally, in his old age—seriously, *really old*—God gave Abraham a son. But then, God called Abraham to give up his son. What kind of God asks that? It feels unfair. Why give a child if you're going to take the child back? But Abraham considered God's request and laid his son, Isaac, on the altar. He surrendered. God spared Abraham's son, and as a result of his obedience, Abraham's faith grew.

Kneeling on the cement floor of that African hospital, through many tears, I prayed this prayer, "*Lord, you love my precious daughter even more than I do. If you choose to take her, I will choose by faith to praise you anyway.*" The moment I

prayed that prayer, peace flooded my soul; I climbed on the cot in the room and fell asleep.

God actually did heal Bethany, and she is now a beautiful mother of three little boys. And as for me, **I learned 3 lessons I will never forget:**

God has the right to give and take away. He is sovereign. Sometimes I don't understand His ways, but I know He is good. Anything God gives me as a gift in my life is on loan to me. Everything I have—my husband, my children, my grandkids, my house, my health and my finances—belongs to Him.

God calls me to praise Him in advance before He answers. When I act in obedience and praise God and thank Him for the answers I don't yet see, the Holy Spirit strengthens my faith and gives me peace. I gotta be honest, I don't understand how He does this, but I know it to be true. In the years that have passed since Bethany was a very sick toddler, countless times, I have praised God for the answer He will give before I have seen His answer. Time and time again as I have chosen obedience, He has been faithful to strengthen my faith and bolster my trust.

God is worthy of my praise and thanksgiving all the time—no matter the circumstances. The truth about God is that He is good, holy and just all the time. Circumstances in our lives might not feel good. I don't always understand why God doesn't just swoop in and fix it all. But here's the thing: if I understood God completely, He wouldn't be big enough for me to trust. So I choose to praise Him even when I don't understand—and when I praise Him, He gives me peace.

Friend, this Thanksgiving the circumstances of your life might feel very dark. You might be struggling with health issues, relationship issues, financial issues or something just as hard. Will you choose by faith to praise and thank God that He is good, even though your circumstances are not? If you do, He

will strengthen your faith and give you a measure of peace. If He can do it in my life, He can do it in yours. {eo}

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