

Cory Asbury: How God's Reckless Love Helped Me During My Daughter's Diagnosis

In the late fall of 2013, our first daughter arrived. Lily Joy Asbury was born weighing 6 pounds even, perfectly healthy in every way. Anna and I were immediately smitten. She was the most beautiful thing we'd ever beheld, and from the moment we saw her, she captured our hearts completely. I remember rocking her back and forth as I sang prophetically over her each night before bed. I would declare truth and destiny over her with new songs each evening.

Everything changed about three months later when Lily had her first (of many) life-threatening seizures. It was very early one morning when Anna violently shook me awake, screaming, "She's not breathing, Cory! She's not breathing!"

My body rose in a shell-shocked, zombie-like state as I tried to make sense of what was happening. "Call 9-1-1!" I blurted out without even thinking about it. Before we had time to process what was happening, Anna (in her pajama shorts without a coat, on a blizzard-like winter morning) grabbed Lily's limp, pale body, jumped into her 4Runner and headed to the hospital about four minutes from our house. Thank God she took matters into her own hands because it was another 15 to 20 minutes before the ambulance reached our home, and who knows whether Lily's infant body would've lasted that long without medical intervention.

Trying frantically to process what was happening, I woke Gabriel (our then 4-year-old) and rushed to the hospital. When I got there, they were still trying to resuscitate Lily on an

operating table. Gabriel burst out crying, scared and confused; I quickly followed his lead. It was one of the scariest moments of our lives. We watched as doctors worked to revive her. As a dad, the feeling of helplessness was devastating. There was nothing I could do to fix my baby girl. All I could do was watch and pray (in tongues, very loudly).

My mind immediately began to wander to the darkest places. *Is Lily going to die? What have I done to offend God? Why would He take my baby away from me? What deep, dark sin have I committed to stir God's anger against my family? Is. This. My. Fault?*

A few days later, after what felt like a lifetime, Lily was discharged from the hospital. Unfortunately, the doctors weren't able to give us any conclusive answers as to why this had happened to her, so we left confused, distraught and defeated. For the first few weeks following the incident, we pretended it hadn't shaken us to the core. It wasn't until it happened again (and again and again and again) that I truly wrestled with the question: Is God good, or is He not?

Allow me to provide some levity amid a pretty heavy story. Eventually, we took Lily to a neurologist, where we discovered that these episodes were cyanotic spells. We realized the common thread was an antibiotic she had been taking. An allergic reaction to the antibiotic had caused her throat to swell and hurt. Then, because her little brain and body didn't know how to respond to the pain and trauma of the swelling, she would hold her breath and pass out. Lily is 100% healthy today. She is strong and happy and has not suffered an episode for almost two years.

It's easy to love and trust God when life is good, but when things fall apart is when we find out what we truly believe. I grew up saying things such as, "God is good! All the time!" But in this time of testing, I realized I didn't actually believe those words. They were just nice ideas that kept me

feeling safe and secure. They weren't planted in me deep enough to get me through this season. Instead, I had to dig down and honestly look at whether I had faith in God's goodness or not. I threw out all of the stock, customary answers entrenched in my mind—whether from Sunday school or random religious rhetoric I'd picked up along the way—and grappled with the very real questions I had concerning His character.

I screamed and yelled things like, "God, if You're so good, how come You're letting Lily suffer like this? If You're so powerful, why don't You just heal her? If You're such a good provider, why are our medical bills piling up?" To my surprise, God answered. He didn't have to, but He answered anyway.

I'm not going to force-feed you the things He spoke to my heart in that season like some sort of one-size-fits-all panacea to your problems because I believe He wants to speak to each of us individually. But I do want to encourage you on your journey.

James puts it best in the first chapter of his best (and only) epistle: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV).

But perhaps you, too, have had an experience that shattered your platitudes and caused you to wrestle with God. Maybe you dug deep at that time and resolved it. Or maybe now is the time to do that. You don't need to fear coming to God with your honest feelings and questions. Say yes to the invitation to grow in maturity and relationship with Jesus even when it hurts. A faith that is tried is a stronger faith. {eoa}

This is an adapted excerpt from Reckless Love by Cory Asbury.

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