

When God Doesn't Make Sense

Whether you have a child serving in the war in Iraq, recently lost a loved one or have no way to pay the mortgage this month, crisis takes many forms. Its impact is felt deeply. We feel helpless, we feel sad, we feel overwhelmed. Some of us are in crisis right now, for others, the images flashing across the TV screen are bringing up painful memories from the past.

Shaky marriages, divorce, death, illness, accidents, terrorist threats, war arouse in us a crisis response. What happens when crisis or trauma impacts people's lives? How can we prepare and respond to crisis? Marriage and family counsellor Lynette Hoy, stresses the importance of differentiating between a problem and a crisis:

A problem is something you can do something about. A problem is a situation presenting difficulty or uncertainty which needs resolution.

A crisis of life is a highly volatile or dangerous situation/emergency requiring immediate remedial action. A crisis is usually something you can do nothing about. A crisis occurs when a stressful life event overwhelms an individual's ability to cope effectively in the face of a perceived challenge or threat.

Typically, individuals respond to a crisis with an elevated stress reaction; mental confusion and overload and physical symptoms such as a racing heart and high blood pressure. A crisis can cause people to seek out God or to question their faith.

What are some practical interventions for coping with crisis and fear?

- **Share your story** and your reactions. Begin to process the grief.
- **Seek help and resources** within your church and community or professional counseling if needed.
- **Take care of yourself** through exercise, nutrition and relaxation.
- **Surround yourself with family**, friends and support.

When there's no one to talk to, we can also pray. When we don't know what to do next, we can pray. The What good will come from praying? Why talk to Jesus? Because he understands suffering — not in some distant cosmic way, but in the flesh. He suffered greatly during his time on earth. He was innocent and died a cruel and horrible death. You can talk to him because he cares about you and knows what you are going through. The Bible describes him as a "man of sorrows acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He knew fear and anxiety, physical suffering, hunger, cold, and sadness. He wept. He even questioned God.

We have a lot of questions

Why is my family struggling? Why isn't my husband here? Why is there evil in the world? Why are we at war? We need answers and we need an opportunity to ask these questions. God is not threatened by our questions. The Bible is full of people of faith questioning God, and God answered them.

Habakkuk, one of the books of the old testament recounts one man's challenge to God. Habakkuk saw the world around him and asked God "how long shall I cry and you will not hear?" (Hbk 1:2) He went on to ask "why do you look on those who deal treacherously, and hold your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?" (Hbk 1:13) Sound familiar? **How many times have you asked the same questions, especially when someone else has what you want?**

God does answer Habakkuk. He tells him that in a world that doesn't always make sense to us "the just shall live by faith" (Hbk 2:4). What does that mean? Faith is believing that God is big enough to bring some good out of what is happening in Iraq and what is happening in your family. Living by faith means waking up in the morning and saying "God, I have no idea what you are doing. My world is a mess and it hurts. But I know you are there and you say that you love me so I am going to get out of bed this morning and see if today is the day that you make things right."

It is far too easy just to say "God loves you and everything is going to be okay."

God does love you, very, very much, but there are things that have happened that are not going to be okay. So many among us are grieving for lost loved ones, or anxious for sons and daughters sent off to war, or fighting private battles against illness or betrayal or finances. The days can get very bleak and the nights offer no relief. Still, God is in control so even in the middle of all of this there is a reason to hope. There is a reason to believe that there will come a day when the ache hurts a little less than it does today.

Why do bad things happen? I can't answer that, but I know this — God is very real. He loves us very much and the events that break our hearts break his heart. When God created the world it was perfect and beautiful. He created man and woman and gave them free will. Our choices brought sin into the world. The perfect world he created was ruined, but God didn't abandon us to our choices. He sent redemption in the form of his Son. He sent a savior to bring us hope.

There is reason to hope, even now. The Bible tells us that God promises he will never leave us (Heb 13:5). He can make something beautiful out of ugly circumstances. He can bring good out of what others meant for evil (Gen 50:20). He still offers hope and peace to each of us today.

You can know peace tonight.

There is a line in an old hymn that says "Let there be peace in the world and let it begin with me." Whether that means peace on a worldwide scale or peace in your own heart, it can begin with you right now. John 3:16 tells us that God loves the world so much that He sent Jesus, His only Son, to die for us so that everyone who believes in Him can have everlasting life.

You can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer. Praying is simply talking to God. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. Here's a suggested prayer:

Lord, I need you now more than ever. I want your peace of mind. In the midst of my broken heart and my pain, I turn to you. Jesus, I ask you to forgive my sins and to give me your peace and comfort. I open the door of my life and put my trust in you.

If you sincerely expressed that prayer to God, you can know that you have a personal relationship with Him. He will be your comfort in these troubled times. God promises us “peace that passes understanding” in other words **peace in a world that doesn't make sense**. You can know peace even while the world is in turmoil. God does not change. Ever.

~ Lynette J. Hoy, is a marriage and family counselor, speaker, writer and the Chicagoland Chair of Community and Business Women for Christ.

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