

Don't Ask Why

As we enter the season during which much of the world pauses to celebrate the birth of our Savior and King, Jesus, Christians everywhere will reflect on the last year and hope and pray for better times in the coming one.

It has been a difficult year for many people. From the war in Iraq to the terrible tsunami in southeast Asia in December 2004; from rising gas prices to bankrupted airlines; from massive layoffs to the horrible destruction brought to our own Gulf Coast by recent hurricanes, disasters have brought suffering to hundreds of thousands around the world. This holiday season will be very different for them.

Certainly, they are not alone in their difficulties. We all face storms from time to time-some more severe than others. I can understand why people ask, "Why the storms?" "Why do I have so many problems and struggles?" "Isn't God supposed to protect me?"

In considering these questions, I've determined that it is Satan who plants them in our minds in an attempt to keep our focus on our problems and off God's goodness. Satan strives to trap us in the storm and cause us to live in misery. But endings always bring new beginnings.

Remember when Jesus visited Mary and Martha after their brother Lazarus had been dead for four days? When He finally arrived, Martha said: "Master, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever You ask from God, He will grant it to You" (John 11:21-22, The

Amplified Bible).

Did she really believe those words? I wonder, because when Jesus said to her, "Your brother shall rise again," Martha replied, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (vv. 23-24). I don't think she really understood what Jesus was saying. She was looking toward a future possibility, not a present reality.

When Jesus first arrived, Martha didn't ask, "Why didn't you come sooner?" or "Why didn't you do something?" What she said instead was, "If You had been here-if You had been on the job-he'd be alive." But her statement had the same effect as a question.

Aren't many of us like Martha? We want our lives to run smoothly. When they don't, Satan takes advantage of our insecurity, encouraging us to doubt God's concern for us.

Our first reaction is to ask why? What we really mean is, "God, if You truly care about and love me, You wouldn't have let this happen."

Have you found yourself at some point during this last year asking God, "Why the storms in my life?"

For one moment, let's imagine that God tells you the reason you've faced difficulties. Would His explanation change anything? The effects of the tragedy would still be with you, and the pain would be just as severe as it was before. What would you have learned?

I've begun to think that why isn't what Christians are really asking God. I think the real questions we're asking are: "God, do You love me? Will You take care of me in my sorrow and pain? You won't leave me alone, will You?" Is it possible that, because we're afraid God doesn't truly care about us, we ask for explanations?

Instead, we must learn to say: "Lord, I believe. I don't understand, and I'll probably never grasp all the reasons bad things happen, but I know for certain that You love me and are with me-always."

I believe it often takes more faith to go through something victoriously than to be delivered from it. Most of us go through emotionally difficult times when tragic loss occurs. Those who are walking in faith come out of them-often better than before.

Don't lose hope. If you are hurting right now because of loss in your life, you have a new beginning in front of you. You may go through some things you will never understand, but God has promised in His Word to work them out for your good. Stop asking why and start trusting Him.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times best-selling author and one of the world's leading practical Bible teachers. She has written more than 70 books, including the popular *Beauty for Ashes* and *Battlefield of the Mind*, and her most recent, *Approval Addiction* (all Warner Faith). She is also the founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. and the host of *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide.