Finding Peace

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Thoughts and feelings about why God lets things like this happen, and why He would require so much of us and our children.

When you find that your child has a disability, you wonder why! Why me? Why our child? Why now? The questions can haunt you and rob you of inner peace. You need to recapture that peace if you are to cope with the present much less the future.

I found some scriptural messages that really helped me. The first is the story of Job (and I hope you will excuse me for paraphrasing). Satan comes to the Lord who says, "Here is my good and faithful servant Job. In all the world there is none other like him." Satan is scornful and tells the Lord that if Job were tested he would fail. So the Lord allows Job to be tested, but with limits. So catastrophe hits Job. He loses virtually all his temporal goods to one disaster or another, but he refuses to "curse God and die" as is suggested. Satan comes again to God and the conversation is repeated, but this time Satan says something to the effect of "Yeah, but if you REALLY allowed me to test him he would fail." This time the Lord allows the testing without limits. Job's body is afflicted. He loses much of his family. He has other painful experiences including well meaning friends who do not understand what he is going through. But he still refuses to curse God and die.

I learned two things from this. God does not CAUSE bad things to happen. He allows them, for our good, but only as far as He feels we can withstand them WITH HIS HELP. The first losses that Job experienced strengthened him so that when the second losses came, he was able to bear them. Job would not have been able to bear the second losses if he had not first experienced the more limited losses. The Lord is in control. He does not simply allow us to run over, although at times it feels like it. The second thing is that this testing is for our good. If we are to reach our potential in this life, we have to be willing to give up everything that is attached to mortality. We have to be willing to give up even our family and this includes the loss of a child (Job lost all his children to sudden death). The Lord does not decide to allow such suffering on a whim. It is carefully thought out. The good that we can gain from this suffering has to outweigh the pain we will feel. The risk that God takes in losing us because we may turn our backs on Him when the suffering becomes heavy is balanced against the good that will be ours if we accept and grow through the testing. If the blessings and knowledge we can gain from the suffering does not outweigh the potential harm and pain from it, He does NOT allow it. It is only when there is something so great, that can be obtained no other way, that He allows so much suffering to be visited upon us.

In the New Testament we read a story of a blind man. Jesus is asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he is born blind?" Jesus tells them neither; the man was born blind so "that the works of God may be made manifest in him." Our children are afflicted partly for the same reason - that the works of God may be made manifest in them. Christ did not say that the works of God were manifest in the blind man only when he was healed; the declaration was made before the healing occurred. The works of God are manifest in every imperfect body. Further, when we lose our child, the works of God may be made manifest in US, as we are called on to suffer. How we deal with our suffering may reveal God's works and glory to others.

Another reflection is based on doctrine from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and on the statement that "unto whom much is given, much is required". If we are greatly blessed, we will be required to give in return. The reciprocal is true also -- "of whom much is required, much is given". Carrying a child with a difficult diagnosis requires much of us, and the Lord gives us much in return. The child alone is a gift, not a curse, but, if you look around at your life as you carry a special spirit, you may notice other thingsm too. My life was protected when I was pregnant with Sidney. I was blessed with very good health. My pregnancy with Sidney was the most comfortable pregnancy I ever had (normally I had daily migraines, clinical depression, and nine month morning sickness, incredibly difficult fatigue, constant pain, and more, none of which were present with Sidney). I had a sleep disorder diagnosed and treated, also, and I have benefited so much from it. But I would never have gone for a diagnosis had I not wanted to be the healthiest I could be for my unborn baby. My husband drove 120 miles each way to work through that entire winter over some of the worst roads in Wyoming with not even a close call, and no days missed of work due to weather or illness - an unusual occurance. We had no financial problems that were not quickly answered by a solution during that time. We learned of Sidney's condition two days before Christmas, yet we had a good Christmas. Sidney alone was a great blessing because she had so much personality and was so much fun to carry in utero. I see all my other blessings as given by the Lord because we chose to love Sidney.

Here is another thought from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. "Be not weary in well-doing, for you are building the foundation of a great work. Out of small things proceedeth that which is great." Sidney was a "small thing" yet greatness came because of her.

In an attempt to reassure parents with special needs children, people often say, "God won't give you more than you can handle." I have two observations about that statement. To believe it and understand it, we need to fully realize what it means. It means that God won't give us more than we can survive, WITH HIS HELP. If we try to go it alone, we fail. We also need to redefine "handle." Somehow that word always makes us feel inadequate because we always seem to sinking and overwhelmed when people tell us that "God won't give you more than you can handle." Sometimes we feel that we cannot handle anything!

Maybe it would be better to say that "God won't give you more than you can cope with" or "God won't give you more than you can survive." Those words validate the pain and anxiety we are feeling. They let us know that the speaker understands us. We are not going to breeze through these experiences. We might feel battered and hurt when we finish. We might be overwhelmed. We might be backed against the wall with no idea of how to survive another minute. But we will gain something if we endure. We can survive with the Lord's help. Survival is a great accomplishment. If we just hang on by our fingernails, we have succeeded! What a triumph!