

## **Why me, God?!!!! Why me??????**

"Boy, God must really be gunning for you!" she said.

As the tears began to stream down my face, I was grateful we were working in the relative darkness of an ultrasound room. The comment made by a nurse was simply an off-handed remark. The words themselves were harmless, but they gained power and cut deep because they echoed the feelings that were surfacing in my heart.

### **Why was God allowing illness to destroy my life and career?**

For one more day, I had struggled to get to the hospital in time for noon-hour scans of patients suffering infertility. On the way to the hospital, I was rear-ended by a man who, "thought the red light was green." As a result, I now had a whopper of a headache--which compounded the suffering I was already experiencing from chronic illness.

That day, it was all I could do to sit and make notes in charts, to smile at the patients--to try to pretend I was alive inside--when every part of my body felt like death and wanted death. Sometimes things happen in our lives that change us--and nothing is ever the same again. I often refer to those times as a "day of days," even though my own "day of days" lasted for three long, dark years.

It began the morning after I defended my master's thesis, when I woke up with a pounding migraine, the stomach flu and a cold. Initially, doctors and friends dismissed it as "the stress exorcism." They were sure that I only needed to relax and get rid of the stress that had built up throughout the past weeks.

But it never went away. And for the next eight months, frustration grew as I battled chronic illness and fatigue. I had some good days, but mostly I was exhausted. I always seemed to have the flu and my weight plunged from 125 to 92 pounds. Not long after, I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), namely permanent fatigue and a depressed immune system..

The irony is that in spite of my sickness, my PhD research was extremely successful. As the first researchers in the world to observe and record the process of human ovulation, our studies gained national and international attention. Opportunities from all over the world were waiting for me. It seemed as though the success I had always sought was there, but I was too tired and too sick to take hold of it. And so, it was with mounting frustration that I realized I could not grasp the very thing I wanted most.

Being the typical "Type A" personality, I needed the challenge of my work to maintain my identity. When I couldn't work effectively, my self-esteem plummeted and depression soared. My relationships deteriorated because I was too tired to do anything and too angry to be near anyone--especially people who had the energy to lead a productive life. I could not function at the level I was accustomed to and, in my mind, if I couldn't do it all, I didn't want to live.

As a result, my heart became very dark. And my spirit screamed out to God--WHY? Why was I in such torment? If God had abandoned me to death, then let me die. But if I was meant to live, then heal me and let me function like a normal person.

For the first time in my life, I was unable to control my circumstances. And as I reached the end of my own strength, my only hope was to look outside myself for help--for something or someone who was much bigger than me.

Author and scholar C.S. Lewis says that pain is God's "megaphone to rouse a deaf world." It's true. I never looked to God much when I was healthy, successful, busy . . . able. I knew He was there, but it was only as I was stripped of all my resources that I really began to seek God and to cry out to Him from the depths of my heart.

Turning to God was the first step on my journey towards healing. Healing came as I gave up my frustration and anger about being sick and unable to do things that I wanted to do. Healing came when I realized that my self-worth was not dependant on my academic success or on my ability to do things. And as I acknowledged my inability to love myself when I was sick, I experienced God's love for me during my weakest moments. Healing came when I stopped fighting my circumstances that had been given to me.

Since then, I have had to choose daily to trust that God is still in control and that He will use this illness to accomplish His purposes in my life. For most days, I am able to trust that God's love and strength will be enough for me that day.

But there are also days when it is a struggle to trust. And those are the times when I am grateful for friends who remind me of the truth that God isn't any less powerful because of pain and suffering. He is able to heal miraculously and instantaneously. But we live in an imperfect world and it is only in acknowledging our suffering and our need that we are able to see God's tremendous power to restore.

Each step that I have taken on my journey of reconciliation with God has brought some degree of physical healing. However, I now consider God's healing to be a much deeper and more complete process than a restoration of the physical body. Ultimately, emotional and spiritual healing play the most significant role in enabling me to find contentment and peace in my life whether I am sick or well.

My battle with CFS is the hardest thing I've ever had to endure. And, although I didn't recognize it at the time, it was the beginning of a life-changing journey with God. That journey has changed my priorities and taught me to place my hope in God's power to accomplish things, rather than in my own talents and skills.

Credit - Susan Martinuk