

When We Question Why

Each of us, at times, must answer questions that seem to have no logical answer.

I was on a business trip when I received an urgent call from my secretary. She told me that my friend Scott Bauer, pastor of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, had just been hospitalized due to a brain aneurysm that burst. Please pray.

What we didn't know was that by the time I received the call, he was already brain dead. Two days later the family decided to remove the life support systems. On October 24, 2003, a beloved pastor, brilliant scholar, and loving husband and father passed away at age 49.

Most would have considered it the prime of his life. He died four years to the day after becoming pastor of the church his father-in-law, Jack Hayford, had pastored for 25 years.

Inevitably, when something unexpected happens, people ask why. Was this an attack of Satan? Did those praying for Scott lack faith? Why would God take one of the "good guys"?

Jack Hayford dealt with these questions the Sunday after Scott's death. Hayford's insights and the beautiful words of Scott's widow, Rebecca, impacted me so much when I read them that I decided to share them here as my own tribute to this wonderful friend.

But there's another reason I'm sharing them: Each of us, at times, must answer questions that seem to have no logical answer from our limited human perspective. Perhaps the

insights of these godly people will help us when we face our own difficult circumstances.

Pastor Hayford told the congregation that though Scott's death was not the success of a satanic attack, there is an attack Christians should gird themselves against—the lies of the enemy.

"[Satan] will say, 'You didn't pray enough'; or 'What you think is "prayer's power and promise" isn't really true'; or 'Something's wrong with you, and that's why the heavy trial is present,'" Hayford said.

He pointed out that all believers have a decision to make. Whom will we listen to—the Good Shepherd, or the enemy, who lies to us?

Hayford said: "This was not the result of a failure of faith. This was not the result of a failure in medical care. This was the result of a finite body's failure and demise. In Scott Bauer, we received a great gift for as long as the physical package could contain it."

Because Scott's condition was probably a congenital birth defect, the question should not be why did he die so young, but why did he live so long? As his widow stated in her comments about his passing, God had a plan.

She told their congregation: "I want you all to know that I am at peace. The Lord always moves into our current circumstance and speaks to us. So it shouldn't be a surprise that He has now. ...

“Although I cannot see the reason, the Lord sees something beyond Scott and me, beyond this moment, beyond this challenge ... and in His grace and mercy has progressed His kingdom plan. As we all step into tomorrow, though I feel deep grief, I am confident that the Lord has a hope and a future for me, for my family, and for us as a congregation.”

Rebecca went on to share the Lord’s reminder to her that we have only one sure foundation. “[The day he died], I went to the hospital early to sit and hold Scott’s hand. I knew it was the last time I would be able to do so. As I sat there, I said to the Lord, ‘All I know to do, is to keep clinging to Jesus.’

“[The Lord] immediately replied, ‘All other ground is sinking sand—even Scott.’ I knew what He meant. My life is to always be built on Jesus alone.”

This is something we all need to remember when we find ourselves asking why.

A memorial scholarship fund to advance continuing education for pastors is being established in Bauer’s name. Maybe you knew Scott, or maybe you’ve just been touched by what you’ve read. You can send your gifts, marked “Scott Bauer Fund,” to our nonprofit partner, Christian Life Missions, at P.O. Box 952248, Lake Mary, FL 32795-2248, and we will pass along 100 percent of the donations.

Please also remember to pray for Scott’s widow, children, parents and extended family.

Stephen Strang is the founder and publisher of Charisma.