

When You're Tempted to Grow Bitter During Suffering

Some of my most difficult conversations I have had in the midst of my cancer have been with believers who do not see God in a hard plan. So many believe that the hard time comes and then God makes it better. It is so easy to forget that our salvation came by way of a cross. In those conversations, the story that always comes to mind is that of Joseph.

Before Joseph suffered, he dreamed the end of his story.

He dreamed the moment his brothers would bow down to him, a moment God ordained to save many in the midst of famine. But what did Joseph have to endure? Rejection, jail, false accusations, misery. Every bit of his hard was part of the plan, and it was all for the glory of God.

I know it's easy, as a Christian, to buy into the American ideal that happiness is the goal, that protection from suffering is really living. Some people have entered our home uncomfortable with how much my children understand my suffering. Sally Lloyd-Jones was such a reassuring treasure to me. We spoke about how people do not give their children enough credit. Jason and I let our children lead the discussion; we let them ask what their hearts are ready to understand.

I see my children struggle when we keep them in the dark and they sense our stress without knowing our hearts.

We did not want to tell our children about radiation, that the story of cancer was continuing. The fact is that we didn't want to tell ourselves that either. But once we faced it honestly, something happened. Peace ran through the painful nooks of avoidance. The stress lessened and the grace to face the new hard entered the crevices of unbelief. We are kept,

closely kept near to Jesus in the midst of our story.

Back to Joseph. I'm reminded how he suffered, how he was hurt and forsaken by those who were supposed to love and protect him. Through it all he looked to God. There are days when I'm tempted to grow bitter toward those who have forsaken us in this dark season.

But like Joseph, I look to God and offer forgiveness and grace to those who bring harm instead of protection. I encourage you to read this story in Genesis, and hopefully see why it brings me such comfort. You see, I believe suffering is caught up in the sovereignty of God. I can't not believe that. Jesus was, after all, the Man of Sorrows, well-acquainted with grief.

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