

Susan:

I remember years ago being in a small group with a pastor and he brought this up, too....does God allow, or is it His plan? **Laura** raised the question, did God “make” her daughter with an 80 IQ? I know the psalmist says that “God knit me together in my mother’s womb” ....I have pondered, do we take that literally or as poetic imagery, a metaphor? I have also been thinking about the video we watched of Wesley Hill, the Christian man who has same-sex attraction, as he tried to discover what is his “story” ....is he this way because of a dysfunctional relationship with his father? No. Was he born with some sort of gene that made him this way, or, as some would say, did God make him this way? Was his same-sex attraction a “good gift from God”? Again, Wesley said no. Wesley said that in the Bible, there is the story of creation in “three acts” - God’s perfect and good creation, a creation that was deformed and marred by sin and death, and then, a story of a creation that will one day be redeemed and restored. Not a creation that will be replaced by something else, but restored to what it was supposed to be. And he placed himself in that story. And so I find myself mostly holding to the belief that cancer, multiple sclerosis, Parkinsons, Alzheimer’s....genetic mutations, and the list could go on and on, are a result of a creation that was deformed and marred. Yet, I believe that God is in control and sovereign, and that He can bring good out of suffering. When my nephew died of an overdose, trying to find out the “why” brought me no comfort, nor did the “what if’s”. The only thing, in the end, that brought me any comfort was reaching the conclusion that God weeps and mourns for our losses, too. That was from a sermon we listened to by Tim Keller about Jesus raising Lazarus, and how, before He raised him, Jesus wept....but it was a bellowing....Keller said that Jesus knew about all the funerals there would be where there would be no happy ending. In the end, that was what was important to me, that God cared about Thomas and that He wept, too. I concluded that if I was handed a “box full of evidence” that explained everything about his death, it wouldn’t bring me any comfort or peace in the end, only God’s presence would.

Rebecca:

This reminds me of something I read from Keller via Twitter, *“Everything sad is going to come untrue and it will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost.”*

I do have to say that when a dear friend told me that God wired my son that way (Autism) in the womb it comforted me. It was like a balm to my heart in that moment. I thought yes.. It is nothing I have done, it is nothing satan was allowed to do, but it was by his beautiful hands and He has a beautiful plan for us because of it. I knew that God is good and God had a plan for his life and this was included- somehow He would make this good. But there have been HARD breakdowns before God..crying out as to the pain this caused us watching him struggle having a friend, and others bully him saying he was weird. As hard as it was and still is-and we are entering a ROUGH season as he is in his senior year in High School, I think it has done nothing but good in our lives in pressing us into Him, and enlarging our

hearts for others who are broken, whose children are broken. Heck WE are broken as parents..so imperfect!! But He is perfect-oh. He has made Isaac one of the most loving, delightful people. It is a mystery as to why He wired Him this way for it has been horribly lonely for Isaac, but somehow this is better than had it not happened. Of course, and then our oldest's Aspergers diagnosis, and love for God growing up yet a turn from God in his late teens which is sin which I don't believe God caused but He is sovereign over..that too has been a deep valley, yet He is making beauty come from it.

I can't help but believe also that parenting is such a tool meant for God to hammer out the hard places in our hearts transforming us..for me it has been resting in His approval and love.

Laura-Dancer

I must be honest here. I can't believe that God *made* my daughter (also on the "spectrum" with an 80 IQ). No one ever cared about her. She was always misunderstood and never had real friends because she was different. People are cruel – even at church. The only people who accept her are those who are usually not the kind of people you want your children around. It has brought great sorrow to me and I can't believe that God would want me so distraught. I can't believe he would make her the way she is, knowing that she would not be accepted in this awful world. She was an innocent baby! It can't be Him who did this awful thing. Why? I see no beauty in this situation. I can't believe He would create her and then let her fail. I don't see the "good" that others have shared here. She is surely taken by the devil now. It is painful to watch your child go off the deep end and to have no control. I have hope and faith, but it is weak.

Mary E:

I think what stands out to me most is how very difficult it is to fully understand why God permits (or actually causes) hardships and yet what unspeakable peace and joy there is in reaching a point in your life where you don't need to understand all that He **does** in order to trust Who He **is**... that He is love, and more than that, He loves you/me, no matter the circumstances. And the icing on the cake is when we can see how He is glorified through situations (diseases, death) that really were the result of the fall of man (and things satan would use to try to bring about our undoing in our relationship with the Lord) which proves that truly all things, even things that only came about due to sin (the fall of man) can be redeemed by God and used for His glory and our good.

Brenda: The thing that stands out to me were the words "He Appoints It". I got hung up on that phrase and had to search my heart about it's meaning. I was always taught that He Allows hardships, but the word "appoint" threw me. In the end, God reminded me that ultimately He is always in control and on the throne. He has shown me that hard things have and will continue to come my way, he is always there, and brings good from the hardships. I trust him in bringing those in my life, to show me what he wants, or to help me grow.

We lost my brother 7 years ago to a horrible accident. It was very difficult to see him suffer before his last day, but in that God showed himself in so many ways. He gave us such peace and showed himself to be the God we loved through his faithfulness, quiet whispers and peace that we felt.

Wendy J: What speaks to me here is another (one of many) hard truth about God. "I form light & create darkness; I make well-being & create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things." (Isa. 45:7) As a believer, it is easy for me to grasp the concept that God is love & that He loves me. It is much more difficult to understand the concept that He not only allows—but creates/plans calamity. Calamity suggests darkness in my human way of thinking, & from there I go to "God is light, in Him there is no darkness." It's another one of those head-scratchers, right up there with Rom. 9:18.

Mary B. Does God plan bad things? Yes...No...both, I think. From our perspective, we are most limited in our ability to see and understand. But from where He is, and in His knowledge and His love He moves for the best of His kingdom and for the subjects of that kingdom. It makes me think of the Saducees saying there is no resurrection, and Christ saying that they are in error because they don't know scripture and they don't know the power of God. It is really hard for us to fathom God's control and the bad things that come into our lives. James says that temptation never comes from God, so that bad things are not planned by Him. Beyond those two different scripture stances, how can we really understand? That is why Mary E's statement is so good, that we trust Him for Who He is even when we don't understand. That is faith.

Chris S. God didn't tell Cain to murder Abel, but it is clear that he knew. My friend who was abused, my own story, I don't believe God made the perpetrators do what they did, people choose sin. I do believe he is in control and allowed it, which is mighty hard, but the alternative seems to be to believe he manages things after the mess. I can no longer shrink him down to that. There is no comfort in that at all.

Bev:

The 3 acts of creation lays it out well. "In the beginning" creation was perfect and as God said it was good. Then God's creation was marred and deformed by sin. Sin has wreaked it's havoc and we live in the midst of the results. But what creation will become is a result of the Gospel. That is at the heart of what we have been studying here on the blog. God Himself stepped down in time in the person of Jesus Christ and experienced the deepest of pain physically, emotionally and spiritually in taking on sin and death. So because of that like you said our only true comfort comes from His presence. I have said before that when there are no answers there is Jesus.