

I Just Suffered A Loss: Now What, God?

By

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Introduction

Loss is a part of life. Everyone suffers losses in their lives – a favorite pet, a job, our health, our belongings, a parent, a child. These losses can cause us deep emotional and physical pain. And it is in these times that our relationship with God is tested. Some people come out of their trial with a stronger relationship with Him. Others walk away from God. What's the difference?

This study focuses on the emotional states we experience during a loss and how we can keep our relationship with God intact.

Scriptures Used In This Lesson

Isaiah 44:24

Romans 8:32

II Corinthians 5:16 – 21

Romans 8:28

II Corinthians 1: 3 –11

Psalms 18: 16 – 19

Psalms 118: 5 – 9

Proverbs 19:21, 16:4, 16:9

Isaiah 14:24

Isaiah 25:1

Why?

This is one question is the most troublesome for us in the midst of a loss. There are variations of the questions that we all ask at times, “Why me?” “Why us?” “Why now?” “Why him/her/them?” It still boils down to “Why?” We want an explanation from God. Strong emotions are mixed in with this question; pain, anger, frustration, disappointment, sadness. The fact that our emotions are so intense makes us even more demanding of an answer. “God I want to know why!”

Three years ago my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent several surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation. During the same month of her last radiation treatment, my wife found out that one of her older sisters had been placed in hospice five weeks prior. We knew she was diagnosed with cancer also, but we had no idea that the doctors had given up. Brenda, my wife's sister, made her husband promise not to tell the rest of the family how sick she really was. Two months later, Brenda passed on to be with the Lord.

Five weeks later, we received a phone call at 6:30 am from our oldest son who was living in Texas at the time. One of my wife's older brothers had suddenly died of a heart attack that morning. What made it so shocking was that he was the "healthy" one of the group. He always ate fruit and vegetables; he was not overweight and did not smoke; he was relatively young (48) and had recently passed a stress test. I can still clearly remember my wife crying and asking God, "Why Bill, Lord? Not Bill! Why Bill, Lord?"

The summer of 1993 was a hard one for us. We lost four close relatives within three months; I lost an uncle and a cousin; my wife lost two siblings – all this after surgeries, chemo, and radiation.

So you would think that if anyone had a "right to ask 'Why?'" it was us. And here are the character traits of God that addresses this question.

God is Sovereign

First of all, we have to recognize that God is sovereign. But what does this mean? Sovereign means that God is the supreme authority in every situation. His will prevails, not ours. Several scriptures speak to his sovereignty. Read Isaiah 44:24. The Lord, Who formed us in the womb, made *all* things...by Himself. The creator of us all and all things has sovereign rights. I think this is one of the hardest concepts to accept about God. He can do what He wants, when He wants, to whom He wants without explanation to us. There are several other "pillars" that can help us accept His authority.



God Is Sovereign

God Loves Me Beyond Measure

There are several scriptures that speak of God's love for us. One of my favorites is Romans 8:32. If God loved us enough to give His Son for us, then what else will He withhold from us? Put another way, God has already proven his deep, everlasting love for us by allowing His perfect Son to be killed so that we can have a deep everlasting relationship with Him. God's desire was to reconcile sinful man to Himself, Who is holy. Read II Corinthians 5:16 – 21. "Reconcile" comes from the Greek work "katallasso" which means to return to favor with, to receive one into favor.



God Is Sovereign

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My wife and I have two sons. To be honest, there's no way in the world I would allow one of them to be killed to save a child molester or murderer or anyone else. God had an intimate relationship with Jesus before the foundation of the world, and Jesus was perfect in every way. But He allowed Jesus to die for the child molester, the murderer, and for us. His love for me is beyond comprehension...but I accept it.

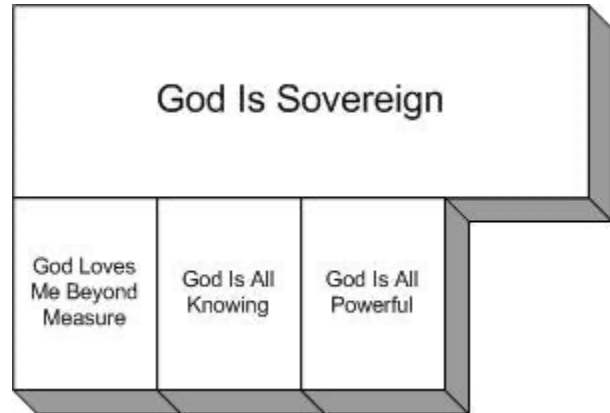
So if I know that God loves me beyond measure, I can more easily accept His sovereignty.

Can you think of a time or situation when it was made clear to you that God loved you?

God Knows All and Is All Powerful

These concepts are basic to Christian doctrine. We learn these attributes of God when we are children. But they are essential to understanding and accepting His sovereignty. Let's read Romans 8:28.

If God loves me and has all wisdom, and is all powerful, then I must conclude that He ultimately has my best interest in mind. But how can a loss be to my benefit? Its not the loss that benefits us, but how we respond to the loss.



One way God brings good out of losses is found in II Corinthians 1: 3 –11. This passage is very insightful and I'd like to look at it closely.

First of all, notice the titles for God in verse 3, the "Father of Compassion", and the "God of All Comfort" (NIV). God is not insensitive to our suffering. He has compassion on us. Read Psalm 18: 16 – 19. And that leads to the next title: *God of All Comfort*. Notice the word "all". God is not limited to comfort us in some of our losses, but *all* of them. Read Psalm 118: 5 - 9.

God is able to comfort us in *all* our troubles so that we can comfort those in *any* trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received. God has made us to be an extension of Christ. As He comforts us, we can comfort others.

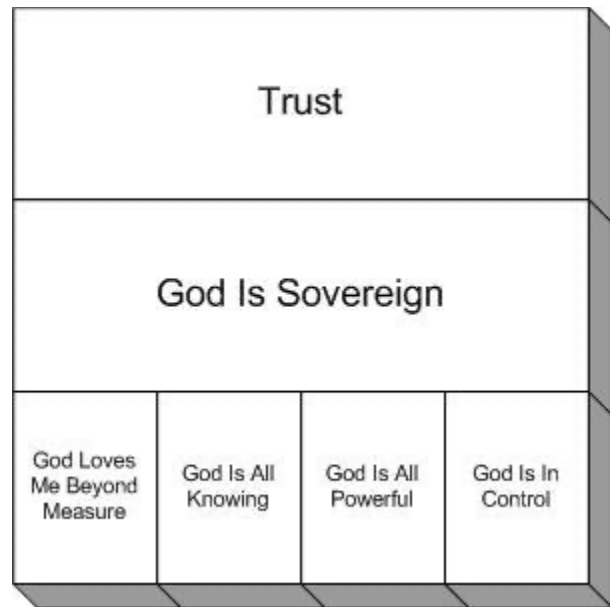
Prior to October 2002, I would have been hard pressed to comfort a man whose wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. For one, I knew nothing about it. Now, I can minister more effectively because I've been through the "fire", so to speak. Did I like the experience? No. Would I want to go through it again? No. Can I be an *effective help* to others? Yes.

Verses 8 – 11 are interesting because it tells us why Paul went through some of the hardships he encountered. Verse 9 is the key. Because of our nature, we will never depend on God to the extent that our relationship with Him is deep, rich, and intimate, on our own accord. It's only when we are "driven to our knees" that we learn to rely on Him. And as we rely on Him, our relationship with Him grows. Our "reconciliation" with Him becomes solidified. We grow during times of loss as we respond correctly.

God Is In Control

The last "pillar" of His sovereignty is that God is in control. Read Proverbs 19:21, 16:4, and 16:9, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 25:1. All of these scriptures testify that God is in control.

And if we know that God loves us, He is all knowing, is all powerful and is in control, we can trust Him. Trusting God is crucial in times of loss. We don't like it; we don't understand it; the circumstances are painful, but if we can trust God "in the midst of the fire", then He can work things for our good.



Has there been a time when you were consumed by flies and became ineffective in your ministry?

Key Point: The best method of killing flies is prevention.

Peace of mind in the midst of flies is invaluable. Peace of mind at *any* time is invaluable. In the Greek, "perfect peace" is translated from "shalowm shalowm", the same word used twice. God's peace is complete, perfect and sound. Flies may swarm all around you, but your peace will be perfect.

Summary

Jesus told us that in this life we would have trouble. But we were not to worry because He had overcome the world. The flies of life may come, but if we keep that "spiritual wall" around our minds, we will be safe and at peace.