

GROWING Together

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WHEN DISASTER STRIKES – HOW CHRISTIANS THINK ABOUT GOD

*God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.
(Genesis 1: 31)*

Is creation always good? Is the creator always good? Can we walk with a mother desperately searching for her child in the wreckage of what was once their home and still believe that a loving God made, and still nurtures, this earth upon which we live? When the fury of nature is unleashed, all our beliefs are challenged and we share with everyone who cries, "In heaven's name, WHY?" We acknowledge God as the creator and it is natural to believe that God must be all-powerful and able to do all things. But how, we ask, can a loving, all-powerful God allow, let alone cause, the natural disasters which destroy the lives of so many of God's children?



This indeed is a profound mystery. It has challenged women and men of faith for centuries. Since many of us look for an all-powerful God in the heavens, directing the affairs of this world, such tragedies bewilder us, causing many to reject their faith. Are we looking for God in the right place? Suppose we change our focus and look for God, here among God's people on earth? In allowing creation to unfold freely, God voluntarily surrendered the power to control both our lives and the forces of nature. Herein lies the mystery. Whether natural or humanly created, God chooses instead to stand alongside and within those who suffer.

Thus when we ask, "Where was God when the tidal wave struck?" we answer, "God was with the child, snatched from her father's arms - and with the parents as they wept". God is in the heart of the widow, looking at her husband's shattered fishing boat and wondering how she can feed her children. But the story does not end there. There is more. God is also to be

found in the strong arms and warm hearts of those who reach out to help those who are suffering. So often we see good coming out of that which seems to be evil.

Scripture tells us of many women and men struggling in times of adversity, yet offers no quick and easy answers. Job was sorely afflicted, bewildered and resentful of his friends' shallow answers. But eventually Job acknowledged that humans possess only a limited understanding of the creator's mind. Such a mystery also surrounds the cross of Jesus. The apostle Paul tells us that "God was in Christ". That means that God shared Jesus' pain at Calvary just as God continues to share our pain today.

We are created in God's image. So often we try to make God in our image. When we do that, the wonder and the mystery that is God escapes us. We will never completely understand God's ways and God's thoughts, but whether in joy or sorrow, we know God understands how we feel and we need never fear expressing our feelings to God. It is God who empowers us to face disaster.



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