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When God Doesn't
explain why



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These booklets are to be distributed free and are not for resale.

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When God Doesn't
explain why



Egerton C. Long

WHEN GOD DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHY...

Picture a young mother suddenly discovering that her first little child had died during the night. Can you imagine her reaction? A frantic call to her husband? A rush to an emergency room? But it was all too late. Their baby girl had died, a victim of 'cot death'. Why? How had it happened? Why?

Now, as their pastor, what could I say as I stood alongside the small white casket covered with rosebuds? How could I explain why God had allowed this to happen? I could not. I could only pray that the God of all comfort would so fill their hearts with His love and the closeness of His presence that they would be able to trust Him. But I could not fully answer their questions – 'Why, Pastor, why?' Again and again I assured them of God's love and prayed that He would sustain them through this severe trial. I could only say: 'Trust Him.'

Another scenario. She stumbled into my study as the secretary opened the door. Here was young woman in her thirties and she could hardly see through her tears. When she asked that hard, familiar question: 'Where is God, Pastor? Why doesn't He answer my prayer? Why doesn't He bring my husband back?' Her husband of 15 years had found someone else and left her with their two primary-age school boys. 'I've been praying and praying and getting nowhere. Isn't God supposed to answer prayer?' What words are adequate at a moment like that? I tried to

I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in God's sight.

I accept Jesus Christ now as my Saviour.

I thank Him for saving me.

Sign your name here

Date ____ / ____ / ____

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HOW TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOUR

If God has been speaking to you as you have read this booklet and if you are willing now to take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, here is what you should do:

1. **Confess** – tell God in your own simple words that you are a sinner needing a Saviour (Read Romans 3:23) Tell God you are sorry for your sin – the Bible Word is ‘repent’.
2. **Accept** – tell God that you see Jesus Christ as your only Saviour and that you accept him now (Read Romans 6:23).
3. **Believe** – that Jesus Christ has saved you because you asked him to do so (Read Romans 10:13). His Word is the assurance that God has done what you asked Him to do.

If you have made this decision today then sign your name here and tell someone else what you have done. Join a church where you can hear God’s Word preached and have fellowship with other believers.

help and prayed with her that her faith might not fail. We all tried to stand with her in the days that followed. Her husband never did come back.

TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARK.

Why does God allow such testings in the lives of His children? Some tests can be both severe and prolonged. They seem at times to be inevitable, impartial, and unpredictable. Often they don’t make sense to our way of thinking. And God doesn’t always explain why He has allowed them. There are, of course, some situations where we can look back later and perhaps see why God allowed a specific test. But in many other cases, we may not know the reason until we get home to Heaven.

TESTS CAN BE VARIED.

We face a never-ending variety of tests. For example, a husband loses his job and cannot immediately find other employment. A young wife develops serious cancer necessitating prolonged and severe treatment. What of the couple who, after trying for years to have a child, finally have a baby but the child has Downes Syndrome? Another all-to-common scenario is where a partner leaves the one he/she had promised to stay with until death separates them. A widowed mother is neglected by her family. A car accident leaves a young man a quadriplegic for life. Think about the parents who pray consistently for their daughter but she refuses to give up her drug addiction and has

no thoughts about Christ whatsoever. The list is endless.

UNANSWERED PRAYER.

One of our hardest tests as a believer in Jesus Christ is unanswered prayer, or when God says “no” to our repeated request. It is always easy to say God has His reasons but even so it can be extremely difficult to be tested in this way. It may be that God doesn’t answer because it is not His time for us to have that request granted. Or He may have something better planned. Or it may not be His will for us to have the specific item we have been praying for. None of these answers are ever easy to live with.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

There are preachers today whose total emphasis is on a ‘prosperity doctrine’. In other words, if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will have health, wealth and a life of pleasure. Those who follow that teaching may find life easy for a short period but then their world collapses around them as soon as they come face to face with a time of major testing.

Christ never promised anything like this ‘prosperity’ philosophy. His words were often the opposite. He gave strong warnings such as ‘in this world you will have tribulation’. He spoke frequently about us taking up our cross – in other words, be prepared for anything that might happen to us as His followers. Testings and trials are part of our Christian experience so

do – to make us like Jesus Christ. Let God use the circumstances and the testings in your life to accomplish this.

Are you prepared to simply and deliberately say today: ‘Lord I give myself again to you. I place my life and everything I am and have in your hands. I believe you can make all things to work together for my good. Help me to trust you where I cannot see the way ahead. Help me to wait on your time and leave my future, my circumstances with you, letting you choose the path ahead. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.’

Here are the words of a saint of God of many years ago: Horatius Bonar.

My times are in your hands,

My God I wish them there.

My life, my friends, my soul – I leave

Entirely in your care.

That is the place to be. May God lead us each one to that place and help us stay there.

did the Psalmist say? 'Even though I walk through the dark valley (of death) I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me.' Psalm 23:4 (NLVGB)

TAKE HOLD OF GOD'S HAND.

Go back over all we have talked about together. Then put your hand afresh into His hand and let Him lead you, hold you, comfort you, sustain you, even carry you through the fire or the test and you will prove what a wonderful loving Father you have and what a Saviour is Jesus. What a blessing is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life day by day.

Two references which may help you so much in any testing time are Psalm 27:13-14: 'I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.' Then Proverbs 3: 4-6 are a continual challenge: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do and He will direct your paths.'

TURN TO ROMANS 8: 28-29

Remember also the words of Romans 8: 28: 'We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose' – now look at verse 29 – His purpose is that we might become like His Son. Never forget that is what God wants and what the Holy Spirit has come to

long as we remain here on this earth. God has planned it that way. James tells us to 'Consider it a gift, when tests and challenges come. Let those tests do their work as you become mature and well developed' (The Message)

GOD'S PURPOSES.

Although we can't always understand this, we need to recognise that God does have a purpose in His testings. We also need to remember that while God has the power to prevent testing, it is not always in His purpose to do so. That is when we need to simply trust Him where we cannot see the way ahead.

Job, the most tested man of God in the Old Testament, recognised this truth. He couldn't understand what God was doing. In a very short space of time he lost all his livestock, his servants were murdered and all his children were killed in a violent storm. He couldn't even seem to feel that God must be somewhere nearby. But Job was still able to say, 'When He (God) has tested me, I will come forth as refined gold'. Gold which has been refined is much more valuable than the raw ore.

TESTED AGAIN AND AGAIN.

Another incredible story of testing is in the life of Joseph as told in the last portion of the book of Genesis. You may remember how his brothers treated him and sold him as a slave into Egypt. There he was wrongfully accused and sent to jail. When an opportunity came for someone to

He spoke a word on his behalf to the king, the man forgot all about Joseph. God finally intervened and Joseph began to see God's hand working for him and through him. Later he was able to say to his brothers: 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.' He trusted God in the dark and could look back and see God's hand and purpose in it all. Most remarkable of all perhaps is the fact that he was used to feed the very family who had treated him so terribly.

Waiting for God to work is rarely easy but God has His time as well as His will. When those two coincide God acts and sometimes acts so quickly we wonder what has happened. There is a helpful verse in Habakkuk 2:3 which, in that instance, was speaking of a vision but it can well be applied to our position, too. 'If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed'.

GOD KNOWS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

When we tend to think that God has forgotten us and left us to battle alone, one of the most reassuring stories in the Gospels is of Christ walking on the water to help his troubled disciples. You can read it in the Gospel of Mark chapter 7 verses 47-49.

Several helpful principles are remarkably illustrated in that incident. Do you remember how, after the feeding of the 5000, Christ sent

that object or engage in that particular activity at that time or stage of their development. Never forget our heavenly Father knows far more than any earthly parent and is infinitely wiser. Christ said 'If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does your heavenly Father know what is best for you?'

Why doesn't God explain why this or that is happening in our lives? Does the Almighty God have to do so? Go back over what we have been saying. In many of the incidents we have looked at in the Bible, God did not reveal His reasons for the testing. In some situations, simply knowing that God, the Almighty God, the ever-loving God was there with them was sufficient grounds for their faith and carried them through to the other side of the test.

OUR POSITION TODAY.

What then is our position today? What can we look for in a time of testing? We can look to see the hand of God sustaining us. We can cling to His promises that He will never leave us. We can even get to know God better as we walk through the dark hours together. That may be one of God's greatest desires in allowing this test to come into our lives. We can cling to His promises. We can read His word and feed on it as we wait for His timing. We can prove in a new way His unchanging love for us. And very often we will look back and thank Him for the experience He allowed us to go through. What

Are you in a similar position just now: Are you saying Lord why was I retrenched?' 'Why is my partner like he is?' 'Why did my partner die?' God doesn't give many explanations. He didn't to Abraham or to Joseph or to Job. He simply says 'Trust me.' And He will give you the grace to go through whatever your circumstances might be, no matter where you are, how old you are or what your circumstances be. Again, remember Christ's words, 'With God all things are possible'.

Abraham went on to see God's wonderful deliverance. God spoke to him in words like this: (Genesis 22:15) 'The purpose of that test, Abraham, was to see how much you loved me. Now I know you love me more than anything else and I will bless you for it.' That may be what He is looking for in your life and in mine.

COUNT ON GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND ON HIS PRESENCE ALWAYS.

A final word or two. Our relationship with God is that of a child with his/her father. Any parent can tell you of the times when he/she refused to grant a child's repeated request. What did the child say? 'But why? Why can't I do this or that? Everyone else is doing it.' Often the parent has said 'Well just because...' and perhaps couldn't give a clear, logical answer which might or might not satisfy the child. The parent instinctively knew that it would be wrong for the child to have

the crowd away? Then He told His disciples to get into their boat and row across to the other side of the lake. **But didn't Christ know what was about to happen? Couldn't He see that a severe storm was coming?** The answer is most certainly 'yes'. Then why didn't He say: 'Men, there is a storm coming, I think you had better wait until tomorrow morning before you start out' But **knowing the storm was coming, He allowed them to go out to face it.**

Here is the first lesson in this story for us. Stop and think of that scene when you are facing prolonged testing. Did Christ know this test was going to come to you? Yes, He certainly did and He still allowed it to happen. Keep that in mind always. He can see what is ahead for each of us even when we cannot do so.

Next, where was Christ while they were rowing their boat and struggling against that severe storm? The story in the Gospels is so clear. Christ was high up on a hill, doing two things: **He was watching them** and **He was praying for them.** Again, there is a lesson here for us when we are being tested. Applying that to our situation today, make sure we remember that He is doing the same in Heaven for us right now. He is watching and praying for us. It is part of His present ministry on our behalf. And His eye is always on us. He always knows our exact circumstances, where we are and what is happening to us.

HIS TIMING.

But why didn't He act as soon as the storm came on the Sea of Galilee that night? If we can calculate it correctly (from the Gospel story) the disciples were rowing for seven long hours before Christ made His move. That sounds familiar in some of our circumstances, doesn't it? Often He waits, leaving us to struggle with the testing He knew we would be facing. Why? Because He sees it as an opportunity for our faith to grow. Paul said it well: 'We gladly suffer, because we know that suffering helps us to endure, and endurance builds character..' Romans 5:3-4 (NLVGB)

THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

At last Christ came to join the discouraged disciples. We are not told that on this occasion He spoke to the storm but His presence was enough to still the wind and waves and let the disciples complete their journey. Those men would never forget that night. The story is repeated by the writers of all four Gospels. Matthew and John were there that night on Lake Galilee and remembered it well. Whoever told Luke and Mark about it, graphically retold the wonder of it all and what the presence of Christ had meant to the disciples out there on the lake.

We, too, need to remember occasions like that when Christ wonderfully came to us and met our need right at the exact moment when we felt

laughed at the whole idea. But they lived to see that son born and when that happened, what did they call him? Isaac – meaning laughter. But age or any other human problem is never a problem with God. You ask 'How is God going to answer my prayer or solve my problem? It is humanly impossible.' Just remember what Christ said 'With God all things are possible.' He simply says to you and to me, '**Trust me.**' When we do that, it opens the way for Him to answer our prayer and fulfil his plan for us.

Remember: A believer is called to expect God to work without knowing how He will do so or without telling Him how to do it.

A DISASTROUS TRAGEDY.

Another variation of the many questions which arise under testing is 'Why?' 'Why is this happening to me? Why is God asking me to do this? God doesn't make sense.' Jesus Christ himself asked that very question. His words on the cross were: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Have you ever felt like that? Do you feel that way now? If you do, you will know how Abraham felt when God asked for the life of Isaac, the boy they had waited 25 years for. How did he feel? How would you feel? (Genesis 22).

Abraham could only say: "I don't understand, but if God could give me a boy when I was 100 years old, then He can take care of this boy now. I don't understand but I can trust God.'

a certain move was definitely in God's will for us. We have moved and then waited for God to show us the next step or the place of service He has had for us. It hasn't been easy. Sometimes living conditions were against us but then God finally opened the way to the place He had in mind when He told us to move. When we finally arrived in that place we had both peace and blessing and we thanked Him for it all. Look at the words of Psalm 27:14: 'Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart, and wait for the Lord.' Is that where you are or need to be today? Someone has helpfully said: 'Wait' means 'don't interrupt God.' Give God time to work out His plan and purpose. That is the best way always.

ANOTHER DIFFICULT PROBLEM.

Have you ever faced a major problem where you cannot see how God could ever solve it, how He could ever work in your circumstances? If so, you can identify with Abraham when God said he would have a son and many descendants. But at that time Abraham was 99 years of age and Sarah was about 90. (See Genesis 17:17) This was an infertility problem. It had been so for many years and no son had appeared. Sarah even used what is now a 'modern' method – surrogate motherhood – with disastrous results.

Finally after years of waiting, God finally said: 'This is the year when you will have the son I promised you.' Both Abraham and Sarah

we could hold out no longer. What a beautiful experience to know Christ's peace. James Dobson wrote that the disciples had to learn that fear and faith cannot ride in the same boat. We need to learn that lesson too.

LET'S LOOK BACK TO OTHER EXPERIENCES.

The Bible is full of stories of men and women who endured tremendous and prolonged testing and still kept their faith in God. There is teaching in all of those stories for us. Look at the life of Abraham, the father of those who believe. He faced several tests in his long life with at least four being major experiences. The first was when God called him to face the test of a dramatic change – a major relocation at the age of 60. Hebrews 11:8 tells us : 'He (Abraham) went out, not knowing where he was going.' (NLVB) Circle that word 'where'. At age 60, God said 'Abraham, get ready for the biggest adventure of your life. I'm going to lead you to another country.'

Did Abraham ask: 'Where am I going Lord?' Did the Lord say: "I will tell you when you get there?" 'How will I know that I've arrived there?' "I'll tell you when you get there.' Do you realise it was at least 15 long years before Abraham even **saw** the place to which God was leading him. Today a believer may be called to follow God's leading without knowing **where** God is taking him/her. That could be a similar major test for a believer

but it will always be helpful to remember this phrase: **The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.**

One of the great verses of the Epistles fits this situation: 'No temptation (or testing) has seized you except what is common to man. But God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.' 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Are you facing a situation like that just now? Is God making a dramatic change in your life and circumstances? Never forget, God has His own perfect plan and place for you. He knows where He is leading you. Read again Jeremiah 29:11 – 'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' Trust Him where you cannot see the end from the beginning, knowing He does. Remember He can see the way ahead and you are His precious child whom He dearly loves.

THE TEST OF A DELAYED PROMISE.

Have you ever been put on hold on the phone, wondering if the person on the other end of the line has forgotten you? Do you sometimes think that maybe God has lost your address? Have you been waiting on God's timing? Have you been saying: 'Lord how long is this going to go on?' or 'When am I going to get a job?' or 'When are you going to answer my prayer?' 'When is my partner going to be saved?' If you have been saying anything like that, you know how

Abraham felt when he discovered that more tests were waiting for him in the very land God had promised, before it would belong to him.

The first test after Abraham arrived there was to discover the land was already occupied! (See Genesis 12:6) It was possessed by others who weren't about to give it up. Second, there is a serious famine in the land. How were Abraham's huge crowd of servants and herds to be fed?

Next, where were they going to live? Where were the houses they had looked forward to? There were none. All the rest of his life Abraham and his family lived in tents. So did his son and his grandsons. If Abraham, had said 'Lord when are we going to have our own house to live in?' God's answer would have been 'In my time.'

That is the same answer He may give to us when we are waiting, waiting for Him to fulfil His promise or the vision He has given us. All God's servants have had to learn to wait for the fulfilment of the vision or promise God has given. Think of Joseph, of Moses, of David and of many others. Remember this: **A believer is called to wait for God's time without knowing when God will act.**

Faith must be based on God's word and God's promises, not on our expectations and faith does not demand God's explanations. Faith can wait. God is never in a hurry.

Personally, my wife and I can say we have experienced this many times. We have believed