

Solution for Life



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In this newsletter we will be addressing how God is present in difficult and unusual times. Sometimes it's hard to understand difficult experiences when we know God is love and is in control. We may find ourselves asking, "What is going on? I don't understand life!" Often it may be tempting to ask, "Can a loving God allow this to happen?" The good news is God does not make mistakes and He loves the world and sent His Son to save us from the sin that we see raging all around us. Christ's love is always with us as we move through our day.

"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (Deut 31:6) Be encouraged; the Lord loves you and will not leave you.

Blessings, Jessie

God's Plan | by Daniel Westlund

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" Isaiah 55:8-9.

I have gone through experiences and circumstances that I did not understand, and it may not be until I get to heaven that I will fully comprehend what God was doing to advance His plan (will) and His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. As a minister beginning my 48th year of ministry I have seen and experienced both joy and sorrow, not only personally, but with those the Lord asked me to walk alongside. Did I always understand God's plan and purpose in a specific situation? No. But I knew God was at work and in control. He always worked to draw people to Himself. Sometimes people did not see His purpose and plan and its outcome, but He loves to use people and their lives to draw them and others into relationship with Him.

I remember a time like it was yesterday, June 1982, I was saying goodbye to my family to leave for Oswego, New York to begin a new ministry. As I reached out to hug my mom, the

Holy Spirit said to me, "give her a big hug, for it will be the last time." I did not understand until 10 months later when my brother Jim called and said I needed to come home immediately before Mom died. I was conflicted. I had made a promise to see Mr. S, who was also dying, but did not know the Lord. As I prayed, the Holy Spirit spoke to me again and said "your mom will be with me today; this is Mr. S's last chance." I fulfilled my promise and led Mr. S. to a saving faith in Christ, at the very moment my mom went to be with the Lord in Minnesota. I experienced both joy and sorrow and learned a great lesson; I can trust the Lord in all circumstances. The Lord's thoughts and the Lord's ways are not mine.

The story is told of an old Scots minister who climbed wearily into the pulpit. Bowed and dejected, he had just faced the harsh criticism of one of his deacons. "Sir, there is something radically wrong with your ministry. Only one person has been saved this year, and he is only a boy." The words stung him, for he too felt heartbroken that so few had responded to the Gospel; yet he still trusted God for the results.

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Solution for growth

God's Not Gone | by Kristen Alewine

When I found out the theme for this newsletter was about God being present in hard and confusing times, I knew what story I needed to tell. A couple years ago I had a picture pop into my head. A series of pictures, really. Like an old cartoon that's really jumpy because there aren't very many frames per second. I think in pictures a lot, so that's not odd, but it felt like it came out of nowhere. One of my friends describes the way she experiences God's voice in this way: "A thought I didn't think." This felt like a picture I didn't paint, so I paid close attention and wrote the whole thing down immediately because I knew I would forget it.

I won't go into all the details, but the basics are that the first picture showed a scared little girl holding onto a very tall man's legs for dear life in a tiny pool of light, and then it morphed into a broad view of the same man and the same girl in a beautiful meadow filled with light. She danced and twirled while he watched her and took great joy in her delight and her trust that he was there even if she didn't have a death grip on him. I knew immediately what it meant and I can't say I was very excited about it.

God was calling me to look for Him in places that were unfamiliar to me, gently suggesting that days would be coming where I wouldn't experience Him the way I always have, but that He will always be there, always watching, always loving, and it is my job to keep seeking Him. That day I didn't really give those pictures much more thought. But months later when I was feeling lost and confused I remembered, and it felt like a precious gift. I went back to read my description of what I'd seen and I cried.

I'm still in the middle. I haven't quite gotten to that care-free, twirling little girl. But I'm grateful that even when I can't feel Him or understand what's happening, I know what I'm supposed to be doing. Seeking, asking, looking for God in the unexpected places. He's not gone. ■

God's Plan from page 1

The service concluded and the weary man of God lingered in the church, wondering if there was any point continuing in ministry. A young lad saw him and waited behind. "Please, sir..." "Yes Robert?" "Do you think if I work hard for my education, I could become a preacher?" "God bless you, my boy," replied the old man with tears in his eyes, "Yes, I think you will become a preacher!"

It was years later a missionary came back to London from Africa. He reported he pushed back boundaries of geographical knowledge about Christ and brought a savage chief to become a Christian and leader to influence people to become believers of the Gospel of Peace. In addition, the missionary provided tribes Bibles in their own language. But most of all, he had followed the Lord with all his heart. This was the boy that asked if he might be a preacher; it was Robert Moffat the missionary and he was the "boy" won to Christ by a tired old minister years ago.

On one visit to England, Robert Moffat told of the needs in Africa where he ministered. Among those who heard him that day was young Scottish medical student who had given his life to God for missionary service. Robert Moffat's words pierced his heart. He said, "There is a wide piece of land to the north where I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary

has been." The young medical student asked, "Would it be possible for me to go to that area?" Filled with the vision of what God wanted him to do, David Livingstone's life had been changed. David Livingstone. He was a Scottish missionary and medical doctor who explored much of the interior of Africa. In a remarkable journey in 1853-56, he became the first European to cross the African continent. Starting on the Zambezi River, he traveled north and west across Angola to reach the Atlantic at Luanda. He worked to save souls of men and also delivered men from slavery.

Was the "labor in the Lord" of the old weary Scottish minister in vain? By man's standard of success, yes. He had so little to show for his faithful service for the Lord. But God uses His standard, not men's, to measure success. Sometimes we do not understand, but God is faithful and is always working. God is in control and His thoughts and ways are not ours.

You may be in a difficult situation; you are tired, and you do not feel God is working. I assure you He does not waste anything. We may not always understand what is happening, but as followers of Christ we can have confidence that God is in control, and He is carrying out His plan and purpose. ■

Bella's Story | by Debbie Bellevue

It's interesting how life can teach us how much we are and are not in control of our lives. I've struggled with worry and anxiety for most of my life and, if I'm honest, I would have to say that in some strange way, worry makes me feel that I actually have some control over what happens. I call it the "WORRY PATTERN." Worry can draw our intelligence and our imagination into its service by producing a fearful version of reality. Sometimes we may even treat worry as if it appears to be watching out for us. When we worry, we may actually get the feeling that we are doing something about a situation. In actuality, we may believe that the worry is somehow capable of changing reality.

About twenty months ago on a day late in May 2021 my 13-year-old granddaughter, Bella, was diagnosed with a rare type of childhood bone cancer. It took them a while to figure out what was causing her to have such pain in her shoulder so by the time it was discovered it had spread to her lungs and her back. Over the last nineteen months she underwent pretty much nonstop chemotherapy only interrupted by 3 major surgeries. One to remove the "monster" tumor on her shoulder and arm (which they miraculously did with great success), and lung surgeries on both of her lungs. Those were not as successful as we had hoped and prayed for and after a long and courageous battle, Bella went to be with Jesus on December 8, 2022.

As we walked alongside Bella and Tracy, her mom, on their journey, it became pretty clear what we did and did not have control of. I learned that "worrying does not take away tomorrow's trouble, it only takes away today's peace."

Scripture tells us that God is a good God, that Jesus died for our sins and also that by His stripes we are healed. It tells us that our faith matters and that we need to put our trust in God and that He wants to bless us. But what happens when

what we are hoping and believing for doesn't turn out as we expected? How are we to respond? What are we to believe about the goodness of God?

My mom taught me at an early age that God's thoughts are not like our thoughts and His ways are far beyond anything that we can imagine (Isaiah 55:8-9). We are not in control of what God chooses to do, nor does He have to explain Himself to us. God is divine and we are finite, He is Lord, and we are to surrender to His ways even when we don't understand them. God is sovereign and we are not, but we surrender because we know that God is good. We see dimly through finite eyes, but He has an eternal perspective and calls us to trust in His goodness.

As I reflect on the journey that Bella and her mom took over the last nineteen months, it becomes clear that they came to understand what they did and did not have control of. It became clear by the way that they chose to live out their faith with what had been dealt to them. They made a decision to get up every day and choose life. They impacted many, as was demonstrated by the stories that people told as they gathered to celebrate Bella's all too short life. There was just something about Bella; there was a light in her and a warrior spirit that touched everyone that she came in contact with. I would tell her that no one ever wants to be a warrior, but when God picks you out and calls you to be a warrior, it is a privilege, and Bella was the very definition of a warrior. Warriors are persistent, they remain hopeful, and never give up. Warriors love well and fight for others who are in the battle with them, bringing light and joy into their lives. ■

"The most beautiful people we have known are those
who have known defeat,
known suffering, known struggle, known loss,
and have found their way out of the depths.
These persons have an appreciation,
a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that
fills them with compassion, gentleness,
and a deep loving concern.
Beautiful people do not just happen."

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Why God? | by Stephen Westlund

I hate cancer. We lost my grandma, Marian, to cancer before I was one. Alice, my other grandma, died of cancer when I was five. We lost Her husband Robert, my grandpa, to cancer when I was eight. And my only remaining grandparent, Gerald, Marian's husband, was already showing signs of Alzheimer's when I was eight...so I guess I hate Alzheimer's too! I never really got to know my maternal or paternal grandparents, but I did have one grandparent I knew as an adult, Grandma Edna. Edna was Gerald's second wife. For as long as I can remember, it seemed Edna was always in a battle with cancer too.

Edna had a very matter-of-fact, abrupt communication style and approach to life that sometimes just rubbed people the wrong way. I suppose if I married someone late in life, and she started showing signs of Alzheimer's and then a doctor told me I had cancer, I would be very abrupt and matter of fact, too. But I loved Grandma Edna...she was my grandma, and she loved me.

The last time I saw Grandma Edna, really my last memory of her, she taught me a truth about God that has become a guiding light in my life. I said, "Grandma, how are you?" To which she abruptly responded, "I have cancer, and God is still good." Here was a woman who had battled cancer on and off for years, a woman who watched Alzheimer's slowly reduce the mind and body of her husband, and she had the audacity to tell me God is good. But she is right, no matter the hardship we face in life, no matter the pain, no matter the loss, God is good.

Beyond the loss of loved ones, the biggest loss I have experienced in life has been the loss of a job. But this wasn't just any job. This was THE job. This was the best job I ever had. I was a small business owner with my brothers and my dad. The first four years of our little business were hard, really hard. But then in 2007, in year five, we started to break through. We were a team, we were really good at what we did, and it was fun, really fun. But we worked in the housing industry and 2008 happened. (By the way, I hate recession too! Please say a prayer for me, that word recession is in the news again.)

By 2009, I was looking for a new job, I couldn't afford the mortgage payment, and I could barely afford to feed my family. On that journey, I yelled at God, "WHY! God, why did you let this happen!?"

I also began writing while on my "why God" journey. I needed to understand why God, who is good, would let me go through so much pain. And so, I wrote a book, which I ended up giving the title, "Little Bottle in the Sea. A Deeper Walk with the One Who Made You." On my journey, I came across this quote from Joni Eareckson Tada: "When we honestly ask God the 'why' question, He doesn't give us answers as much as He gives us Himself." Eareckson Tada also said it this way, "God is good, not because He gives us answers, but because He gives us Himself." Spoiler alert, the book I wrote, doesn't really answer the "why God"

question, but it does give some humble insight on how to press on in the presence and power of Christ Himself.

I still don't know why God allowed me to lose my job and go broke. But I know this, in one of my temper tantrums about how much I lost, God rebuked me in my spirit and put on my heart that in my work I was building my little kingdom rather than seeking first His kingdom. If you are a follower of Jesus, no matter what hell this life under the sun brings you, God wants you to love Him and be about His kingdom first. The book of Romans says He will work all things for good, for those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose.

In my journey with the LORD, I have come to learn that asking God 'why' is the wrong question. If I truly want to understand, I should ask God, "What is your purpose in this?" This is a much better question to learn and grow in. Still, from my limited perspective, the purposes of God do not always make sense.

As I write this, my family grieves another loss. Gerald's and Marian's great-granddaughter, Bella, recently stepped into the eternal presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. (I hate cancer!) I never met Bella, but when I was young, I was close to her mom, my cousin Tracy.

What do you do when someone you love is hurting? What do you say when there is no answer to their 'why God' questions? God led me to do what He taught me through my own, much lesser season of loss. I prayed "Lord Jesus, please give my cousin, and all the family, Yourself."

In one of my conversations with Tracy, she shared this amazing truth from Bella's life, that has given me new instructions on how I should approach my remaining years under the sun:

"...I take an immense amount of comfort, knowing that not only is Bella no longer in physical pain, she suffered more than anyone will ever know... but she's also no longer afraid. My little girl battled fear all her life. And she had to face it and overcome it and learn who her God is in ways that most people never will. Her doctor saw how anxious she was on the first day they met her and was astounded at how she was able to walk through and face her fear. I watched her form a deep relationship with Jesus that fit her spunky 15-year-old personality. Because I know He created her, and it was inspiring to watch."

May we all be inspired by Bella and make it the purpose of our lives to know God more and form a deep relationship with Jesus. And may Jesus give us Himself as we face and overcome our fears as He works all things for good in our lives. ■

Solution for the future

Watch & Pray | by Daniel Westlund

At the beginning of each year, I take time to reflect on the coming year and its prophetic implications. Last year I said 2022 would be a year of change and those changes will continue into 2023. On February 24, 2022, the war that began in 2014 between Russia and Ukraine expanded and now indirectly involves NATO and the United States, as a member of NATO. The conflict is creating economic tensions involving the trading of goods and services between nations and a shifting of alliances between various countries. China has sided with Russia against the United States and, with several other major countries, is attempting to create a new gold backed currency to replace the dollar as the world reserve currency. This is one of the battles taking place towards the formation of the planned one world governing body by the year 2030, called the "Great Reset."

I am not an economist, but I know the Bible in Revelation 13:17 reveals to us total control of the world economy by the 8th and final world governing body. Who will be the winner

of this economic battle to fulfill prophecy before the return of Christ? The Bible has much to say about this time called the last days, beginning at Pentecost, ending with the return of Christ. Peter explains this in Acts 2:14-21.

The key to understand the end of the last days is the rebirth of Israel as a nation in 1948. In our last newsletter I wrote about the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, the promise of God. I referenced Psalm 102:12-18 that speaks prophetically of the rebirth of Israel in a future generation; that generation is now. In verse 18 of Psalm 102, the word translated "future generation" means terminal or last generation. When I watch what is happening globally, I realize the coming of Christ is near, even at the door.

"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:36 ■

Bulletin Board

Creative Journaling

The workshop is to assist women in their personal relationship with Jesus. This includes art and creative journaling, thank you journaling and prayer journaling. All of these are ways to grow in a friendship with Jesus.

To schedule your journaling retreat contact Jessie Westlund by calling, 317-319-5838 or emailing jessie@solutionforlife.org.

Present Days and the Return of Christ

In every newsletter, Dan gives an update on the meaning of some of what is going on in the world and how it relates to the return of Christ. Dan is beginning a more frequent update in addition to the newsletter. The purpose is to give updates on the things that are evolving around the world that appear to be leading up to the return of Jesus. Examples may be related to economics, politics, or world powers. He will give insight on how this relates to the last days. If you would like to receive this update, email sfl@solutionforlife.org and request "Dan Updates."

Message from Dan and Jessie

Twenty-three years ago, Solution for Life started on January 12, 2000. We are thankful for the people who have faithfully come alongside us to make this ministry continue for 23 years. There is a wonderful team of people that has been faithful to ensure retreats take place, and that the newsletter and publications are ready to be sent out. Dan has filled pulpits and taught numerous classes. The women's ministry has grown over the

years. In addition, we have had the joy of reaching into many communities with funds to support people in need. We have also been able to support God's servants who have found themselves in places of need. Most of all, prayer support has allowed many to grow in Christ and overcome darkness. It is a joy to humbly serve Him. We look forward to loving people to bring "His kingdom come on earth as in heaven." Thank you for your prayers and support.

Blessings, Dan and Jessie

