



Session 8

**GOD'S GOODNESS IS AN  
ANCHOR IN MYSTERY, TRAGEDY,  
AND DISAPPOINTMENT**

*It is not the task of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the cause of our wonder.*

—KALLISTOS WARE









## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the following quote:

*It is not the task of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the cause of our wonder.*

—KALLISTOS WARE

- a. Explain the connection between people coming up with “bad theology” and how they respond to mystery.
2. What does it mean that bold faith stands on the shoulders of quiet trust?
  3. Read Romans 8:28. Explain how this passage of Scripture is an anchor during mystery (when prayers don't get instantly answered or we experience disappointment).
  4. Explain the difference between Matthew 11:12 (the violence of faith) and Mark 10:15 (receiving a gift as a child).
    - a. Discuss how you can know when to “rest” as a child or engage in the violent act of faith.
  5. Discuss why it's not helpful to ask God why? In these times, what do you need most from God? (It's not necessarily answers that can be grasped by the mind.)
  6. Discuss the difference between healthy mourning and unhealthy mourning. How should mourning and loss drive you into the Presence of God?
  7. Read Proverbs 6:30-31. Discuss what it means to pray for vindication using this Scripture as a reference point.
  8. How can the vindication of God released in your life actually reveal His goodness to the people around you?

## **ACTIVATION EXERCISE: RESPONDING TO THE MYSTERY**

In this session, Pastor Bill walks viewers through some of the undiscussed facts concerning loss, disappointment, and mystery. There is an appropriate response to mystery, which results from loss. It's not to live in extended mourning, nor is it right to reject mourning and pretend everything is okay. It's healthy to mourn in such a way that we are drawn into God's Presence, receive His loving touch, and then emerge from that season with an expectation of vindication. It's not vindication to fulfill a longing for personal revenge, but more so a desire that the goodness of God would be made visible on our lives because of His restorative touch on every area that experienced loss.

## **FAITH IN ACTION: ASK FOR HEAVEN'S VINDICATION AND INCREASED ANOINTING**

This will be a time of corporate prayer. If you sense the Holy Spirit directing, you can transition from the time of group prayer into prayer partners or individual prayer. This is a very sensitive time, particularly for those who have experienced any measure of loss for which there is mystery in their lives.

Remind yourself of the assurance of Romans 8:28 and that God's summons is not to act like we've never experienced tragedy, but more to respond to it correctly.

Prayer directions:

- Pray for a healing mourning period for every person who has experienced loss—where they can go into God's Presence and share their heart with Him. Receive His love rather than trying to get all of your questions answered.
- Pray for a discernment of seasons—so that people are not ensnared by extended mourning, but recognize the healthy time to mourn and the time to transition.
- Pray for a revelation of vindication—that those who have experienced loss and tragedy would see their mystery as an invitation to vindication. What produced mystery in your life is actually the very target you are being called to pursue in prayer with an expectation of increased breakthrough. It's not about reacting to the thief who stole (the devil), but it's about living in response to the Father who wants to show His goodness in an extreme way.
- Pray for recompense and restoration on the basis of Proverbs 6:30-31. Declare and announce restoration over everything that has been lost, as the Lord makes all things new.

## GOD IS GOOD INTERACTIVE MANUAL

- Pray for an anointing over those who experienced loss. Declare that this anointing, released through your life, would destroy the very things that caused loss, tragedy, and disappointment.
- Pray for the demonstration of God's goodness in unusual ways as people see God's vindication releasing restoration and anointing in your life.

## EMBRACING MYSTERY AND TRUST

*It is not the task of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the cause of our wonder.*

—KALLISTOS WARE

This quote from Kallistos Ware is one of the most meaningful quotes I have read in many years. God is more than capable of going head to head with anyone in debate. The thought that God might be intimidated with humanity's questions is quite humorous. He invites us into this dialogue. (See Isaiah 1:18.) It's just that He has a different value system than we do, although ours is changing daily in our walk with Him. And to have a relationship with Him is always on His terms. But we know that His terms are always for our best. God has one basic requirement of anyone who approaches Him—faith. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him"* (Heb. 11:6). That is what He values.

Living in the place of trust positions us for breakthroughs—bold faith stands on the shoulders of quiet trust. Faith is an activity of the heart. Real faith comes through yieldedness, not some trumped-up activity of the brain. Faith comes from surrender, not striving. Faith is not mindless. Understanding with the renewed mind (see Rom. 12:2) can often be used to set the context for faith to work in, much like the banks of a river set the parameters for the flow of the water. While faith is not mindless, it is also not mind-full. It is not intellectual in nature. True faith is superior to reason in that it gives our intellect a context in which to grow safely—in the knowledge of God. Remember, it's the fool who says in His heart there is no God. (See Psalm 14:1; 53:1.) The Eternal God is the cornerstone of all logic and reason.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why do you think that asking for answers from God might not be the correct response to tragedy, loss, or disappointment?

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## NOT WITH THE HEAD, BUT WITH THE HEART

*To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that  
you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

—EPHESIANS 3:19

God cannot be comprehended. If it were possible, we, not He, would be God—the finite will never envelop the infinite. He is to be known by relationship. Consider the wonder of the Almighty God even wanting for us to know Him. Because Jesus took our sins upon Himself, we are authorized to approach the Father with the same qualifications that Jesus has in coming before His Father. Jesus is received and celebrated by a perfect Father who is always good. Every true believer is equally received and celebrated because we are in Christ.

To know God is the greatest privilege given to anyone. The cross of Jesus Christ is the ultimate invitation to know God. It is here we can know with certainty He has spared no expense in enabling us to respond successfully to His invitation.

Clarity on this mystery of head vs. heart is given in Ephesians 3:19. It says, “*to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*” The word *know* is a word that means “knowledge gained through experience.” It is experiential knowledge. The word *knowledge* means “to comprehend.” In so many words Paul is saying, *that we might know the love of God by experience in a way we could never comprehend or fully understand.* It’s not that knowledge is wrong, or that ignorance is exalted. Knowledge is vital. We have teachers in the Body of Christ so we will learn. In fact, one of the main responsibilities of the Holy Spirit is to teach us—it’s a divine priority. But we must require of our own hearts that the knowledge of Him takes us to Him. Through an encounter with God, we grow in divine wisdom. It’s that knowledge is not required for faith.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Describe the difference between responding to mystery with your “head” or “heart.”

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## YOUR INVITATION FOR VINDICATION

*People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house.*

—PROVERBS 6:30-31

I had a conversation with Rick Joyner on the phone a couple of days before my dad's death. He told me that this loss would give me access to a seven times greater anointing against this particular disease. That may sound a bit awkward to some, but I knew of the principle first established by Solomon in the Proverbs passage above.

The devil is called the thief, and he stole from our family when my father died of pancreatic cancer. I also knew that greater anointing was not to be given automatically. It would require time in the *secret place*, crying out for the more that God had promised. It was not begging, in the sense of there being a fear God wouldn't keep His promise. I just knew that not everything was automatic. Sometimes He waits to see if the promise will awaken something in us that can carry the weightiness of the answer we've asked for. When answers to prayer come to a yielded heart, they release greater strength. But when answers come to a resistant heart, they carry a high probability of deepening the independence that causes conflict with God in the first place. The recalibration of our value system needed to be consistent with His.

The Book of First Samuel has a story that becomes vital for us in this journey. There is a woman named Hannah, who was barren. And while she was loved much by her husband, she was not fulfilled in life without a child. At the same time, we find Israel was in trouble again, and God desired a solution—He wanted them to have a trustworthy prophet. Hannah became so desperate in her prayers that she promised God that if He would bless her with a son, she would return the child to God, dedicating him to a life of ministry. Without knowing it, she aligned her heart's cry for a son with God's heart cry for a prophet. It was when both worlds came into agreement that we see Heaven invade earth, giving her the son she longed for. She went on to have many more children, as God honored her sacrifice of heart to meet the longing He had for Israel to have a trusted voice from God.

I do believe God hates cancer and that He wants His people to rise up with His hatred toward that disease. But hate it enough to seek God in private and take risk in public. As I've stated before, there





**REMINDER**

Sometimes God waits to see if His promises will awaken something in us that can carry the weightiness of the answers we've asked for.

## TRUSTING IN THE TRIAL

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*

—PROVERBS 3:5 NLT

The need for mystery need not be painful or dreaded. It is a part of our ongoing story. We value the outcome—the miracles, the breakthroughs, and the divine interventions—as we should. But He seems to treasure the process—that which takes us to the outcome. It's the process that reveals and demonstrates our devotion to Him. Devotion, that realm of established trust, is something He can build upon. God is the ultimate entrepreneur, building the unexpected in the earth upon and through the lives of His trusted saints.

What we really believe about Him becomes evident in trial. Answers to prayers are the easiest things in the world for God. He is all-powerful. What He doesn't control is our response to Him. He has influence, but not control, as He has given us a most valuable gift—a free will. When our will is surrendered to His purposes, all of creation gets closer to the healing God promised, as His people find out who they are. (See Romans 8:19.) We are to reign with Christ. It's vital to see this destiny in the way it was presented to us, as our beloved King put a towel over His arm and washed His disciples' feet. He rules to serve. Our privilege in life is to serve with the heart of a king and rule with the heart of a servant. Reigning with Christ will never equip us to exercise power over people but instead will allow us the opportunity to serve sacrificially—following the example given to us by Jesus.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How does trusting God during trials reveal our devotion to Him?

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## ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

—DEUTERONOMY 29:29

It's wisdom to realize what God has given us access to and what is to remain entirely in His possession. This is where trust is proven.

I believe in miracles and have seen more than I ever even hoped to see as a young man. My experience has been what Jesus promised—the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the poor have the Good News declared to them. My conclusion is miracles happen entirely by His grace. I've seen them happen when there was great faith, as well as when there was simple obedience in prayer but no real expectation of a miracle. It's still all by grace. And while this life of following Jesus is to be a life filled with supernatural interventions, we are given the following passage for a reason: *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (Rom. 8:28).

Such a promise would never be necessary if everything worked the way we expected. God is not a vending machine where we put in a coin and pull the handle and get what we requested. He is a Father that is to be known. Trusting Him enough to embrace mystery as a gift is one of the quickest ways to come to know this One who is beyond knowing, whose ways are always good.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Reflect on Deuteronomy 29:29. How does this passage of Scripture protect you from trying to get answers that God might not be sharing?

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## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*God is Good!*

*I declare it.*

*I believe it.*

*In every season and circumstance, I know that You are good.*

*I may have unanswered questions.*

*There may be mystery I'm facing.*

*Even though I don't have all the answers, I have the greatest answer.*

*You are a good Father.*

*I can trust You because You are faithful.*

*You are the Lord and You do not change.*

*Even though seasons change.*

*Circumstances change.*

*People change.*

*You are the same—yesterday, today, and forever.*

*Thank You, Jesus, for showing me what the Father is like.*

*You revealed Good who is truly good.*

*Establish it in my heart.*

*Settle it in my mind.*

*And above all, let the revelation of Your goodness consume my life and invite others to taste and see it for themselves!*

## ABOUT BILL JOHNSON

Bill Johnson is a fifth-generation pastor with a rich heritage in the Holy Spirit. Together Bill and his wife Beni serve a growing number of churches that have partnered for revival. This leadership network has crossed denominational lines, building relationships that enable church leaders to walk successfully in both purity and power. Bill and his wife are the senior leaders of Bethel Church, Redding, California. All three of their children and spouses are involved in full-time ministry. They also have nine wonderful grandchildren.