

# Why did God let it Happen?

Many women have been violated and hurt in unspeakable ways through all types of abuse, for some it has been repeated, long-term abuse others have suffered through ritual abuse, and many other intense cruelties. Regardless of whether it was a single incident of abuse or something that was repeated throughout childhood, sexual abuse is a devastating thing. If you are a woman who has been deeply wounded, changing the way you view God and the way you view the abuse will help you heal. Real heart and soul healing can only happen as you learn to see your abuse and suffering the way God sees it.

Almost every woman who has been abused asks why God allowed the abuse to happen. She wonders if He cares? Does He, for some reason care less about her than others? And why does God allow pain, especially such horrible pain as sexual abuse? This study is designed to help you find answers to these questions.

Each day as you work through this study, begin by asking the Lord to bind the enemy so that he will not have any influence over your mind and heart. (Mt 12:29) Ask the Lord to open your eyes so that you can see the wonderful things He has put in His Word. (Ps 119:18) Ask Him to help you see your suffering the way He sees it.

## What You Will Need

There are some books you will need in order to complete this study. You will need a copy of either [\*Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts\*](#) by Jerry Bridges a book to help you to see that everything that happens in your life is for your good and God's glory, or [\*Exquisite Agony\*](#) by Gene Edwards, a short but outstanding book about God's purposes for suffering, especially suffering at the hands of other Christians. It is formerly titled *Crucified By Christians*. If it is possible, get both books. You will also want to read at least two or three of the following books:

- [\*The Hiding Place\*](#) by Corrie Ten Boom – “The Hiding Place proves that the light of God's love can penetrate even the darkest recesses of despair, places like the Nazi extermination camp at Ravensbruck. After protecting Dutch Jews in a secret room in their home, Corrie ten Boom, her sister and father were discovered, arrested, and imprisoned. Only Corrie survived, but her faith in God remained strong-so strong that, after the war, she could forgive a former camp guard in a face-to-face meeting. More than just a spellbinding adventure, The Hiding Place is a life-changing story.”<sup>1</sup> It will help you to see that, “there is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still.”
- [\*Glenda’s Story\*](#) by Glenda Revell – “Unwanted from birth and abused throughout her childhood, Glenda was desperate for love and a sense of belonging. Her only respite from her home life was school and the welcoming shade of a willow tree, under which she would lie and dream of another life in another family, and pray to the God she did not know yet. Ultimately, Glenda’s afflictions became the cord with which God drew her to Himself... This story of hope is an amazing account of our merciful Savior, who brings light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow and peace out of pain.”<sup>2</sup> Glenda also wrote another book, [\*With Love from a Mother’s Heart\*](#), it is a testament to the healing God can do in the heart and life of someone who has been deeply wounded. In this book she tells about some of the lessons God taught her as a wife and mother.
- [\*More Precious than Gold: The Fiery Trial of a Family’s Faith\*](#) by John & Brenda Vaughn – “After fire destroys their home, leaving Brenda and their two-year-old daughter Becky severely burned, the young family embarks on a seemingly endless journey of suffering and upheaval. With faith refined by this fiery trial and restored by God’s grace, the Vaughns are

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<sup>1</sup> From the back cover of the book.

<sup>2</sup> From the back cover of the book.

later able to see gold come from the ashes of their former life.”<sup>3</sup>

- [\*Dorie: The Girl Nobody Loved\*](#) & [\*No Place to Cry\*](#) by Doris VanStone – “As a child, Dorie was rejected by her mother, sent to live in an orphanage where she was regularly beaten and abused by the orphanage director, and by cruel foster parents, and was daily told that she was ugly and unlovable. Dorie never knew love until a group of college students visited the orphanage and told her that God loved her. As she accepted that love, her life began to change. *Dorie* is the thrilling, true account of what God’s love can do in a life. Doris Van Stone takes readers through the hard years of her childhood into her fascinating years as a missionary with her husband to the Dani tribe in New Guinea.”<sup>4</sup>
- *Evidence Not Seen: A Woman's Miraculous Faith in the Jungles of World War II* by Darline Deibler Rose. This is the true story of a young American missionary woman's courage and triumph of faith in the jungles of New Guinea and her four years in a notorious Japanese prison camp. Never to see her husband again, she was forced to sign a confession to a crime she did not commit and face the executioner's sword, only to be miraculously spared.

## **World View**

The first thing that must be settled is whether or not there is a God. If you have doubts take some time to read through the materials in these links:

[Institute for Creation Research](#)

[Creation, Dinosaurs, and the Flood](#)

[Center For Scientific Creation](#)

Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.” and Isaac Newton said, “In the absence of any other proof, the thumb alone would

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<sup>3</sup> From the back cover of the book.

<sup>4</sup> From the back cover of the book.

convince me of God's existence." All of creation is a witness to God's existence. Once you have established in your heart and mind that God is then the next step is to find out who God is.

### **Is God Good?<sup>5</sup>**

Who has not questioned the goodness of God when they see a picture of starving children or read news briefs about genocide and ethnic cleansing. Suffering is rampant in our world, it always has been. Many in twentieth century America have been sheltered from experiencing the deep suffering that most of the world lives with. Their comprehension of suffering is limited to what they see happening on the evening news.

Many Americans have a *Leave it to Beaver* mindset. Most people in industrialized nations live with conveniences that kings of a few centuries ago could not have even imagined. Most Americans have never even missed a full day's meals let alone faced a plague or lived in the middle of a war. When we are cold we turn up the heat. When there is a drought our suffering is paying fifty cents more for a head of lettuce. Our western culture is barely familiar with the overwhelming suffering in the world.

But this is all quickly changing. As America is becoming more and more wicked, suffering is becoming more and more prevalent. Currently the statistics are that one out of every three little girls and one out of every four boys will be abused.<sup>6</sup> There is already an ocean of people who have quietly suffered abuse as children. The statistics indicate that only about 12% of them will ever even tell what happened to them.<sup>7</sup> Eighty-eight percent suffer in silence; hoping that no one finds out about their shame but also wishing there was someone they could trust to help them carry the burden of what they experienced without rejecting them.

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<sup>5</sup> This section is based to a large extent on a sermon by Dr. Don Kistler, "The Goodness of God" preached on February 2, 2002 at Second Reformed Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis IN

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families Definitions, Scope, and Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse. July 2004

So how does all of this abuse and suffering fit together with what the Bible says about God? In Psalm 119:65-72 David says:

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good and doest good; teach me thy statutes. The proud have gorged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

How can God be good and yet allow all this suffering? First lets look at the life of David, a man after God's own heart. David did not have an easy life. His family looked down on him. When Samuel told Jesse to gather his sons together they didn't even bother to go get David (1 Samuel 16) We catch a glimpse of the tension and strife in David's family in chapter 17 when David brought supplies to his brothers on the battlefield. He questioned why no one would answer Goliath's challenge, and one of his brothers mocked him publicly. Verse 29 gives us an idea of the pain in David's heart from his brother's rejection.

And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou

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<sup>7</sup> Child Sexual abuse Fact Sheet <http://www.stopitnow.com/csafacts.html>

mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? 1 Samuel 17:28-29

As a boy, David faithfully served Saul by playing his harp to sooth the king when he could not sleep. Saul even made David his armor bearer. But when David was a young man, probably still a teenager, Saul spent years trying to hunt him down and kill him. David was on the run from Saul from the time he was a teenager until he was crowned king at the age of thirty. After all of this how could David say, “Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord?” Why didn’t David become bitter? It is because David realized that God’s goodness is according to His Word not necessarily according to his wishes or expectations. God is the one who defines what is good. If God says that it is good, then it is good.

“It is what God says is good that counts not what we say is good, not what we feel is good. If God says it is good in His Word we can draw one conclusion and one conclusion only – it is good.”<sup>8</sup> When we get to Heaven and see things the way God sees them we will agree with the choices He made for us.

I wonder if David realized when his brother was mocking him or when Saul was chasing him, that all of this was training to be a king. It was training that was just as important as killing lions, bears, and even giants. God had a purpose for every hard thing that He took David through. God knew that this suffering was a good and necessary thing in David’s life. In Psalm 119:69-72 we see that David also came to recognize that good in his suffering.

Joseph also learned that God had a reason for suffering. We know that God used him to save his family from starvation and thereby the nation of Israel from whom would come the

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<sup>8</sup> Kistler, Don “The Goodness of God” a sermon preached on February 2, 2002 at Second Reformed Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis IN

Messiah. But what got him into the position where he could be a deliverer? It was the murderous hatred his brothers had for him. How hopeless it must have seemed for this teenage boy as he was placed in a line of shackled slaves on their way to Egypt. Then as a slave in an Egyptian household. One principle that he understood is that it does not matter where God has placed you. What matters is that you please God in the place you are in. Because of that principle he served God with all his heart even as a slave in an Egyptian house and he rose to the top of the ladder there in Pottapher's house. There he learned managerial skills. Little did he know that God was training him in how to be a world leader.

Then when he was at the top, God sent him to prison. How discouraging, why would God do that to someone who was serving Him with all his heart. No one would have known if Joseph had given in to Mrs. Potapher and no one would have cared. It was a socially acceptable practice in Egypt. But Joseph chose to please God rather than keep his position and look where he ended up, in a dungeon. Exactly where God wanted him. He must have need more preparation for being the prime minister of the world. It was also the avenue God would eventually use to put him into power. But what if he had gotten bitter because God kept, "doing him wrong." God would have raised up another deliver and Joseph would have missed out on the best part of the story where he is reunited with his family and lives on the fat of the land.

He may have struggled with the whys when he was following the camel and when he was in the dungeon but he did not get bitter about it. If he was bitter he never would have been so concerned about the baker and the king's cup bearer. In the end he was able to say to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Genesis 50:20

Joseph and David were able to see the good and be grateful to God for the suffering that

they experienced but what they went through was different than what a little child goes through in the ravages of sexual abuse. It can be harder to see God's purpose in letting a little child suffer but the principles are still the same. Lets look at a less emotionally charged example of the sovereignty of God than sexual abuse for a few minutes.

Is God good even though sometimes He chooses to create a little girl with unattractive features? How will being unattractive affect her as a little girl and eventually as a woman?

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Does God's choice of creating a little girl with unattractive features mean that He does not love her or that He loves her any less than pretty little girls? \_\_\_\_\_ If there is a question in your mind, consider I Samuel 16:7, "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." and I Peter 3:3-4, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Differences in appearance, abilities, parentage and social heritage are God's special frames to highlight and amplify His unique message through us.  
~ Bill Gothard

We must remember that God operates on an infinitely higher level than we do. My pastor told about how when he was a little boy he would go to his grandfather's horse farm on the weekends. It was his job to give grain to the horses. As he went down the row of stalls carrying



his little bucket of oats and a coffee can to scoop out the grain, his bucket always ran out at the same stall. The horse in that stall threw a fit every time. The horse saw dinner coming each time but just as the boy reached his stall, he would turn and walk away.

What if the boy tried to explain to the horse that everything was ok? What if he said, "Look horse, I'm a small boy with a small bucket, hang on a few minutes and I'll be back with your lunch." Would that horse ever understand what the boy was trying to get across to him? No, the horse did not have the mental capacity to understand such a concept no matter how it was explained. Now what if we gave the horse an intelligence rating of 1 and the boy had a rating of 10. How would we rate God's intelligence? Would it be a million, or a billion, or a trillion?

If a horse with an intelligence rating of one can't understand the simple concept of, "I'll be right back." Who are we to think that we can understand the ways of God? Who are we to demand of God that He explain Himself to us? He has told us many times in His Word that He is good and that He loves us. Can we ever get to the point in our own human reasoning of recognizing that the sexual abuse of a child can end up helping that child to be better than what she would have been? No way! We can only see it from our limited perspective unless the Lord shows it to us. Our part is to trust Him and His Word. Corrie ten Boom's little statement, "In acceptance lieth peace," helps put the principle in perspective.

When God brings hard things into our lives, often He either cannot or chooses not to explain the primary reason for what He chose for us. Job probably never knew till he died, about the tremendous spiritual battle that was going on in the heavenlies concerning his suffering. In Beth Moore's book, *When Godly People do Ungodly Things*, she says about the suffering Job went through:

"Do you realize Job endured the entire excruciating ordeal without ever knowing he was

in the middle of a match between the God of the universe and the head dragon of hell? Even at the conclusion of the Old Testament book, Job still had no idea. He had learned plenty about the sovereignty of God, but he still had no concept of the faith God had shown in him. Don't you think Job would have had an easier time if God had said, 'Listen, son. I know this is horribly painful, but something much bigger than you know is at stake here. You are a truly righteous man in an unrighteous world. Satan thinks you'll crumble if I draw back some of your protection and blessing. I want him to see that you won't. So, as hard as this is, you stand firm! All the hosts of heaven are rooting for you, and all the unholy hosts of hell are jeering at you. Win a big one for the team, won't you?

That kind of explanation would have made a tremendous difference to me. What about you?... If we knew the stakes were high and we were in the middle of a paramount competition, we would throw everything we had into it, wouldn't we? The fact is, we are in such a competition. We just don't realize it. Neither did Job. I have wondered over and over what his face looked like when he got to heaven and they told him what was going on in the unseen world while he was down below...

Don't you know Job was so thankful he had chosen to believe God and remain faithful? Can you imagine how strange Job must have felt to realize he had been chosen by God to fight one of the hardest earthly battles in history? In humanly inexplicable ways, God allowed Job to be tested so harshly because He, God, had faith in him, Job. Amazing.<sup>9</sup>

Job did not know about what was going on in heaven but in the last chapter of the book,

he did realize that he learned a great deal about God as a result of his suffering. Like Job we may not understand the main reason for our suffering but usually He allows us to see some of the benefits to the trial He has chosen for us if we will look for them.

What are some of the benefits for a little girl who is not pretty?

- ❖ It will be easier for her to develop true inner beauty because she has not learned to find her sense of self-worth in her outward physical appearance.
- ❖ She will probably have more compassion toward others who are mocked or ridiculed.
- ❖ She can focus on the things that are important to God rather than trying to get the approval of the world.
- ❖ She will be more likely to develop friendships with people who are solid stable Christians, not looking to use her to raise their social standing.
- ❖ She can learn that beauty is not essential for happiness.
- ❖ She can learn to see this “defect” as a mark of God’s ownership in her life. Romans 9:20b, “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”

The list could go on and on. Can you think of two or three more benefits for this little girl?

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Now lets take this a step farther. What about when God chooses a painful lifelong illness for a child? I have a friend who’s little sister has juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. She has known pain almost every day of her life and will probably experience this daily pain for the rest of her life. Can God cause continual, severe pain to a child and still be good? What if God has special, deep

lessons He wants that little girl to learn. Already she has a grace and maturity far beyond what other children her age have. She has learned to see things from an eternal perspective. She has learned that God does not always make life easy for us but that He goes with us through the hard times. She realizes that this suffering is only temporary and she is more grateful than most children for the things the Lord does and provides for her. She has a deep relationship with the Lord that few other children her age have.

Can God cause a child to suffer and still be good? \_\_\_\_\_

Several years ago I visited a facility for people who were both severely mentally and physically handicapped. While I was there I saw a beautiful little African American girl who's name was Rainbow. She was probably about seven or eight years old. She had been in a drowning accident when the car she was ridding in went out of control and ended up in a lake. It was several minutes before they were able to get Rainbow out of the car that had filled with water. Since that time she has been in a vegetative state. I struggled for quite a while with why God would allow this beautiful little girl with so much potential to lose all mental capacity.

Then the Lord showed me some important truths. First of all, I don't know what kind of life Rainbow had at home or what she would have done in her future. Perhaps this was God's way of saving her from some mental or physical anguish. But then I also realized that potential is not important to God. He is not glorified so much in what I do for Him as He is in my being and doing what He has asked of me.

I raised a guide dog puppy once. A yellow Labrador retriever named Lolly. She was a beautiful dog and I loved working with her. She was very eager to please but she was also very strong. It is the nature of a retriever to chase anything that moves and her instincts were very good. Because the guide dogs are so valuable there is a very firm rule that they must always be

on a leash unless they are in an enclosed environment like a building or a fenced in yard. The guide dogs are allowed to run and chase in a fenced in area but they must be taught not to chase while they are on a leash. By the time Lolly was five months old she had already snapped four leashes and given me many skinned knees as she would take off after a cat or a jogger.

It is easy to understand the importance of teaching a guide dog not to follow their chasing instinct. It could be deadly for a working dog to suddenly forget his job and take off after the bird that just landed in front of him while he is leading a blind person. I spent most of the training time trying to help Lolly break her chasing habit. Finally one day we were on a walk. A rabbit ran through a lawn in front of her. Every muscle of her body tensed as she prepared to chase that rabbit but she froze. She whimpered a bit because she wanted so much to chase but she had finally come to the place of wanting to please me more than she wanted to chase the rabbit.



In that moment she honored me even more than she did when she graduated from guide dog school. In the same way, God is most honored by our being in the place He has chosen for us and our acceptance of that place. Rainbow was in the place God had chosen for her. God was completely glorified because she was doing exactly what He desired of her.

Now you have probably already anticipated the last step in this reasoning process. Can God allow a little child to be abused and still be good? What if God has a plan for that little girl's life that can only be fulfilled by suffering abuse? God does not randomly dish out pain, He has a plan for every hard thing.

## Chosen not Abandoned

Seeing those who grew up in happy homes, women who seem well adjusted and happy with the life they are living, can be hard for women who grew up in difficult homes and have a daily struggle with the memories of their childhood. It is easy to believe the lie that God loves others more than He loves you. Feelings of abandonment and rejection flood the mind and heart. While Scripture is full of verses about God's love, it is easy to think that those verses are intended for someone else because there does not seem to be much evidence of love in the past. We usually fail to see suffering as a gift.

"The sovereignty of God is the one impregnable rock to which the suffering human heart must cling. The circumstances surrounding our lives are no accident; they may be the work of evil, but that evil is held firmly within the might hand of our sovereign God...All evil is subject to Him, and evil cannot touch His children unless He permits it."  
Margaret Clarkson

A friend was observing that almost without exception, those who have significant depth, and relationship with the Lord are either elder Christians or else they have been through suffering. Oswald Chambers said, "It is doubtful that God can use anyone greatly that He has not hurt deeply." While most of us would never choose the suffering that we have experienced it is comforting to know that we have been chosen for that particular suffering because God has a plan to use it in our lives.

### Suffering:

- The fertile soil into which God transplants every growing Christian. I Peter 5:10; 2 Corinthians 1:4
- The motivation to take your eyes off temporal things so that you can see eternal realities. Philippians 3:8
- The pain that is required in order for true healing to take place. I Peter 4:1

- The confirmation that you have been chosen for special leadership with Christ in His kingdom. 2 Timothy 2:12<sup>10</sup>

In the past I have questioned whether or not God was right in allowing Job to go through the loss of his wealth, his children, and his health just to prove a point to Satan. It seemed to me to be a bit selfish of God. Then I realized that God's purpose was much bigger than that. Satan's purpose was to get Job to reject God; one of God's purposes was to grow Job up.

Before all this trouble came on Job, he was living a nice comfortable, peaceful life but he also only had a surface knowledge of God. By the end of the trial he was able to say, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." Job 42:5. Before his suffering Job knew how to love God when things are going well. By the end of his suffering, Job knew who God is.

Psalm 56:8 tells us that God knows about every tear we shed and each one is precious to Him. "Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?"<sup>11</sup> In Israel the people have an old tradition. When someone is grieving, a loved one will collect their tears in a little bottle and wear it around their neck. It is a way of showing how much they care about the other person's suffering. God never allows one more tear than is absolutely necessary. Every tear one of His children cries is precious to Him.

Sometimes God does answer at least in part our questioning of where He was when the abuse happened and why He let it happen. One lady who was abused as a little girl asked the Lord where He was when the abuse was happening to her. She recounted that sometimes her father would hold the covers over her so she could hardly breathe as she was being abused. When she asked the Lord where He was when she was suffering, He spoke to her heart and said,

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<sup>10</sup> Gothard, William. Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts video seminar.

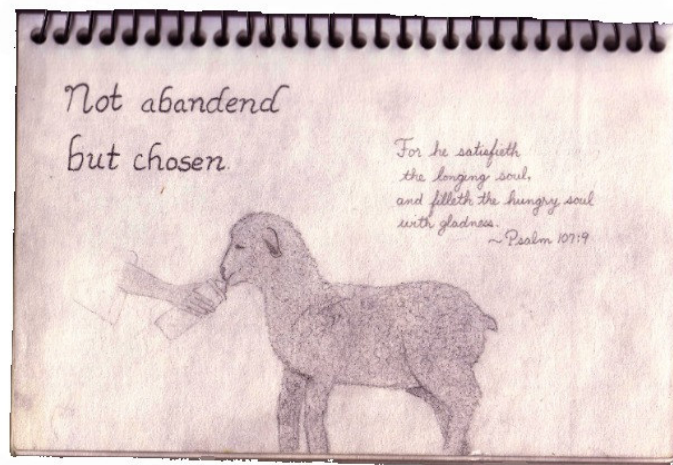
<sup>11</sup> Psalm 56:8

"I was there with you. I was the one that made the little space between the covers so you could get air."<sup>12</sup>

Another lady who asked the God where He was. Received this answer from the Lord. "I was there all the time. When you cried I cried. I cannot explain to you in this lifetime to your satisfaction, why I let it happen. I offer to you my unconditional love and healing."<sup>13</sup>

When I asked the Lord why He allowed the abuse in my life He gave me a very simple answer, yet it brought peace to my heart. He told me that I had not been abandoned. I had been chosen. He used the illustration of a shepherd and His sheep to help me understand. Sheep are followers, usually they will follow whatever sheep takes the lead. For this reason it is very helpful for the shepherd to have a special sheep called a Bell Weather. This sheep follows the shepherd and leads the other sheep. When a shepherd needs a Bell Weather he will sometimes take a lamb away from it's mother and bottle-feed the lamb so that the lamb develops a very close relationship with him. It is a very hard thing for the little lamb to be separated but it is necessary if the lamb is to develop the close relationship with the shepherd that is needed to be a Bell Weather.

That is what the Lord did with me. He chose not to give me a loving nurturing home. He also placed me in difficult situations. It was my choice to accept these things from Him or to become bitter about them. Because I



<sup>12</sup> Regier, John. *Biblical Concepts Counseling Workbook*. Colorado Springs: Biblical Concepts in Counseling 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Copley, Kenneth. *Introduction to Spiritual Warfare: Course 1*, Sioux City: International School for Biblical Counseling, 2002



have chosen to accept the healing He has offered, He has used the hard things in my life to draw me closer to Himself and to open up ministries to others who have been deeply wounded.

*A block of marble stood  
Before the sculptor where He would  
He smote with hand well skilled,  
And thus with blow on blow fulfilled  
The vision of his mind.*

*At first with chisel coarse and stroke,  
Unspared, the corners off He broke,  
And soon the form appeared.  
And then, with finer tools he wrought  
And finer yet, until He brought  
The perfect image forth.*

*So, with unerring skillfulness  
With cunning hand and sure;  
'Tis as the marble groweth less,  
The likeness groweth more.'  
So God divinely works with those  
He, in eternal ages chose  
To show His work of grace;  
And thus, with blow on blow to trace  
The image of His Son!  
How Blest to know that he who holds  
His tools, before His eyes beholds  
His own beloved one!  
The cares and sorrow day by day  
The troubles that o'er shade the way  
And nothing e'er by chance befalls  
The one whom God in purpose calls  
In whom His love is found.*

*And when we have the glory gained,  
And Christ's full image have attained,  
We'll praise His sovereign grace,  
And bless the hand that dealt each blow  
Upon the marble here below  
In working out His will!<sup>14</sup>*

Part of the answer to why God permits such hard things into our lives is found in I Peter 5:10, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after

that ye have suffered a while (felt the pain of sin), make you perfect (restored, complete), establish (to turn resolutely in a certain direction), strengthen (in spiritual knowledge and power), settle you (lay the foundation)."

In *Crucified by Christians*, Gene Edwards puts it rather bluntly,

You like your God when He lets you have a nice home, a good car, and good circumstances, do you not? When He lets you sell your house and buy another one? When you get that scholarship, procure that job? But what is your attitude toward Him when that same Lord gives consent to nails tearing through your flesh, ripping your feet, and shredding your soul? Do you still like Him? As Much?

God did not hide the truth from us. John 16:33 says, 'In the world you will have tribulation.' We can expect horrible things to happen to us in a sin filled and wickedness driven world. It is the end of the verse that gives us hope, 'be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.'

In light of the pain we experience at the hands of others, our confidence and hope lies in the truth that God is able to bring healing and that He even uses the pain to build strength of character--a Christ like character--in us. We cannot guarantee that you will escape evil in this sick and fallen world (see John 16:33), but we can reassure you that you don't have to be a perpetual victim of your past. In Christ, God has provided us with a way to overcome our past, and we have to assume our responsibility to choose that path of freedom.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Author Unknown

<sup>15</sup> Gene Edwards, *Crucified by Christians*, (Sargent, Georgia: The Seed Sowers 1994) 34.

God never promised to keep Christians out of difficult situations, what He promised is that He will be right there with us as we go through them to be our guide and companion. That is what Psalm 23 is all about. He is our shepherd who sometimes leads us through the valley of the shadow of death.

It is much easier to see how suffering in an adult's life can bring growth than it is to understand and accept that God chose a little child to suffer something as horrible as sexual abuse. Chose is the key word though. There is nothing random about God.

In many countries, those who are to be trained as Olympic athletes are chosen for their life's work as young children. Most of them are not given a choice. They are selected and the course of their lives is planned for them. The renowned gymnastics coach, Bela Karolyi, chose Nadia Comaneci when she was only seven years old. She would be called upon to spend the next seventeen years of her life in intense training all day almost every day. It was the price that needed to be paid in order for her to become an Olympic athlete.

In the same way, God chooses some for special jobs and special relationships with Him. The choice of the circumstances surrounding your life and the plan God has for you are not up to you to choose. You can rest assured though that those plans were written by a loving Heavenly Father. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

God chooses a plan for your life but it is up to you to decide if you are going to follow that plan or reject it. You can either allow suffering to do the job God intended for it and make you better or else you can allow it to make you bitter and unusable. Some might have the, "But it's my life and I don't like it attitude." That may be true but it will not change the reality of what happened. Corrie Ten Boom put it very succinctly, "In acceptance lieth peace."

There are two things that you must choose to accept by faith if you are going to get on with the life God has planned for you. The first is that God allowed the abuse, and the second is that God loves you. Jeremiah 17:5-8, 14 says,

Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. 6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. 7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. 14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.”

Start reading some of the biographies listed earlier. Each of the biographies is a story of suffering but it is also the story of God’s plan for pain. Pay special attention to the way the suffering God called them to, has prepared each of them for the special task God had for them. Also take careful note of the deeper relationship with the Lord that was developed as a result of the pain they went through.

## **The Goodness of God**

“God does good because He is good...What we are determines what we do. Everything acts according to its nature.... There can never be a time when God is not good or doing good.”<sup>16</sup>  
That would be against His nature. In Malachi 3:6 He says “I am the Lord, I change not.”

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<sup>16</sup> Kistler, Don “The Goodness of God” a sermon preached on February 2, 2002 at Second Reformed Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis IN

”Everything God does is good but that does not mean that we will realize that it is good, agree that it is good, or feel like it is good.”<sup>17</sup> We try to define God based on our limited perceptions. We trust our own judgment more than God’s when we only see a few pieces of the puzzle and God sees the finished work.

Ps 34:10 says that those who seek the Lord will not lack any good thing. There are two general classes of trauma. Type B trauma is the occurrence of something negative. Child abuse, the death of a parent, and a car accident would all be considered type B traumas. Type A traumas on the other hand, are the absence of something that is good. Things like not feeling loved as a child. Much of the suffering we experience is because we feel that we have not had emotional needs met.

Because the Lord promised in Philippians 4:19 to supply all our needs, we can rest assured that if we don’t have something than it is not a need for us. If we don’t have it than it is not a good thing for us. We must rest in the assurance that God has a plan for what He gives and what He withholds. “Complaining is telling God that He could have done better.”<sup>18</sup> Instead of complaining about what God has or has not done, the key is to get to know Him better.

The issue is who is the final authority for what is and is not good. If I am the judge of what is good then I am bound by my limited perspective. Am I the final authority or is God the final authority. That is what faith is all about. When Satan tempted Eve he convinced her that God was something other than what He said He was. He tried to get her to believe that God was withholding something that was good for her and therefore God was not being good to her. God was trying to protect her but instead of trusting that protection, she decided that she knew what

It is doubtful that  
God can use anyone  
greatly that He has  
not hurt deeply.  
~ Oswald Chambers

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

was good for her better than God did. She forgot about all the good God had done for her and focused on the one thing she felt like she was missing out on. In contrast to Eve are the words of a poem by Betty Stam, a martyred missionary to China:

*And shall I fear  
That there is anything that men hold dear  
That thou would'st deprive me of,  
And nothing give in place?*

*That is not so--  
For I can see Thee now:*

*"My child, I died for thee,  
And if the gift of love and life  
You took from Me,  
Shall I one precious thing withhold  
One beautiful and bright  
One pure and precious thing withhold?  
My child, it cannot be."*

*~ Betty Stam*

Who's vision do you choose to trust, your own or God's?

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Why have you made that choice?

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Take some time now to tell the Lord about your choice in writing.

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## ***The Weaver***

*My life is but a weaving*

*Between my Lord and me.*

*I cannot choose the colors.*

*He worketh steadily.*

*Ofttimes he weaveth sorrow.*

*And I in foolish pride*

*Forget He sees the upper*

*And I, the underside.*

*Not till the loom is silent*

*And the shuttles cease to fly*

*Shall God unroll the canvas*

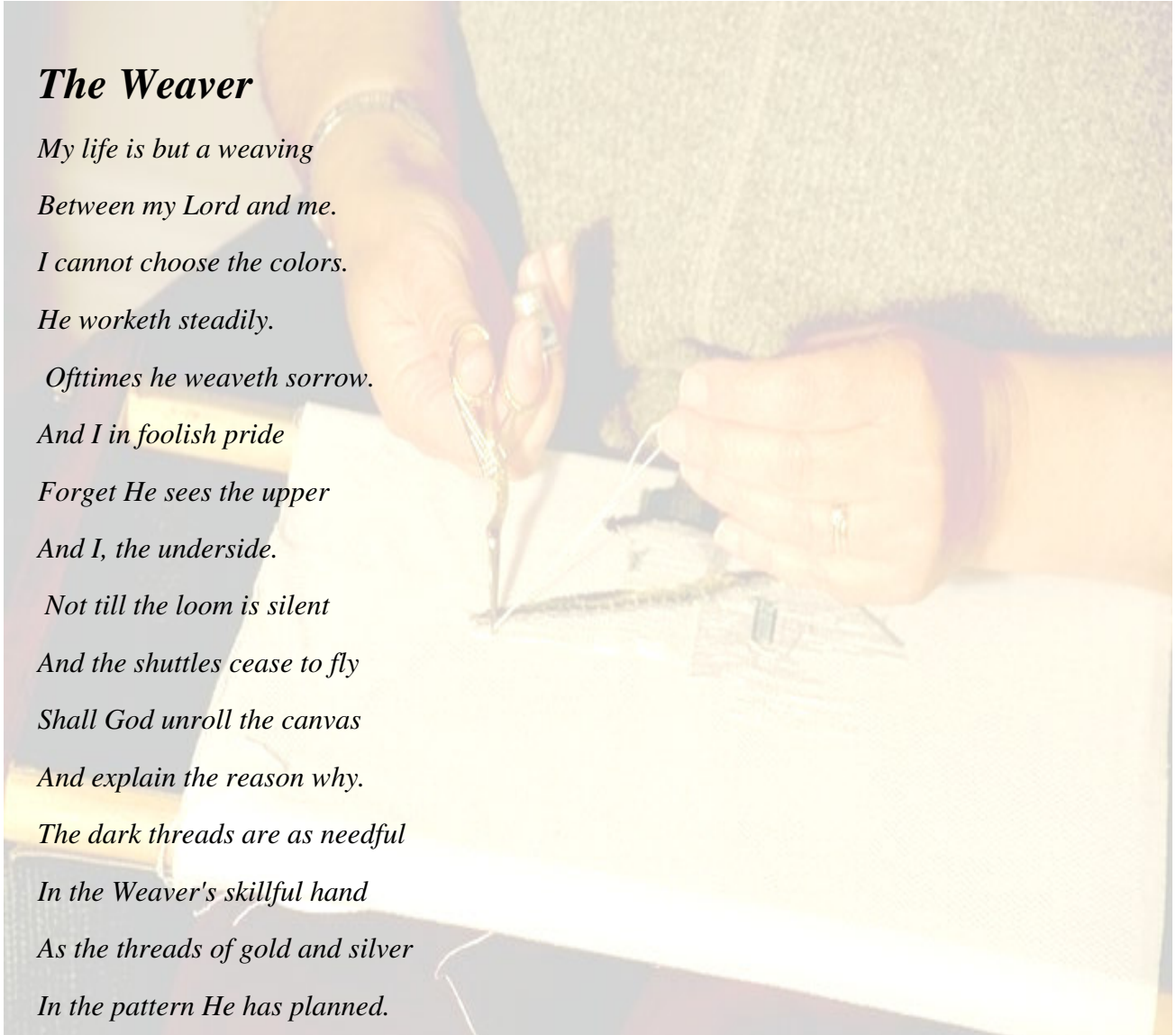
*And explain the reason why.*

*The dark threads are as needful*

*In the Weaver's skillful hand*

*As the threads of gold and silver*

*In the pattern He has planned.*





Please begin reading either *Trusting God* or *Exquisite Agony*. When you are done with either or both of the books answer the following questions.

What are some of the purposes for the pain in your life?

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How does God want you to respond to that pain?

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How has this book changed your thinking about the hard things that come into your life?

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## Count Your Blessings

One of the keys to healing is to begin to count the blessings that the Lord has given.

Scientists have a problem when it comes to atomic chemistry. Based on what scientists know, every atom in the universe should fly apart. There is an unidentified force that holds them together. I believe that force is God. I believe that He consciously holds every atom of our being together. There is much to be grateful for.

A painting in an ancient temple depicted a king forging a chain from his crown, and nearby another scene shows a slave converting his chain into a crown. Underneath the painting is this inscription; "Life is what one makes it; no matter of what it is made."

Make it a practice to write down at least three ways the Lord has blessed you each day.

Receiving strength from joy is essential for healing to take place. We can have joy and peace even in the middle of terrible circumstances because we have the assurance that our Heavenly Father loves us and is taking care of the things that concern us. In a letter to his sister, Hudson Taylor wrote,

I am no longer anxious about anything . . . for He, I know, is able to carry out His will and His will is mine. It makes no matter where he places me or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me. For the easiest positions he must give me grace, and in the most difficult, His grace is sufficient. So if God place me in great perplexity, must he not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? . . . His resources are mine, for He is mine.

It is essential for those who are healing from abuse to learn to return to joy when difficult things happen. It is easy enough for the ordinary person to spiral into depression in this sin sick world but those who have been deeply wounded are especially vulnerable. Seeing things in a

positive light – from God’s perspective, is a choice it is not something that comes naturally. It is a habit that must be developed if the one who is suffering is to receive the benefit of that suffering. Suffering will either make you bitter or better. The choice is up to you.

## Attitude

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that live is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes. ~ Charles Swindoll

Would you spend some time counting your blessings? First of all ask God if He would show you some benefits that have come to your life because of the abuse you suffered. Make a list of these benefits, list everything that comes to your mind no matter how small it may seem.

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## Bitterness

When God created man, His desire was for man to live in perfect fellowship with Him and complete obedience to Him. When Adam sinned, the consequences of his sin were far greater than he could have imagined. Not only did he and Eve suffer, every one of Adam's descendants has felt the terrible consequences of their sin. Sin always affects to a greater degree than people expect.

Sin takes you farther than you want to go.

Keeps you longer than you want to stay,

And costs you more than you want to pay.

Sin always affects others who are not responsible for the sin. When John Donne wrote, “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee...”<sup>19</sup> He was expressing the truth that whatever is done will affect others, whether good or bad. It is a fundamental principle of life. But as we will see, God is able to use the pain we experience at the hands of others and cause it to work out for our benefit.

Most people don't expect God to protect them from the consequences of their own sin but they have a very hard time with suffering for someone else's sin. It may seem like the innocent victim is being punished for the perpetrator's sin. Punishment implies wrong-doing. It is not punishment, it is suffering. It is helpful to remember that Jesus has suffered for every sin that has ever been committed. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the

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<sup>19</sup> Donne, John. *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, 1624

tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

Often we blame God for our pain, but He is not the problem. Sin is the problem; God is the solution. It is actually part of God's mercy that sin hurts; otherwise, wickedness would abound even more. Joe Beam, in his book, *Seeing the Unseen*, explains that the enemy seeks to use pain and hurt in the believer's life to make him angry with God. He weakens the believer's faith and clouds the believer's vision so that the Christian blames God instead of the enemy. This hinders the believer from looking to God for help in those trials. When the believer needs God the most he turns from God, feeling that God does not love him.<sup>20</sup>

Bitterness develops because of the desire for justice that God has placed in each of us. When a wrong has been committed, especially a wrong like child abuse, we have a need to see the one who sinned punished. Bitterness is an attempt to punish the perpetrator. Romans 12:19 says, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” The Lord is even more specific in Matthew 18:6-7, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”

We must know who God is and what His character is in order to be able to trust Him to punish those who have hurt little children in such evil ways when sometimes it seems as though the wicked are prospering. Forgiveness is taking the one who hurt me off my hook and placing him on God's hook. Neil Anderson, in his book, *The Bondage Breaker* wrote:

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<sup>20</sup> Joe Beam, *Seeing the Unseen* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub Co. 1994) 177.

Forgiveness is difficult for us because it pulls against our concept of justice. We want revenge for offenses suffered. But we are told never to take our own revenge (Romans 12:19) ‘Why should I let them off the hook?’ we protest, You let them off your hook, but they are never off God’s hook. He will deal with them fairly – something we cannot do ... Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person’s sin.

Forgiveness is costly; we pay the price of the evil we forgive. Yet you’re going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the bitterness of unforgiveness...<sup>21</sup>

When I was a teenager I had a murderous hatred for my step-father because of the things he had done to me. By the time I was thirteen I had three things planned out: The first was to run away to New York City, the second was how I could kill myself, and the third was how I could kill my step-father. It is only by God’s grace that I never carried out any of those plans. When I was fifteen God brought me out of the situation I was in at home by allowing me to attend a very good boarding school.

It was there that God began to help me grow in my relationship with Him. I started to learn more about who He is. When I was sixteen I read the book, *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts*, for the first time. That was when I started to realize that God did have a plan for my life and that He could use my past hurts for good in my life. I still struggled daily with intense bitterness though.

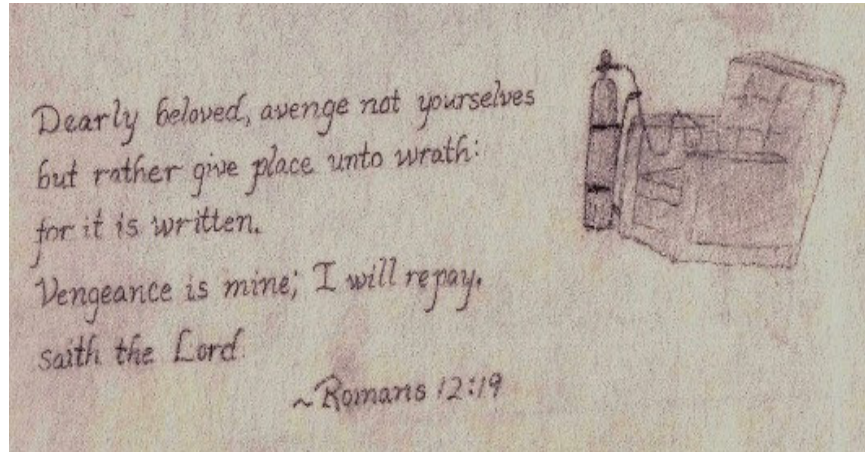
It was not until I was in my twenties that the Lord brought freedom from my bitterness. It was when I chose to trust God’s promise that He would punish my step-father for what he did, that I was released from the bitterness that was chained to my heart. There was such an instant

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<sup>21</sup> Anderson, Neil T. *The Bondage Breaker*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers 1993.

release that I felt like I could float. I was no longer responsible for bringing justice. It was not my problem anymore.

Around that time my step-father's health began to decline dramatically. A while later when I was home on a break from college my step-father was having a very hard time breathing. He is dying



from emphysema and has several other serious medical problems. He was gasping for breath as my mother took him to the hospital. After they left I knelt by the couch and asked God to be merciful to my step-father. It was then that the Lord clearly showed me that this was part of God's vengeance on my step-father for the things he did to me. In Romans 2:9 the Lord promises, "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, ..."

The Lord also showed me that it was His mercy that He waited to punish my step-father until I was not trying to punish him. If God had not waited, I would not have recognized God's faithfulness to keep His Word. I would have been trying to increase my step-father's suffering instead of asking the Lord to be merciful to him. Now, over ten years later, my step-father is still languishing. He begs to die almost daily. For several years he has been completely helpless and bedridden. I believe that my step-father has also come to realize that he is suffering for his sin. That makes his suffering even worse. My perspective is that he has suffered enough but God reminds me that I have placed that in His hands.



## Conclusion

We have looked at the principles behind suffering and God's purposes for suffering. While those principles are true, pain and healing are still hard. Knowing that God has a purpose for the suffering and that He cares very much about you helps ease the suffering.

Remembering that Jesus also suffered, not for His own sins but for our sins also helps. 1 Peter 4:1-2 says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Alaine Pakkala, a Godly woman who suffered unspeakable sexual and satanic ritual abuse but who has gone on to help thousands of other women recover from severe abuse, said:

The enemy that tried to destroy you is working hard to get you to take the unexplained things that happened in your life and use them as a barrier to getting to know God. He might stick in your mind the thought, "Well, where was God," You prayed in your mind for God to stop it and He didn't stop the abuse. You need to come to a choice of saying, "I don't know why He didn't stop those things from happening but I'm going to put that aside in an unexplained box. I don't understand but I think that I have distortions about God ...Choose to take that unexplained thing and put it in this unexplained box. Say, "I'm still going to ask God why didn't you stop them but I'm not going to let the enemy use it as a barrier for my getting to know God" That is what the enemy wants to do. He wants to make sure you never get healed. He wants to make sure you never come to know God. He wants to make sure you don't come to an end to this pain.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pakkala, Alaine. *Your Not Going Crazy*. Audio Tape Colorado Springs: Lydia Press 1999.

Don't let the enemy have his way, choose to trust God and put the things that you don't understand in the unexplained box until God's timing to explain them or until you see the reasons clearly in heaven.

### *Whom God Chooses*

*When god wants to drill a man,  
and thrill a man, and skill a man,  
When God wants to mold a man,  
To play the noblest part;  
When He yearns with all His heart  
To create so great and bold a man,  
That all the world shall be amazed,  
Watch his methods; watch His ways.  
How He ruthlessly perfects  
When He royally elects!  
How He hammers him and hurts him  
And with mighty blows converts him  
Into trial shapes of clay  
Which only God understands;  
While his tortured heart is crying,  
And He lifts beseeching hands!  
How He bends but never breaks  
When His good He undertakes.  
How He uses whom he chooses,  
And with every purpose fuses him;  
But every act induces him  
To try His splendor out --  
God knows what He's about!<sup>23</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> Author Unknown

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