

SEPTEMBER 15, 2014

What If the Worst Happens?



Article by

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I found myself growing fearful. Not a heart-stopping, all-encompassing fear, but the kind of constant gnawing that occurs when you look at the discouraging trends of the present and assume things will never change. When you think about the future and wonder, “What if the worst happens?”

What if.

I’ve spent a lifetime considering the “what ifs.” Those questions have a way of unsettling me, destroying my peace, leaving me insecure.

People in the Bible were uneasy about “what if” questions, too. When told to lead the Israelites, Moses asked God, “What if they don’t believe me?” Abraham’s servant asked about Isaac’s future wife, “What if the young woman refuses to come with me?” Joseph’s brothers asked, “What if Joseph bears a grudge against us?” All of them wondered what would happen if circumstances went awry. Just like we do.

We all face a staggering array of “what ifs.” Some are minor issues while others have life-altering repercussions. What if my child dies? What if I get cancer? What if my spouse leaves me?

The uncomfortable truth is, any of those things could happen. No one is free from tragedy or pain. There are no guarantees of an easy life. For any of us. Ever.

I was considering this sobering reality a few months ago. Over the course of several days, I had brought numerous longings and requests before the Lord. I wanted them fulfilled. *But the unthinkable question haunted me: What if my inmost longings are never met and my nightmares come true?*

Is God Enough?

As I sat poring over my Bible, I was reminded of the questions I had wrestled with for decades. “Is God enough? If my deepest fears are realized, will he still be sufficient?” Each time those questions had come up in the past, I’d pushed them out of my mind. *But this time, I knew I needed to face them.*

I wondered: If my health spirals downward and I end up in an institution, will God be enough? If my children rebel and never walk closely with the Lord, will God be enough? If I never remarry and never feel loved by a man again, will God be enough? If my ministry doesn’t flourish and I never see fruit from it, will God be enough? If my suffering continues and I never see the purpose in it, will God be enough? I wish I could have automatically said, “Yes, of course God will be sufficient.” But I struggled.

I didn't want to give up my dreams, surrender those things that were dear to me, relinquish what I felt entitled to.

I reflected on my unilateral unwritten contract with God, where I promise to do my part if he fulfills my longings. *I reluctantly admitted that part of my desire to be faithful was rooted in my expectation of a payback.* Didn't God owe me something?

“God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life.”

Reluctantly, I opened my hands, filled with my dreams, and surrendered them to him. *I didn't want to love God for what he could do for me. I wanted to love God for who he is.* To worship him because he is worthy.

God's presence overwhelmed me as I relinquished my expectations. He reminded me that I have something far better than a reassurance that my dreaded “what ifs” won't happen. I have the assurance that *even if* they do happen, he will be there in the midst of them. He will carry me. He will comfort me. He will tenderly care for me. *God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life. But he does promise that he will be there in the midst of our sorrows.*

Even If

In the Bible, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not guaranteed deliverance. Just before Nebuchadnezzar delivered them to the fire, they offered some of the most courageous words ever spoken. “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it . . . But *even if* he does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods . . .” ([Daniel 3:17–18](#)).

Even if.

Even if the worst happens, God's grace is sufficient. Those three young men faced the fire without fear because they knew that whatever the outcome, it would

ultimately be for their good and for God's glory. They did not ask "what if" the worst happened. They were satisfied knowing that "even if" the worst happened, God would take care of them.

Even if.

Those two simple words have taken the fear out of life. *Replacing "what if" with "even if" is one of the most liberating exchanges we can ever make. We trade our irrational fears of an uncertain future for the loving assurance of an unchanging God.* We see that even if the worst happens, God will carry us. He will still be good. And he will never leave us.

"Even if the worst happens, God will carry us."

Habakkuk models this exchange beautifully. Though he had pleaded with God to save his people, he closes his book with this exquisite "even if" . . .

Even if the fig tree does not bloom and the vines have no grapes,
even if the olive tree fails to produce
and the fields yield no food,
even if the sheep pen is empty
and the stalls have no cattle—

Even then,

I will be happy with the Lord.

I will truly find joy in God, who saves me. ([Habakkuk 3:17–18](#))

Amen.

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