



Who is God When Life Stinks?

“God is Good”

What exactly does THAT mean? Does it mean that everything happening to us is good? Explain then please, the refugee camps in Darfur, violence in Iraq, natural disasters in so many places around the world. Does it mean we are “happy” when the bills aren’t paid, when the kids are sick, when the toilet backs up?

Are we ready to loudly rejoice over “good news”, but then we quickly drop our heads and quietly say nothing when God doesn’t “come through” as we had asked Him to?

I work in the field of early childhood education, and we train teachers how to periodically write objective observations on each child. We purposely avoid words like “good” and “bad” in our notes, because the reader has no idea to what standard those adjectives refer. What adjective would I use now, as I dialed my husband on the cell phone to tell him that I had just received news of breast cancer?

My fingers shook as I dialed, and although still in shock by the unexpected news, I disciplined my focus on the next step. How thankful my heart was for cell phones, and the immediate chance to let my man know this terribly significant news for our lives.

Before I could finish dialing, a voice called out my name. I turned my head to look around. Who? Where? I was in the parking lot and didn’t know anyone nearby. A truck then pulled up and a friend we know from church hollered out the window, “What’s up, Ruth?” Well... how do I answer that one?

Approaching the truck, without faltering I calmly said, “Don, I’m getting ready right now to call Bob, because just two minutes ago I found out that I have breast cancer.” Before Don had a chance to gulp a breath and reply I asked, “Would you pray for us?” We knew Don to be a man who stayed in close communication with God, and desired to know God’s guidance, so I smiled at the “coincidence” of him driving through this parking lot at exactly the moment when I needed guidance most. Don looked a bit like a deer in headlights, but prayed with me, expressed his concern, and then left me to place my call.

Bob’s response to the news was a bit stunned, but he calmly and confidently replied, “We’ll get through this together.” He was concerned, though, for more information and he suggested I drive to the gynecology office to get a written copy of the report.

Numbly, I agreed this was a good idea. It was almost closing time for the office, and I whispered a prayer that I would arrive in time (without a ticket) and see whom I needed to see.

The OB/GYN waiting room was empty, except for two young women who were chatting. I was asked to sit and wait in the outer office, and it was impossible to avoid overhearing the conversation between these two ladies. Sitting nervously on the edge of my seat, I was actually grateful for the distraction of their noisy conversation. They apparently knew each other and were catching up on family news, as they loudly chatted together. One woman was pregnant and the other was telling of her own recent delivery. News moved on to other family members – and I overheard mention of an uncle who had been tested for cancer. Excitedly, one young woman told the details to her friend that her uncle’s test was negative. “Oh”, exclaimed the friend, with enthusiasm and thrill. “God is so good!”

When “God is so good” sprang up as an immediate response to a benign report, my heart almost burst with desire to interrupt. What about MY report? **What does a malignant tumor indicate about God – or about me?** Perhaps God reserves His “goodness” only for those that deserve it most – and had I missed that list? Perhaps my life had already received an abundance of God’s goodness (I knew this was true) but now it was time to “balance things out” with something as rotten and devastating as cancer!

If it is an eternal truth that God is good, then test results of either negative OR positive must resound that truth... I wanted to jump up, tell them that I too believed in God’s tender heart of love for his children, even when He allows tough, heart-breaking news to crash into their lives!! *(Later, I recognized one of these ladies as a young mom from the local MOPS groups where I serve as a mentor mom, so was grateful I had not been impulsive and rude!)*

“GOD IS GOOD.” In order for this to be ALWAYS true, it can’t depend on circumstances. It also does not agree with our desire for comfort! In “The Lion, Witch and Wardrobe”, C. S. Lewis described God’s goodness when he wrote this about Aslan. “He is good, but he is not safe!”

God’s goodness writes the scripts of our lives NOT according to our comfort-seeking petitions, but according to his best plan. His character is seen as he expresses faithful love for his children ~ both in the times of miracles AND times of trials.

Yes, Bob and I have chosen throughout our marriage to trust in God's goodness, at ALL times. We delightfully enjoy the many blessings He so often brings into our lives as proof of His kindness and generosity. We also have wriggled under the discomfort of His perfect love, but benefitted as he taught us new things about ourselves, and shaped us through life's not-so-pleasant events.

We would accept cancer and whatever else God desired as his purpose, despite the pain and disappointment, and we would believe it to be evidence of his love.

Little did I know how wildly this would become the mantra for our lives...

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son.

Romans 8:28 & 29

[Next Chapter](#)