

When Life Throws You a Curveball, Cling to This Biblical Truth

Curveball!

Can you think of a time when you were walking through life and, suddenly, a curveball got thrown in your direction—and hey, it even hit you? I sure can! Life has a nasty habit of throwing things in our path, and we get blindsided. These punches can change our belief system. One curveball may leave us bruised, battered and beaten while another will leave us breathless and crying in a puddle on the floor. Still another may bring up anger within us that we did not know existed. Each one of us responds differently. Yet, we all have experienced the sucker punches and curveballs of life.

One of the things I have learned over the years is that how we respond at that moment makes a huge difference in the outcome. Those very unwelcome hits do have the capacity to take us down and out, but they can also make us stronger and more determined to run hard after God. It is hard to hear when we are struggling to get the next breath and attempting to find footing again.

Coupled with trauma and unexpected emotions that come raging in, we must also deal with the thoughts and opinions of others. If you have been through trauma, I imagine that you have had people say some unhelpful things to you amid the pain. Yes, they mean well, but the reality is the good old Christian clichés do not work and can add more pain rather than bring healing.

The second half of 2014 turned into a challenging year for our family. It was a year that I not-so-affectionately dubbed, “The year from hell.” Our business did not have a lot of work,

but that was not the issue. In the second half of that year, we had two close family members die of cancer. Additional trauma pushed its way into our home through a traumatic issue that rocked the world of one of our children and, therefore, impacted the entire family.

Did we wrestle with God? My husband and I were stretched beyond measure. During this time, I was a pastor at a local church. As a result, I was dealing with everyone else's issues while my heart and the hearts of my family members were breaking. And, of course, we were also dealing with the unhelpful words that were said to us personally.

What do we do when the curveballs come, we get knocked down, beaten up and dragged through the proverbial mud? How do we explain what is happening when we do not have the answers ourselves? How about the moment when Christian platitudes reach our ears from well-meaning believers—or they come out of our mouths? What do we do when we are struggling to get our footing and figure out what we believe amidst heartbreak?

Though it all, we must remember that God is close. Psalm 34:18 reminds us that God is not only close to the brokenhearted, but He also saves us when we are crushed. Furthermore, Psalm 147:3 tells us that God will heal the brokenhearted, and, as a part of that, He will bind up the wounds.

This tells me God is aware that I will face issues that break my heart. That is a fact in Scripture. Yet, in the moment, it can be hard to receive. It is not a Scripture I would quote to someone in the moment of their grief. When we walk with someone who is grieving, we need to let them drive the conversation; our job is to be present and to love them right where they are. However, this was a vital truth I needed to remind myself of time and time again. My personal feelings would scream that God was not there and that He was not going to comfort. Yet the truth of Scripture had to be my refocus; I had to fight for that ground.

As life swirled and felt out of control, I found my searching mind digging a trap. I wanted to know why. I do not know about you, but I want God to see my side. I will even state that He is in control, but I want to reserve my right to know the why and to see if I approve. And, honestly, I probably will not agree.

It is at this juncture where people sometimes say painful things to us as they try to put the “acceptable” or theological answer to that question. As a pastor, and, as someone who has walked through pain, I have learned to tell people we do not know all the answers. I am OK with not trying to explain God. In the midst of the pain, I made a conscious decision to release the why question. In the middle of that decision, there was another major decision: I would trust God no matter what. That trust could not be feeling driven. It must be based on the facts of Scripture and my experience of walking with God over the years.

Over and over, God has led me to Proverbs 3:5-6. That proverb reminds me to trust in Him no matter what. It tells me I will not understand everything, and that needs to be OK. However, not understanding does not mean I am lost or alone. It means that as I relinquish control, He will step in and shine the light on the path ahead. And, if I am a puddle on the floor, He will gently pick me up and set me on my feet again. The question I had to answer was: “Will I let Him?”

What do we do when life throws us those curveballs we did not see coming? What happens when sucker punches come, our world gets rocked and everything feels out of control? What is our response when people say the wrong things, and the pain goes even deeper? When we feel all alone and hopeless, there is one thing we still have control over. Where is our focus? Are we going to allow the grief, pain, sorrow and hopelessness to become our label and focus? Or are we going to walk through the valley of the shadow of death knowing God has us and will ultimately direct our steps.

Will we permit Him to do this for us? I am ready; are you?

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