

Mark Batterson: How This Famous Spurgeon Quote Inspired Me to 'Kiss the Wave'

I have a friend who has had a migraine for five years. Moments of relief are few and far between. The pain became so debilitating that he eventually had to resign from the church he was pastoring. He's been to countless specialists. He's tried a wide variety of treatment plans. Nothing seems to help much or for long.

I asked him how he's managed the pain and the emotions that go with it. He said, "I've learned to kiss the wave." I must have given him a quizzical look, so my friend explained. He was quoting Charles Spurgeon: "I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages."

It's a powerful sentence all by itself, but the backstory makes it even more meaningful. Before I unpack the whole story, let me say something point blank. Kissing the wave doesn't mean we don't experience storms or get seasick during them. The good news? There is a God who can rebuke the wind and the waves with these words: "Peace, be still." But before you rebuke the storm, you need to accept it. You can't move past the pain if you ignore it or hide it or deny it.

A few years ago, Lora and I found ourselves thrown against the Rock of Ages. Lora was diagnosed with breast cancer. If you've had cancer or have a loved one who has, you know that a thousand questions fire across your synapses. *What stage is it? How do we treat it? What is the prognosis?* Fortunately, we caught it early, and Lora is better than ever.

Can I brag on my wife? I don't think I've ever been prouder of

her. Lora kissed the wave. How? She participated in her own healing process by making some courageous changes. She became intentional about everything she put in her body and in her mind. Along with changing our diet, we did our best to eliminate toxins in our environment. Yes, that includes people. Lora started practicing meditation more regularly. We even started frequenting comedy clubs. Why? Laughter “doeth good like a medicine.”

When you get cancer, denying the diagnosis does no good. If you don't own it, it will own you. Kissing the wave is confessing what's wrong—in this case, cancer. But it's also professing what's right—God's healing power. Remember my miraculous healing from asthma? It began with a *brave prayer*. For Lora, the healing process began with a *brave question* she stumbled across while reading a poem about illness:

What have you come to teach me?

When we find ourselves in difficult situations, we get so focused on getting out of them that we fail to get anything out of them. Then we wonder why we find ourselves in the same situation all over again. There is nothing wrong with asking God to change your circumstances, but His primary objective is changing *you*. The circumstances you're asking God to change may be the very circumstances He is using to change you.

In the words of John Piper, “Don't waste your cancer.” You can fill in the blank with whatever challenge you face. Don't waste it! Maybe it has come to teach you a lesson that could not be learned any other way! Kissing the wave starts with a brave question: *What have you come to teach me?*

You don't need to sabotage yourself—that's for sure. Suffering will find you soon enough. When it does, you must recognize that it has the power to enrich your life in a way that nothing else can. If you find yourself in a season of suffering, that is a difficult sentence to read. I acknowledge

that, and I don't stand in judgment over others, because I don't stand in their shoes. I don't pretend to know the trauma you've endured. I do know this: *everyone is fighting a battle we know nothing about.*

Lora and I have experienced our fair share of grief and pain and disappointment. I'm not sure where we rank on the bell curve, especially compared with those who have experienced injustice or aren't sure where their next meals are coming from. Like our memories, suffering is subjective. We have some long-lasting regrets, like every parent I know. We have deep wells of sadness, like every person I know. We have walked through the valley of the shadow of death more than once, and we have the emotional scars to prove it. We've also seen God turn some of our toughest tests into our most treasured testimonies. We wouldn't want to live those seasons all over again, but we wouldn't trade them for anything in the world. Every *testimony* starts with *test*. Pass the test, and you get a testimony. {eoa}

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