

4 Things to Remember When Bad Things Happen

It's the age-old question everyone grapples with at some point in their lives, when the injustices of life present themselves in unthinkable ways to those who simply do not deserve them. Why? This question resonates when financial hardships come. Why did I lose my job when I was working hard and doing everything right? Why? This question resounds personally when death touches our lives. Why did my loved one die of cancer? Why? This question reverberates when we experience loss as a society. Why did that young man kill those people (mostly children) at Sandy Hook School? Why?

In my own life I have wrestled with this question. As a pastor, I have found myself face to face with it, as I have watched the people I minister to deal with hardships, difficulties and death. My city, Las Vegas, has been one of the hardest hit cities in this most recent recession. My heart broke as I watched good, upstanding members of my church lose businesses and homes. I've presided over many funerals, including those of the young, which are exceedingly difficult. There have been moments, looking at the tear-stained faces of the parents and seeing their desperate attempts to make sense of the tragedy, that the question *Why* seems to be screaming at me.

In my own personal life, this question has also challenged me. From the loss of my father-in-law to cancer, to other personal tragedies, and the bankruptcy proceedings my church recently went through – *Why* was the first question I asked God.

The trouble with going through trouble is that our minds instantly want to connect a cause with an effect. This is why inexplicable pain or grief is so difficult to take. There isn't a reason those children at Sandy Hook should have died.

There isn't an explanation that will satisfy the grief the parents and that community are now bound to. There is no easy, pat answer that will make the pain more bearable. But there is an Answer.

As I began to ask God, Why – through my own grief and pain, God brought an unexpected answer to my Why. When I asked Why, He answered with Who.

Honestly, at first, this didn't feel like an answer. My heart was broken. My world was in a tail spin. But over and over, as I demanded to know Why, He brought me back to Who. To Himself. To His Presence. To His Son Jesus. I began to realize that He was leading me away from needing to know the reasons, and leading me back to Himself.

4 Keys to Standing Strong When the Why's Come

I want to share four keys that helped me through my pain:

1. **GET REAL WITH GOD.** It is important to be honest with God about how you feel. We are 'feeling' beings. God created us this way. He can handle how you feel. When I was grief-stricken, I was bluntly honest with God at times. He never rebuked me. He loved me through my grief. He loves you. He can handle your anger. Remember that according to Isaiah 53 'It was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down.' NLT
2. **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.** When difficulty strikes, we often forget to take care of ourselves. We have to be sensible. It is incredibly important during the storms of life, that we remember to get away and rest. You simply cannot ignore your own needs – physically and spiritually. You will heal faster when you recognize the need to get away and get perspective. Even Jesus needed to withdraw to grieve (Matthew 14:13).
3. **IT'S A SEASON.** Remember that all of life happens in

seasons. God designed nature to remind us that there is a time for everything. Seasons of grief or hardship come. But then they go. When you're in the moment, it can feel like forever. But it won't last forever. It will come to an end.

4. **IT'S NOT THE WHY, IT'S THE WHO.** Remember that the ultimate Answer to the Why's in your life is the Who. It is the Person and Presence of Jesus. As you run to Him. As you pour out your heart to Him. As you are honest with Him, the healing will come. The perspective will come. The strength will come. The grace will come. He is the Answer in the midst of your pain.

Every circumstance and situation we face is different and unique. The pain I've experienced is different than the pain you've experienced. There's no point in comparing, because pain is relative to what you've faced. But the truth is: we've all experienced pain and difficulty.

On this side of heaven, we may not know all the reasons for why something has happened. But we can know Jesus. We can experience His Presence. He isn't afraid of our weakness, grief or anger. In fact, the Bible says 'He is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed.' He is I AM. He is everything we need Him to be in the moment we need Him. And ultimately, we can trust Him. We may not understand the Why, but we can always trust the Who!

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