

10 months ago, 3 days before Easter, my 8-year-old daughter Daisy Love was diagnosed with cancer for the 3rd time.

6 weeks ago she was diagnosed for a 4th time... now with 2 inoperable tumors. Since then we have spent 35 days in the hospital and she has had another round of chemo

In total it has been 3 years and 4 months that we have been fighting cancer with Daisy (almost 30 rounds of chemo—6 major surgeries)

The last 10 months have been the most difficult time of our lives... so much has happened AND we have experienced so much of God's presence and grace.

Today I want to share a little bit about the most recent part of the journey, namely the 3rd and 4th rounds of cancer and a couple of profound moments and lessons Kate, the kids, and I have learned along the way.

The reason we want to share these things with you is because they involve you... they involve you because we feel so incredibly loved and supported by you all... in prayer, giving

They involve you because you have been so kind in giving me a leave of absence and in sticking with our family (and Reality) during what has been a very, very difficult time on every front

And they involve you because Kate and I been called by Christ to give our lives to all of you, to Reality, in love, service, leading, teaching, preaching and by example... and as we give you our lives—it has to include our 3 1/2 year struggle with Daisy's cancer with all of its ups and downs, victories and heartbreaks, sweet moments and pain, fear, darkness and hope and faith.

And what I want to do primarily is 1 thing—to testify of our Heavenly Father's wonderful, caring, **rescuing presence**...

... in hopes that when the circumstances of your life are crushing and heartbreaking, you will be inspired to turn to The Father, through Christ, as the one who loves you and is **with** you, holding and sustaining you in your darkest moments.

The **caring presence of the Father** is well represented by Jesus as He shared with His disciples about God's care for even little birds:

Matthew 10:28-31

- Context:
 - Disciples sent on mission (vv. 1, 5^a)
 - Tells them of hardship waiting (vv. 16-17, 22)
 - Sounds great! Life on mission with Jesus! Hooray!
 - Then in verse 28, "**do not fear**"
 - Everything is going to go wrong, you will face pain, rejection, discouragement, persecution, and death... but do not be afraid... instead (Jesus says in **verse 28**), **fear God!**
 - He says it in an interesting way: **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**
 - Verse 28 in NLT: **Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**

- Let me explain:
 - **Fear only God**
 - **The issue (Jesus is teaching) is not** other people, what they can do to you, or your own mortality. It is not your body, or pain or suffering, or even death. It is not the tough, unfair, unjust circumstances
 - All these things will happen to you, Christ says, but these are **not the main issue**
 - They are not eternal—which is what He is getting at when he references the soul and hell
 - So, **what then is the issue** when times are hard? When life hurts. When things are messy and seem out of control. When all is unfair, unkind and seems to be ending badly.
 - **And what does it mean (in these times) to not be afraid (v. 28), but rather, fear God only?**

Verses 29-31 (Jesus explains)

- A sparrow does not fall “**apart from your Father**” ... “**Therefore, do not fear...**”
- Bad things—tragic things/unfair/senseless things—happen... that is just the way it is...
 - **But they do not happen “apart from your Father”**
 - Or as the NIV puts it, “**outside your father’s care**”
- Look what Jesus **doesn’t deal with** here:
 - He does not deal with “**the why question**” or the complex issues of the sovereignty of God
 - Certainly the disciples would be thinking this (**Why!?!**) as Christ told them of the imminent danger, injustice and death that they would face in serving Christ!
 - “**If we are simply obeying God and God is good and all-powerful... why!?!?**”
 - Don’t think for a minute that the Disciples at this point had some **developed theology** of “suffering for the kingdom’s sake” (These guys are no Apostle Pauls)
 - In **Matthew 16** they will reject all together the idea of Christ suffering—and when He actually does, they will abandon Him
 - No, there is nothing noble in their thoughts at this point... they have just been told that in obeying Jesus, they will not be immune to incredible hardship—life, for them, is going to hurt
 - **And they are going to want to know why!?!**
 - “**Why** will we be allowed to be rejected, arrested and executed?”
 - “**Why** is a poor innocent baby bird allowed to fall from its nest and suffer and die?”
 - “**Why** did my husband leave me; chronic illness; the market crash ...”
 - **Jesus is fully aware that “the why question” is hanging in the air (it always is)**
 - Suppose (they) (you) (I) knew the answer—would that make the pain any more bearable?
 - Does “why?” fix it?
 - There are, of course, good answers—but Jesus does not provide them! Nor does Scripture
 - But what about: “For God’s glory!”
 - Yes! Absolutely! “**But, God, you are all powerful and good... can you not get glory some other way?**” (than Daisy suffering for 3 ½ years)
 - See, the answer is not so simple—and Jesus does not address it
 - **Rather, He points us to the real answer to current pain, injustice and suffering**
 - **He gives us something that saves us from “why?”**

- Verse 29 again
 - The NKJV has done the church a great disservice by mistranslating this passage: “**apart from your father’s will**”
 - “**Will**” isn’t in the Greek text. The Greek simply says, “**apart from your Father**”
 - The word “**will**” was added in attempt to clarify (as all translations must do from time to time)
 - But here it has obscured Christ’s point, not clarified it
 - In talking about suffering to the disciples whom He loves, Jesus isn’t addressing **the issue of God’s will**
 - **Rather, Christ makes suffering an issue of God’s presence!**
 - I.e. “**You guys are going to suffer and die. Innocent birds are going to suffer and die. All is not well in this fallen world. But none of you will suffer or die, not even a single sparrow will suffer or die, ‘apart from your Father’ being present!**”
 - **Suffering and death do not take place apart from the Father being present!**
 - I.e. “**Therefore, do not fear! Your Father’s presence is enough!**”

I wasted almost two months wandering around on Mnt. Carmel... **(include full Israel report)**

- Then we got the news about 2 new tumors and Daisy’s 4th diagnoses... and prognosis, which is bad
- **(in that room) Kate and I agreed to stop asking “why” and start asking God to be “with” us**
 - A sudden outpouring of God’s grace
 - Peace and strength and even joy
 - 35 days in the hospital
 - We have been discovering that the Father’s presence is enough to sustain us
- **The issue is not “why is this happening” or “how is it all going to turn out”**
- **The issue is that God is present as it is happening AND that we trust Him with the outcome**
- **AND THAT IS ENOUGH!**

Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

This is what it means to fear God...

- Remember Jesus had said to the disciples facing radical hardship: “**Do not fear all that/them, rather, fear only God!**” (verse 28)
- **To fear God is to reverence/respect/honor/extol/trust Him enough to believe, BY FAITH, that He is good, sovereign and present when life is hard, cruel and out of our control**

Life is always going to throw things at us that will incite fear:

- Illness, impending death, rejection, financial hardships, failure, loneliness, abandonment, the unknown, loss of control...
- **When these things happen we have a choice TO EITHER FEAR GOD, OR FEAR EVERYTHING ELSE**

Fear or Faith?

- **Faith in the face of pain is: Trusting God’s goodness despite any apparent evidence against it¹**

“A living faith is nothing else than a steadfast pursuit of God through all that disguises, disfigures, demolishes, and seeks so to speak, to abolish Him.” –Jean-Pierre de Caussade

¹ Philip Yancey, *Reaching for the Invisible God* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2000), 69.
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Living faith (and to fear God) is to pursue God... not merely answers and resolution

- I was (seemingly) pursuing God more than I ever have—but God was more silent to me than He had ever been
- In my **demand to know** “why this was happening” and “how would it all turn out” I was refusing (though unaware at the time) to fear God, by refusing to trust God

★ In the most difficult times of life we want answers, we want clarity—but God wants our trust

- And rather than answers (which He does not promise), He wants to give us Himself (which He has promised)

What I realized was that I was not **pursuing God Himself**, rather I was **pursuing answers...** and answers as to why God was allowing what He was allowing, doing what He was doing, and not doing what I expected Him to do.

- Which is to really **not trust** Him—which is to really **not fear** Him
 - While Christ says, “**Do not fear all these things... fear God only**”
 - Why? Because wherever there is pain and suffering and death—**He is there**
- And His presence (not answers as to why) is the remedy that Scripture holds forward for fear again and again

In Scripture the **imperative** (or command) “**do not be afraid**” is always connected with the **indicative** (statement of fact) “**I am with you**” (not, “I will explain it all to you”)

Deuteronomy 20:1

When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; **for the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.**

Joshua 1:9

Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, **for the Lord your God is with you** wherever you go.

Isaiah 41:10

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Isaiah 43:1^b-2^a, 5

Do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by my name; you are Mine!
When you pass through the waters, **I will be with you...** Do not fear, for I am with you.

Imperative/Indicative (Divine reasoning)

- Cf. Matthew 10 “**Do not fear, a sparrow does not fall outside your Father’s care, you are more valuable...**”
- = Can no longer accuse God of not caring (“**Don’t you care...?!?!**”)
 - **Why? His presence proves His care and soothes our fear**
 - **Psalm 23: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil (why?)—for Thou art with me**

Christ is the ultimate expression and proof of God’s desire to be with us, and the fact that He cares for us

- **Christ is Immanuel** = God with us
- **The Cross of Christ** = whatever is happening to us, it isn’t because God doesn’t love us
- **The Resurrection of Christ** = whatever is happening to us, it isn’t ultimate
- **The Ascension of Christ** = whatever is happening to us, it isn’t outside His control
- **The Holy Spirit of Christ** = whatever is happening to us, it isn’t happening apart from The Father’s presence
- **The Gospel of Christ** = whatever failures we have, they don’t exclude us from the caring presence of the Father

Daisy is home now... (full time care)

- Scan on Tuesday. There are very few options—time is very limited
- **But The Father is with us**—and that is allowing us to enjoy the time we have, because we are not ruled by the fear of what we may not have—and why that may be
- **His presence is allowing us to have faith rather than fear**
- Not faith in a certain outcome—that is not what is meant—**rather faith in a certain Someone**
 - That He is with us, even unto the end
 - And when the end comes, we shall be with Him evermore... and that is enough.