

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Why NOT me?

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"Why me?" Have you ever asked that?

I have, and I'll bet you have too. I don't think it's because any of us feel entitled, but it is a natural response when things are piling up on us.

Why me? It's a hard question. I've prayed plenty of prayers that started out with "Why...?"

Several years ago I was serving a church in Florida. In a sister church in town, a young couple were in a car accident. The husband had a significant brain injury and was in a coma. His wife died on the scene. So when this man came out of the coma, he awoke to learn that he was a widower with two preschool children.

That seems horrifically unfair. His statement was simple, according to the youth minister at the church: "Why me?"

That's a basic, primal question.

You may think about this story and think, "That's not all that bad compared to what I've faced in my life." Perhaps. It's hard to be objective when you're the one that's hurting. We do tend to judge our troubles on a scale when comparing ourselves to others.

Here's the fact, though: In this life, you're going to have challenges and pain. It comes with having a pulse. Your response might be to ask, "Why me?"

I'd encourage you not to feel bad about asking that. It doesn't mean you're weak or unspiritual. It just means you want answers.

Here's a scriptural reality check:

- *Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.* – Job 5:7
- *Anyone born of woman is short of days and full of trouble.* – Job 14:1
- *For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.* – Ecclesiastes 2:23
- *Why did I come out of the womb to see only struggle and sorrow, to end my life in shame?* – Jeremiah 20:18

I could go on, but I don't need to. These are honest statements that could easily lead to a "why me?"

There is a companion thought, and this won't win me any popularity contests, especially as we get closer to Thanksgiving: "Why *not* me?"

If problems and heartbreak are part of the human condition, then "why not me?" is an equally valid question, even if it's unpleasant to think about.

Whatever grief you're facing, you aren't unique. You aren't singled out.

There isn't any inherent comfort there. So I have to dig a little deeper. If I want to be truly thankful, there are a few more layers to peel back.

I've come to realize there is a natural progression for me. Maybe all of us, if we'd just take time to evaluate things.

I'm about to go all scriptural on you, because that's all I have. It's also all I need.

Check this out:

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything;

for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." – 1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18.

There is an obvious truth in these verses. The command is not to be thankful *for* everything (how could you be thankful for the death of a child, for instance?), but rather to give thanks *in* everything. There is quite the difference.

It's a matter of recognizing that we gratefully acknowledge God's hand in all circumstances. Circumstances change, but God does not.

The challenge is for us to remain aware of God's goodness regardless of what things seem to be on the surface.

I don't have to tell you that's not easy, especially when our emotions have gripped us and our feelings are all over the map.

Part of it is just realizing there is a lot going on around us that we'll never be aware of. That's where the "why me?" comes in. Maybe part of it simply means that we are to be open to God in all situations and recognize that not only is He aware of what we're facing, but that He already knows the outcome.

We can, then, ask "why me" but we also understand He's under no obligation to answer. I'm guessing that has something to do with faith and free will.

There's a third step, then. Here's the progression:

- Why me?
- Why not me?
- Why me?

That third "why me?" There are some sweet promises in that one.

Here's a hypothetical:

Say a man loses his beloved wife. He asks, "Why me?"

Then he comes to realize that people lose loved ones. All the time. There is nothing unique in his loss, even as much as it hurts. He comes to be able to sincerely say "Why *not* me?"

As time goes on, he grows into acceptance that he wasn't picked out of the crowd by the hand of a capricious God Who delights in inflicting pain. He realizes that death is part of living.

The result is that he is able to identify and empathize with others going through similar challenges. He's able to touch lives that otherwise he never could have – it's a matter of "been there, done that." He realizes that things happen not only for his growth and maturity, but so that he can minister in God's name to others.

The result? He realizes that he's supernaturally blessed. Now he can say, "Why me?" He realizes that triumph has grown from tragedy, and he has a cause greater than himself. He can't believe how fortunate he is to serve.

This is an idealized scenario, perhaps. "I could never be so accepting of my loss," you say.

I don't have an answer for you. You know yourself and your heart.

My point is simply we do have so, so much to be grateful for.

Why me, indeed:

- I woke up this morning in a warm bed.
- Breakfast was simple and good.
- My car started.
- Lunch was good, too.
- I have a job.

I could go on, and belabor the obvious, but we can all rightfully say “Why me? Why do I have so much and why am I so blessed? Why is there always hope? Why was I given another day here?”

It’s because you ain’t done here yet.

O be joyful.