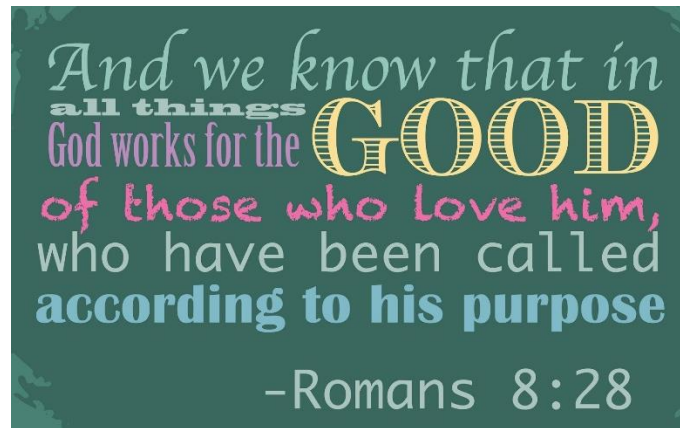

My Journey with God



I herniated a couple of spinal discs and was in agony in hospital for weeks in South Africa, while the Health Insurance decided whether they would or wouldn't pay for my corrective surgery. As a result of the delay, further serious medical complications followed requiring major surgery before the spinal operation could be performed.

Growing through trials

You know when God is going to grow you? I know it happens periodically in my life and it's not always easy. Sometimes He really takes you to rock bottom. I think it's called rock bottom because if you feel like you are falling onto a rock slab and you know you're going to be sore and broken. I feel when I haven't had a spiritual growth spurt for a while, or I'm drifting away from my Father, I know my fall is going to be bad. I beg God not to make it too difficult, but it's only through great trials that we can grow greatly. James 1:2-4 *"Consider it pure joy, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

Also, Paul in [Romans 5:3](#) says *"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."*

Please don't think I'm comparing my health journey to Jesus' suffering and sacrifice in any way at all! What I am trying to say is that the greater the suffering, the greater the reward. Well, that's how I'm seeing it this time. I certainly do not want to go through things like this every time I need to grow. *But that's up to God and His will, not mine.*

I try to remember that mine is nowhere near the horrors Jesus suffered. If you think about what Jesus had to endure and he knew it was coming. He knew they were going to drag him off to be judged and scourged and mocked and judged again. If any of you have ever researched the cat-o-nine tails you will know that it was a terrible weapon that literally took chunks of flesh out of the person. I doubt they gave him much water, if any, throughout his ordeal. I think that would have killed many of us. The crown of thorns. Carrying the cross that far . . . the rough wood biting into the already raw flesh of his shoulder and back. Falling on the uneven ground and grazing his knees, shins and hands. In the heat of the day to be nailed onto that rough wood and hung at an angle where your body weight is pulling on all the nails through your flesh. It was just the most horrific thing to

go through, especially since he was innocent. He did it because he loved us - through his suffering he saved us! If that kind of love doesn't blow your mind, nothing will. Rom 8:35 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"

Harder and harder

Why am I telling you this? When my health ordeal started it didn't seem like it was going to be a lesson for me. There were a few hard things I had to face but I "prayed" about them. They didn't really come right but rather, things just seemed to get harder and harder. My life started to unravel. The medical aid (health insurance) did not respond at first, then they would say one thing one day and change the goal posts the next day and then they refused to cover the surgery at all. The only thing that did not change with them was their constant inconsistency.

I then developed side effects from the pain medication I was given in high doses. My problems multiplied, leading to me having to have another major operation more urgently than the original spinal fusion operation. I had so many sores in my mouth, (another side effect from prolonged use of the medication) and I can't open my mouth more than about two centimetres at most and I couldn't chew anything, so I was put on a soft food diet.

All through this, my boss was threatening me with losing my job and not believing my situation was genuine. I had to get the hospital and the surgeons to write letters confirming my condition and need for sick leave and rehabilitation.

God's intervention

At one point I just hit a wall. I was crying and sobbing hysterically. Finally, I said to God, "I can't, I just can't! I have nothing left in me. You have to take over because if I'm going to survive this, You have to give me Your strength". I really prayed with all my heart, not a quick superficial prayer of just words like I had previously.

Within minutes I realised I had a peace come over me. Phil 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

It reminded me of when I was a little and my mom wrapped me in a warm towel when I climbed out of the bath in winter. From the moment I realised I was calm it was also like my eyes had been opened. I saw God in everything that was happening.

Those of you who know me well will know I can't sit still. I have been forced to sit still and rest. Really rest, no housework, no laundry, no work, no cooking - just rest. I have been trying to launch my son, Ethan, into adulthood and it's been like trying to bath a cat!!! He has had to take on adult responsibilities! He can't be angry that I have forced this onto him because I can't help it. He has been supported by the people around him, but he has had to actually be an adult and it's really starting to sink in. He hated it in the beginning but now he is getting the hang of it. His self-esteem and social skills have started to come back. He is praying and talking about God and has asked to be baptised, which is the best part of this whole experience!!

Making use of the time and circumstances

I have had time to really delve into the Bible and am loving having the time to go into the book of Ezekiel (not sure why I chose Ezekiel, it just felt right) I am learning so much!! I have been able to use my circumstances to preach to people around me. People I have never met before, heard what was happening, come to visit me and prayed with me!!

We are privileged to serve a mighty, mighty God who takes so much care of the little things and He has blessed me with so many people touching my life. What He has allowed to happen in my life, is showing me and others that **something good does that come from difficult situations**. We just have to look for God in it and be willing to learn and grow. I can honestly say that I cast my cares on the LORD and He sustained me (Ps 55:22)

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

Sis Char Hayfield, South Africa
