

Why Your Times of Spiritual Darkness May Be Part of God's Perfect Plan

How long has it been since you walked outside at night in a dark place and really looked up at the stars? The darker the night, the better. Telescopes that look at the night sky are as far from city lights as possible. And to truly see as far as possible, you have to go to the Hubble Space Telescope—in the darkness of space! Yes, sometimes darkness might help you see farther.

Our human eyes have a limited ability to deal with light. Shine too bright a light in your eyes and you are blinded. We can't even look at the sun directly.

The same principle holds with our spiritual eyes—for now.

We think we would like to know things God knows, such as why evil exists, what happens when someone dies and details about the future. We might imagine that God is somehow holding out on us and keeping information—light—from us that we need. We get frustrated with the limited light He shines on those things, imagining that if He would tell us everything, we could understand.

But what if God is mercifully allowing us just the right amount of light so that we can see what we need to see, but also preventing the amount of light that would blind us?

Seeing in the Dark

This principle holds in many areas of human experience. When things are bright, we only look at and see what is right here, right now. Seeing farther often requires darkness.

If you are a business owner, you're less likely to invest in

improving your business if everything is going great. You're less likely to invest in your marriage if your relationship seems perfect. It's only when problems show up or pain happens that most people even begin to think about growing.

That's perhaps not how it should be, but it's how we as humans are.

Think of your own experience with God. Did you first come to Jesus because everything was going so well you just had to find someone to thank? Most of us came to Jesus in the dark, when things were going bad. It's then that our hearts are open enough to "see" what has been there all along.

I recently heard an amazing presentation by author and apologist Ravi Zacharias. What I remember most was his statement, "The problem of pleasure is much greater than the problem of pain." When things are too good, when we are too successful, it's easy to forget God completely. It takes a greater commitment to remain faithful when things are good than it does when things are bad.

That does not mean God sends bad things to us. John says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5b). It's not His problem; it's the limited ability of our eyes (rather, heart) to see.

Things You May See Better in the Dark

As humans, it's hard to look at ourselves. When things are comfortable, we don't feel the need to see, or change. Darkness—problems—may help you see areas in your own character that the Holy Spirit needs to change, ways in which you are harming other people or mindsets that are holding you back.

In ministry, as in other areas, success invites complacency. But darkness—lack of response, dissatisfaction, overwhelm and so on—invites you to look further. What have you been overlooking? How can you innovate to something more effective?

What skills might you need to learn?

In God's own dealings with you, think back to the times you have grown the most. It's almost certainly when things were so painful you were "forced" to do so. I've learned much more about God's ways in the difficult times than when things were easy.

A team learns most about one another when facing the toughest opponent. You learn most about your best friend or your spouse when facing challenges together. And you learn most about God when you go through difficult things together with Him.

This principle is only part of God's truth. But if things seem dark right now, consider what God might be inviting you to see.

Seeing Farther in the Dark

Tonight, pray for a clear sky. Get away from city lights, go outside and look up at the stars. Really look. Let your eyes dilate in the darkness and drink in the glory of the sky.

Every time I do that, I feel both incredibly small and incredibly important. I'm always reminded that God made all that! And I also think about how the very God who made all that came to rescue *me*!

Remember that the very God who made each one of those stars also made *you*. And if you stick around, one day you'll be able to see both God Himself and all His glorious universe, and everything about His dealings with you. The light won't blind your eyes any longer. Both your physical eyes and the eyes of your heart will be able to see it all.

And at that time, you and I will be able to say, "He has done all things well!"

Your Turn: *Have you been frustrated or upset about the darkness you seem to be in? Consider God's invitation, that*

this darkness might help you see further. Leave a comment below. {eo}

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