

## Holding Onto The Things We Do Understand

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Leading a children’s ministry (CM) can be the most fulfilling experience in your entire life! It can also be filled with frustrations and discouragements. Leading a CM takes work and focus. Some of the greatest times I’ve had in my life (apart from enjoying life with my wife and our son) were relaxing in our CM office after a full Sunday (3 morning services and 1 evening service) with some of our CM leaders and sharing the good things that happened during the challenging day. We would talk about both the good and the “bad” things that we encountered. We would sigh, pray, and laugh together! These “Selah” times were critical moments for us. It reminded us that the work was difficult, but that we were together in God’s power!



As a ministry leader, you probably have a good “picture” of how things should be. You make plans to honor God, and you have seen Him bless your work. You may also face surprises as you see life and ministry played out in a way that you didn’t plan. Ministry is “living and active.” It isn’t always “safe”! God lets things happen to us that shake us and challenge our faith. According to Romans 8, God is actively involved in everything that happens to us. His joy is when we focus on Him and remember WHO He is! He is in charge of our lives. He is about developing us. He uses “good” things and “bad” things to accomplish His will. In verse 28, Paul gives us a very clear picture of God’s sovereignty. He says that God can use (cause) all things to work together for our good.

In ministry, we face hard times, but as Jesus said in John 16:33, “In this life you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Hard challenges and “bad” things are a part of life. God wants us to focus on Him, and not on the hard things. This is a mental exercise each time it happens!

I learned a great lesson from watching a former pastor, Greg Laurie, and his wife go through the death of their first-born son, Christopher. He died instantly in a terrible car crash. Of course, his death devastated them. Greg took a Sunday off, and then came back to preach a sermon about life and tragedy. I’ll never forget him saying, through tears, “The things I don’t understand about God drive me to hold onto the things I do understand.”

Here was a world-famous preacher and evangelist who faced a terrible tragedy. He and his wife had to “wrestle” with their own views of life and God. Their faith was challenged, but they both found strength in remembering who God was in their lives. What we don’t understand drives us to hold onto what we do understand!

If you face a challenging issue in your ministry, you will probably ask God, “Why?” We don’t understand the “Why?” questions. We seldom get answers to them. Here are some things that you can hold onto. These are the things that we know for sure:



- God is omniscient! He knows all! He knows “bad” things will happen. He permits it.
- God is omnipotent! He is not a “victim” of anything!
- God lets us experience tragedy. He promises to be with us through it. (John 16:33)
- Jesus came to give us “peace that passes understanding.” (Phil. 4:7)
- Jesus weeps at our losses. (John 11)
- God promises to care for our needs. (Mt. 6:8)
- God’s ways are not our ways. (Isa. 55:8, 9)
- God is trustworthy. (Psalm 9:10)
- Jesus will not leave you alone. (John 14:18)

You may never have an answer to the "Why?" questions. But you can hold onto God who begs you to "Come to me."

After many years of grieving, Greg Laurie is more passionate than ever to preach the Gospel! He knows that a personal relationship with Jesus is the ONLY way for people to get through this life!

I love the story of Elijah's exhaustion and dealing with death threats and fear. In 1Kings 19, God permits Elijah to run away and react to what is happening around him. Elijah basically says, "I did all these things for you, and now this is what I get?" God met Elijah in the cave! He didn't judge Elijah for being discouraged or exhausted. God comforted him, fed him, let him rest. These are critical characteristics of God that you need to focus on when you face discouragement or exhaustion! God understands! God wants you to rest and recover!



One of the most beautiful things about Elijah's story, though, is that after enough rest, God tells Elijah to return to the work he was doing. He challenged Elijah to connect with others who could help him carry out the work that God called him to do. The "cycle" of ministry involves hard work, extreme successes, tough challenges, exhaustion, recovery, and return. It is a process that God understands and permits!

May you hold onto God as you "wrestle" with the surprising, often time "bad" things that happen in ministry. Withdraw, retreat, and recover. Let God minister to you! "Set your mind on things above..." (Col. 3:2) and hold onto the things you do understand as you return to the work with renewed passion.