

MAGNOLIA MINDS: What I'm Learning About God

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This last year has been interesting for me, to say the least. I graduated with my Ph.D., started a new church, and began a complicated assignment serving on the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention while the committee is trying to deal with the issue of sexual abuse.

To say that this season of life has been hectic would be an understatement. Combine these issues with a deeply divided political culture that is now in the third year of an endless pandemic, and eventually you start to question where we might be headed as a culture.

Like many of you, the last few years have been exhausting for me. I have found this to be especially true for most pastors. We still have to figure out how to deal with lower attendance, budgets, and volunteers. We still have to figure out how to “do” church, and we are still struggling with a changing church landscape.

Additionally, we are now struggling with a recession and the ebbs and flow of new variants of COVID. Regardless, through this season of life I have been reminded of three aspects of God’s character that continue to shine through in my life.

First, God has shown Himself to be sovereign over these circumstances. While COVID may continue to rage, God is still controlling all things. While the political landscape may continue to be problematic, God is still controlling all things. While your life may seemingly be as chaotic as it has ever been, God is still in control of all things!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us be reminded that God is sovereign over all things! Psalm 115:3 tells us plainly, "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases."

God does what He pleases to do. This leads us to the second characteristic about which God has reminded me: God is good! Regardless of what is going on in our life, God is good to us. Psalm 34:8 reminds us of this: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good."

Indeed! While this year has been challenging, I have found myself, time and time again, seeing the good hand of God at work in my life and family. This is not to say that we deserve it or have earned it. No! God has shown Himself to be good because He *is* good!

Lastly, God has been revealing another characteristic to me: God's providence. The providence of God is closely associated with Him being sovereign or in control of all things. However, there is a slight difference here.

God is not just in control. His providence tells us that God is ordering everything out in the world for our good. Despite COVID, politics, health, or finances, everything is going exactly to plan. Nothing that any of us are experiencing has been left to chance. Everything is working out according to God's plan and, as a result, God can be trusted.

The great thing about difficult circumstances is that they offer us an excellent opportunity to grow closer to Christ. So, regardless of circumstances, remember that God is good. Irrespective of what is going on in your life, remember that

God is in control. And remember, no matter what happens, everything is working out for your good.

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