

God's Presence When Hurting

It seems like it would be easy to feel the presence of God with us in the beautiful, sacred, lovely places of life, or in those situations where we are on top and everything is going our way.

But the truth is that God is never nearer to us than when we are hurting. Time after time, I have heard people say – and, no doubt, so have you – “This is the hardest thing we’ve ever gone through. Our hearts are broken, but we will be all right because God is with us as never before.”

That, in fact, has been my own experience. I’ve said it.

One little boy put it like this: “Why are all the vitamins in spinach and not in ice cream where they belong?”

I don’t know the answer to his question. We’ll have to ask God about that, but vitamins are in spinach, and God is uniquely and especially with us when we are hurting. Perhaps the reasons are two-fold:

1. We are more open to God when we are in pain, more receptive to His help, more aware of our need of Him.
2. Because God is like a loving parent who wants to be especially close to His children when they are hurting.

The late James W. Moore – bestselling author of more than 40 books and senior pastor of St. Luke’s United Methodist Church in Houston for more than 20 years – told a story that illustrates these points. On one occasion, he was at the hospital visiting a little girl who was very sick. Her mother had been at her bedside for days and days.

“The doctor called me out into the hallway and asked me to see if I could get that young mother to go home for a while,” Moore said. “The doctor said the mother had not slept, had not eaten, for several days. ‘She has got to be exhausted. See if you can get her to go home to rest a bit,’ the doctor said.

“I went back into the room and said to her, ‘Tricia, the doctor is worried about you. He thinks you need some rest. Why don’t you come and let me take you home for a while?’”

Moore added: “She looked at me and said only as a mother can, ‘Jim, you don’t really want me to leave my little girl when she is this sick, do you?’ Being a parent myself, I understood exactly where she was coming from, and I said ‘No, I’ll go downstairs and get you a sandwich.’”

(more)

God is like that – a loving parent, not a harsh judge; a loving parent who wants to be especially close to His children when they are hurting.

So, first, we can count on God to hear us when we pray, and, second, we can count on God to be with us when we are hurting.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear (Psalm 46:1-2 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter