

Why You May Not Want to Ask God 'Why?' After All

Enough. Have you ever said that to God?

"Enough suffering, Lord. I've had more than my fair share of trouble. When is it going to stop?"

Remember the trials and tribulations of Job? His near-perfect life was disrupted by trouble. Lots and lots of trouble. He lost his children, his wealth and his health in a swift series of events that seemingly defied explanation.

Many of us know someone like Job. Someone who has experienced extraordinary suffering. I have a friend who lost his father, brother and wife, all within five months. Another friend and her husband have been unemployed for several years and suffer from several debilitating illnesses. Still another friend has breast cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy in the hope that surgery will be a later option. (Right about now you may be wondering if it's safe to be my friend!)

I recently learned of another person who received bad news. Joni Eareckson Tada has breast cancer ... again.

What did you think when you read those words? Did the word "enough" spring to mind? After all, Joni has been a quadriplegic for more than 50 years. Instead of hiding in a corner or throwing herself a life-long pity party, she became an author, speaker and founder of Joni and Friends, an international ministry that shares the hope of the gospel and offers practical help to those impacted by disability.

She is an advocate for those with disabilities and the author of at least 48 books. She is also an artist, having learned to paint with a brush between her teeth. Joni does all this and more from her wheelchair.

And after battling Stage 3 breast cancer in 2010, she was diagnosed with breast cancer again two months ago.

Why breast cancer? Why now? Rather than ask these kinds of questions, Joni viewed her cancer through a different lens. She has often said that “our afflictions come from the hand of our all-wise and sovereign God.” This diagnosis is no different.

When she was first diagnosed eight years ago, Joni noted with her characteristic sense of humor, “Although cancer is something new, I am content to receive from God whatever He deems fit for me—even if it is from His left hand (better from His left hand, than no hand at all, right?!).”

Joni did not ask why because she was already sure of the answer. She went on to say, “Yes, it’s alarming, but rest assured that Ken and I are utterly convinced that God is going to use this to stretch our faith, brighten our hope and strengthen our witness to others.”

She added, “For years I have hoped that my quadriplegia *might* encourage people struggling with cancer ... now I have a chance to *truly* empathize and journey alongside, affirming that God’s grace is *always* sufficient for whatever the disease or disability.”

After receiving this repeat diagnosis, Joni said, “What good is it if we only trust the Lord when we understand His ways? That only guarantees a life filled with doubts.”

It’s easy for us to quote Scripture when life is pleasant. But when we’re confronted with a dreaded diagnosis, the death of a loved one or a financial loss, can we say with Joni, “My soul, wait silently for God, for my hope is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my refuge; I will not be moved” (Ps. 62:5-6).

When confronted with suffering, often our first inclination is

to ask God, “Why?” Perhaps a better question to ask is “Why not?” We live in a sin-sick world. God never promised us a life free from trouble. However, we can choose how we will respond to the uncertainties and difficulties of life.

I love how Joni puts it: *“Faith isn’t the ability to believe long and far into the misty future. It’s simply taking God at His Word and taking the next step.”*

What next step is God calling *you* to take today in faith?
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