

Article Title: By Way of Grace...

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When life changes we may feel upset, sad, depressed, or uncertain. When the doctor tells us about a chronic or life-threatening disease we look for answers. Why me? Could I have prevented this? Why has God done this to me?

As a scientist/psychologist I want to understand the cause and effect of people and disease however my conclusion is that I cannot understand life from a "fairness" perspective. There is no way to calculate guilt or weigh blame. Anger seems justified yet it only makes the pain worse. I have learned that I may still ask "why" but I don't demand the answer as loudly as I once did.

I have learned to operate as a psychologist/person/Christian in the medical world through acceptance, forgiveness, and grace...all religious concepts. I can respect other views but fundamentally believe that IT IS YOUR LIFE TO CHOOSE, TO DECIDE, TO LIVE! The afflictions of the body do not trap our mind or our spirit.

While we are told that it is important to "accept" our disease it must be understood that this is a struggle. Ask yourself this question "In my life have I ever accepted defeat, ever quit easily, ever given up with no fight and liked it?" Knowing this about ourselves we see, in the face of disease, an attempt to identify the cause and punish it, hurting those around us or ourselves.

Forgiveness is the doorway to coping with life. It is not concerned about blame. It meets you where you are, in whatever state of mind or body you are in. Forgiveness is best understood in the concept of Grace and Grace is a most difficult concept. Grace is unfair, does not make logical sense, does not operate in a "fair" way, and is at the heart of the gospel. Grace is Christianity's best gift to the world, a spiritual nova in our midst sending out a brilliance that overcomes vengeance, racism, and hate.

In the final analysis, forgiveness and Grace are acts of faith. By forgiving myself or others, I am trusting that God is a better justice-maker than I am. I leave in God's hands the scales that must balance the explanations for why a disease happened. I never find forgiveness easy, and rarely do I find it completely satisfying. Nagging injustices remain as I witness pain and suffering. I must return again and again to God seeking his help with my short-comings.

Forgiving yourself or others for decisions that led to disease liberates so that what is positive in life can be enjoyed. Releasing the focus on "why" gives one power to reach out to ourselves or others in those situations where we most need companionship.