



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Rejoicing with Unbearable Sorrow

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Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4 NASB).

The following article is based on a personal testimony written by a mother who lost her young son in a tragic accident.

By Rachel Kraynick

We all face hardship, challenges, and difficulties at some point in our lives. Some have more difficult trials than others. I am no different than anyone else. And to be quite honest, God never promised a life free from pain, hardship or trouble. Even Job, who was considered a man “blameless and upright, one who revered God and avoided evil,” was subject to unimaginable loss and suffering.

I, too, have experienced a hurt that is so deep - so great - that I struggle to find the words to describe it. I am not sharing my story looking for pity or sympathy but in hopes to comfort others struggling, and to encourage them to rely on God and trust in His plan when they have hit rock bottom. I will share the questions that I asked, the lessons that I have learned, and the things that I will never forget.

I was fortunate enough to be raised in a family that has a very strong love for God and His wonderful plan for the whole world of mankind. As a child, my family met regularly for Bible studies every Sunday morning and Friday evening. I remember looking forward to participating in our Sunday school lessons taught by my aunties and being involved in Friday evening studies, which was usually led by my grandpa. Our class consisted mainly of family members, but we would invite friends or neighbors to attend if the opportunity arose. I always felt so comfortable asking questions in our class because “no question was a silly question.” We would be asked to read scriptures and participate in the in-depth conversations to improve our understanding in any of the topics we studied. Our class always encouraged the children to participate, and my curiosity, love for, and interest in God’s plan remains a predominate interest of mine to this day.

After completing university, I moved back home to work, which is where I met my husband. Although raised in a different faith, he attends our Bible studies and supports me in strengthening my understanding of the truth. In 2005 we welcomed our first baby, Chase, then our second baby boy, Cooper. My husband runs a large cattle and grain operation, and I work full time for the Ministry of Agriculture. My boys were always involved in extracurricular activities such as baseball, swimming and



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hockey, but their passion was being on the farm exploring and experiencing all the wonderful things farm life offered. Our lives were full and we were blessed beyond measure.

A Change

In the spring of 2011 our lives took an unexpected and drastic blow. Our oldest son, Chase, was killed in a farm accident. He was six years old. I do not know if I can articulate in words how extremely painful this experience was to us. I can remember the numbing that lasted months, the feeling of anger, regret and sadness that seemed to cripple us for years and which affects us in our lives even to this day. I did not understand how the world could continue on when something this devastating happens! Children are not supposed to die before their parents! Things like this don't happen to people like us! I was living in a nightmare. I hurt. I ached. I cried. I was numb! Our world collapsed. Time stood still and did for a long time. How could we continue in this world without our beautiful child?



Grief overtook our lives and I did not function properly for a long time. There was nothing that could comfort a grieving mother for her child. Even though I knew the plan of God, it did not provide instantaneous relief because I wanted Chase here with us. I wish it would have been me rather than him. Thankfully, we were surrounded by a family that loved us, a community that supported us and a Bible class that strengthened us. We knew that we would never get over the death of Chase, but we needed to find ways to get through it. I initially struggled with, "Why did this happen? Why Chase?" Even though I still do not know why it was Chase, I do know that all of our trials and experiences are "Father filtered" and have been specifically designed for each of us. We read in Isaiah 55:8-9: *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

In Hebrews 11 the "Hall of Faith" names are recorded. Every one of those names listed represented someone God shaped using severe trials in order to fulfill a major role in His plan. Each one experienced unimaginable trials, such as Joseph in the pit, Daniel in the den, Paul in prison, Job as he sat among the ashes and Moses in the wilderness. But the one who suffered the most was God's only son. *He was despised*



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and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Isaiah 53:3. Jesus himself even cried at the cross, *My God, why have you forsaken me?* So I know God uses ordinary people to carry out extraordinary works, but they all have to be “prepped” to do the job.

For every question I had on why this was happening to us, the Bible seemed to provide some insights and answers. Every time our class had a study on a particular topic, we would come across scriptures that would really resonate with me and our situation and provide me a better perspective. The Bible became our survival guide to navigating into a “new” normal way of life.

So, when I asked “Why me? Why do bad things happen to good people?” here are some scriptures I considered.

- Hebrews 5:8: *Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.*
- Hebrews 2:10: *For it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering (hope).*
- 1 Peter 1:6-7: *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, as was necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*
- 1 Peter 4:1-2: *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking; for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*
- James 1:2: *Count it all a joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds; for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (patience).*
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: *Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we are able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (to comfort others).*
- 2 Corinthians 4:8-10: *We are afflicted but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed - so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies (witness to others).*



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- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: *I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities, for when I am weak, then I am strong* (strength in weakness).
- John 9:1-3: He saw a man blind from birth, and his disciples asked him, Rabbi, who sinned, *this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*

Looking back on our experiences, scriptures gave us all the necessary principles for how to conduct ourselves in the most trying of times. God gave us his Word to equip us (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and the Holy Spirit to guide us and to reveal truth to us (John 14:25-27). These are the things that have been reinforced by our loss.

A Grander Perspective

Perspective is both innate and learned, based on our genetics, life experiences and values. However, there is another element of perspective, which is choice. More than just looking on the bright side, perspective is how we choose to see things. I know that we cannot always control what happens to us, but we can control how we react to them. We choose how we act in the face of adversity - we either get bitter or we get better.

I remember a counselor talking to us after the accident and sharing the statistics of marital breakup after the death of a child. The statistics were not in our favor, but at that moment I decided that our marriage would not fall to that statistic. I knew that this experience could either break us apart or make us stronger. We made a choice to have it make us stronger. *He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Trust the Lord

I have come to realize that I am not in control of my life, but God is. I need to trust Him even if I do not understand. Trials present opportunities to trust that the Lord is in control and is working all things for our good. Looking back, I know God has used this particular season of hardship and uncertainty to draw me closer. I have learned more about God and myself in this experience than perhaps at any other time of my life.

These trials may be designed to test us, to refine us, to deepen our characters in a way that we may not have done otherwise. These trials may have been designed to prepare us for a future work that is beyond our comprehension. Whatever His reason was for permitting this experience, I will continue to trust in Him and pray for His will to be done rather than for my circumstances to change.



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- Proverbs 3:5-6: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.*
- Psalms 18:2: *The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, In whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

Pray For His Will to be Done, Not Ours

Sometimes we do not know what is best for us. What we think we need is not what we should have. Only God can know what circumstances are needed to prepare us for what is ahead. That is why we need to pray for His will to be done, not ours. When I encounter moments or days that seem unbearable, I pray to God to provide me with strength and guidance, and to use me in whatever way He sees fit. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God* (Philippians 4:6).

Be Humble

I used to think that things “like that” do not happen to people “like us” and we took a lot of things for granted. I felt strong and confident that I was in control of circumstances. Was I wrong! It is strange how, in a moment, your life can change and how you can fall to your knees.

The Grief Cycle goes between Anger, Denial, Regret and Sadness. Sometimes you go through that cycle multiple times in a day. This is when I really understood I was not in control of my circumstance, but God was. This experience has taught me humility that I may not have had otherwise.

C.S. Lewis said, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself, but it is thinking of yourself less.” These humbling, tearful and uncertain circumstances deepened our trust in the Lord and helped us realize the power of God’s grace.

- Psalm 59:16: *But I will sing of your strength. I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.*
- Luke 14:11: *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*
- 1 Peter 5:6-7: *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

The Strength of our Bible Class – Share Our Burdens

Just as we learn to trust the Lord, trials push us to lean on others, either in our class or in our communities. We have the most wonderful Bible class. I say that thankfully. Our class is small, it meets at homes and has very interactive studies.



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After the accident our whole class was grieving. We not only lost a son, but we lost a great-grandson, a grandson, a nephew and a cousin. We grieved together, we listened to one another, we shared the memories and we helped carry each other's burdens. Humbling as it can be, if we share our hurt, we develop a resilience that leads to connections, trust and deeper relationships.

- 1 Corinthians 12:26: *If one member suffers, all suffer together, if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*
- Galatians 6:2: *Bear one another's burdens.*

Empathy / Compassion

Our own trials and hardships have helped us develop empathy for others. After experiencing this devastating hurt, I have become highly aware that most people hide their sorrow. We force a smile, we leave out details, and we even convince others we are fine. I developed a soft spot for those who put on a brave front and who are able to keep others at an arm's length for far too long. A silver lining in sorrow's dark cloud is that God can use our experiences to reach out to others with compassion and comfort.

- Ephesians 4:32: *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*
- Colossians 3:12: Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Count Your Blessings

Have an attitude of gratitude! The more people I meet, relationships I build and experiences I gain, my awareness of God's rich abundant blessings deepens. I know I have so much to be thankful for, including a wonderful family and a class and the knowledge of God's plan. My love and adoration for our heavenly Father is independent of my earthly trials. I know I will see Chase again and my circumstances are temporary. I continually pray to have a spirit of thanksgiving, to be a positive example for all families and for God to strengthen our faith.

- 2 Corinthians 2:14: *Thanks be to God who leads us, wherever we are, on his own triumphant way and makes our knowledge of him spread throughout the world like a lovely perfume!*
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18: *In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.*



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Stay Focused

Your mind will go wherever you let it, so choose to fill it correctly. Train it to focus on the positives and the good, not because you are naive to the reality, but because it keeps you focused on that future hope for the whole world.

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13: *I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus.*
- Philippians 4:8: *Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

Be Patient

God has kept every single promise He has ever made, so why would He stop now? Everything He has promised to come true has, so now it is my turn to wait on Him, so in His due season these things will come to pass.

- Romans 12:12: *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*
- Psalms 27:14: *Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.*

Be a Light unto Others. Pay it Forward.

In 2011, Chase's Elementary School took on the task of spreading the idea within the community that it only takes one person to make a difference. They taught their students the concept of "Paying it Forward" and handed out Pay it Forward cards to each student, asking them to think about ways to use them. To perform a random act of kindness, a willingness to give your time, energy, or talent without expecting anything in return.

Chase was only six years old when he came home with his card, and he was constantly thinking of ways he could make a difference. Whether it was shoveling the neighbor's driveway in the winter or opening doors for others, Chase's heart was so full of love and goodness to share. The lesson our family learned from Chase's assignment is that no matter how young or old, rich or poor, everyone has something to give. When he passed away, we handed out these cards to all the people who attended his funeral, and still do this day, as a reminder of who Chase really was - a loving little boy with so much to offer.

Every time I pay it forward, I not only think of our little boy, but it is a chance to brighten someone else's day and let our light shine. *You, Lord, keep my lamp burning, my God turns my darkness into light* (Psalms 18:28).



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We Will Never Forget

Having a hope is what is most precious to me. I know that our circumstances are temporary and a promised kingdom awaits us all. I know someday our Heavenly Father will *wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things will disappear* (Revelation 21:4). I also know that *my flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever* (Psalms 73:26).

We will never forget Chase and the wonderful life we had with him. I am thankful for everything he has taught us while on earth and even after he has left. Without him, we would not be who we have become. This experience has strengthened our marriage, made me a better mother, sister, daughter and friend - and because of this I am so very thankful.

In 2014 our family welcomed another baby boy, Coy. Coy has renewed our strength and brought more joy and laughter into our lives. Truly, God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea (Psalms 46:1-2). To God be the Glory! May He continue to use me and my life as a testimony to others.