

God Doesn't Waste Anything

Many of us go through experiences in life that seem worthless, a waste, or are downright painful. When we look at life through the lens of those experiences we are hurt, confused, and not sure how God is possibly going to use any of it. We really want to believe he will, but we just aren't sure how he will or if he can. In those times we need to know and trust that God doesn't waste anything we walk through in life.

How can we know it will turn out for good?

Whether you have experienced great loss, been deeply hurt, or carry the weight of past sins - we have all experienced times when we have wondered how God will use this for good. Sometimes we even wonder if he loves us enough to give us good. We can rest assured in these trying times though. Romans 8:28 lets us know that "in all things God works for good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." This means that whatever bad experience or negative situation you have endured, or are living through now, God is redeeming it. He is making good come from it even now.

When we say God doesn't waste anything we are not saying that everything that happens in life is a good thing. There are horrible things that happen in life. Some of them we cause by our choices. Others are caused by the choices of others. We are not negating the pain anyone has lived through. What we are saying when we believe that God doesn't waste anything is that God redeems, he fixes and restores that which is broken. He makes good come out of bad.

In my life I have lived this truth repeatedly - when something is hurtful, like the dissipation of a friendship, or heartbreaking, like the death of a close friend. In these times I can't see that any good is being created or that these hard things will serve any purpose. But God has promised. Does that mean the hurt disappears or the tears never come? No. That is all a part of being human. But I have seen time and time again, when I thought no good could come, that it does. It may take years, but God is faithful. He redeems. He works for our good.

How can I trust this to be true?

Maybe you're thinking, "All of this sounds nice. I want it to be true, but how do I know that it is?" Basically, that question boiled down is - How can I trust God to bring good to my situation? That's a worthwhile question to ask as long as you're going to the right sources for your answers.

Ask God. You can ask God questions. He won't be upset with you. He loves you deeply. Ask him - *Lord, where is the good in this? I really can't see it right now.* Or

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even better questions you can ask are - *What are you trying to teach me in this?*
How are you shaping me in this?

Remember, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Good is becoming like Jesus, being transformed more like him every day. So through whatever your circumstance, whatever hard, hurtful thing you are walking through, God will use it to shape your heart, to build your character, to make you more like him. We see this on display time and time again in the Bible.

Biblical Examples

In the Bible we see repeatedly that God uses less than ideal circumstances to bring about good things.

When we first meet Paul (who at this point was still Saul) in Acts it doesn't seem likely that there is a whole lot of good that is going to come out of that guy. He tells all about it in Acts 22:3-5:

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished."

God knew all of this about Paul's life. He knew that he was trained as a Pharisee under Gamaliel, spoke Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew, grew up in Greek culture, and was a Roman citizen. And we see throughout the New Testament that God utilized every piece of Paul's life. Because he was a Jew, he knew all the customs and could relate to anyone with a Jewish background. Because he spoke multiple languages, he could communicate truth with many people. Because he was a Roman citizen, he could travel freely and had certain rights. Because he knew Greek culture, he could minister within that culture. Because Paul had a past as a not good guy, he could tell everyone with full confidence that God can forgive and change anyone:

"Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

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Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life." 1 Timothy 1:13-16

Paul probably wouldn't have been our first pick as the best missionary candidate, but God doesn't see things the way we do. God saw all the things that made up Paul and decided that he would be the one to take the Gospel truth to the Gentiles. Paul's story gives me assurance that God doesn't waste anything.

Nehemiah is another friend we meet in the Bible who helps us see this truth. Nehemiah lived in Old Testament times. He was an Israelite at a point in their history when the nation of Israel was exiled. Nehemiah had a job in the court of the King who was ruling them, Artaxerxes. Sounds pretty swanky, but in reality not so much. He was cupbearer to the king, meaning Nehemiah tasted the King's wine before the King drank it, so that if it was poisoned, Nehemiah would die, not the king. Nehemiah got word that Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, was in bad shape. There was no wall around it anymore, which meant no protection and that broke his heart. We see in Nehemiah 1 that he fasts and prays. The King notices his downcast demeanor after about four months and asks Nehemiah what is wrong. Nehemiah tells him about Jerusalem and asks to be appointed overseer of the rebuilding of the wall...and the King actually agrees! He agrees to lumber and protection and other stuff as well. The story is incredible.

Being an exiled servant in the King's palace waiting to be poisoned doesn't seem like a very good thing. "He had no idea his years of servitude to the king had any divine significance. For all he knew, God had forgotten him and his people. It is no accident you are where you are. And it is not necessarily a problem that you are not where you assume you ought to be," describes Andy Stanley in Visioneering. God redeemed not just Nehemiah's situation, being a servant in exile from his homeland, but all the Jewish people's situations when there seemed to be no hope all the way around. God is faithful. He works for our good.

He is Faithful

Somehow God does this, he redeems, he transforms. He takes bad and makes it turn out for good. In the book Hinds Feet on High Places, the Good Shepherd shares, "Nothing my Father and I have made is ever wasted." God will use

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whatever situation you have lived in or are living through now to bring glory to himself.

I have a friend who lived through some incredibly evil things in her childhood, things that God never intended for her. As an adult, though, her childhood pain has driven her down a career path of loving and helping kids who no one else wants to help. God hasn't wasted any of her pain. He is redeeming her story by using her to restore the stories of countless children.

In my own life, through the dissipation of a friendship, I have learned how to hear and trust the voice of God. God didn't waste my pain. In the unexpected death of a close friend, God has shown me that his promises are true, I can know that I will see her again, and my loss now allows me to know better how to mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15). God didn't waste my confusion or tears. My hope was never misplaced. Yours isn't either.

God won't waste a minute of your pain or confusion. Will you trust him? He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

Discussion Questions

1. How have you witnessed God take something that seems wasted and turn it into good?
2. Do you think you trust God? Why or why not?
3. Is there anything in your life that still seems like it's wasted? How has that affected your relationship with God and other people?
4. Do you need to ask God what the good is in a situation or what he is trying to shape in you through a situation?

Next Steps

1. Make time to ask God what the good is in a situation or what he is trying to shape in you through a situation.
2. Spend some time praising God for always working for our good.

Further Reading

- [Hinds' Feet on High Places](#) by Hannah Hurnard
- [Anonymous](#) by Alicia Chole
- [The Hiding Place](#) by Corrie ten Boom