

Focusing In . . . By Faye Reynolds

"Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand." (Psalm 73:23)

I took a spill off my bike this summer – nothing too serious, but I was hurting for a while. What struck me the most was how my body and psyche reacted to protect myself from any more pain. I didn't want to stub my toe, get stung by a wasp or even a mosquito. I became very cautious because I simply did not want to hurt again. My pain tolerance had maxed out.

It has been a good summer, but also a hard summer with some very sad situations. A beloved son and brother killed in a motorcycle accident; a young mom dies giving birth; a neighbor's boy continues to make horrible choices. There is a lot of suffering in my community and this week I prayed a collective cry, "God, we just don't want to hurt any more".

In some of these situations, God has been amazing, as He has showed up to comfort the mourning and strengthen the weary. In other cases, it has felt like God is nowhere to be seen. His absence is painfully striking and difficult to comprehend. Maybe we're just looking in the wrong places, but it isn't for lack of searching. I don't know what to say about that. I believe the Scripture when it says, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek with all your heart*" (Jer 29:13) but for one friend, it feels like a bad game of hide and seek with someone not playing by the rules.

The day I crashed my bike, I came home to an empty house and felt rather sorry for myself, but my husband surprised me and came home mid-day from work to see me. He couldn't do anything for me, but he showed up. That meant so much to me and helped immensely. Sometimes God shows up in people – in a tangible presence and caring face and we are comforted. Never minimize the power in just showing up and being present in order for God to use our presence. Other times, the people showed up, but God didn't seem to be among them, like Job surrounded with well-wishers.

There is this little phrase that pops up in Scripture from time to time: "*Yet I . . .*". There will continue to be much pain in the world and heartache and sorrow. Sometimes God will be an unshakeable presence that nothing can defeat, and other times, we will know an absence beyond comprehension; *Yet I . . . Yet I* will believe that God cares and He will eventually will come and bind our wounds and heal our heart. Yet I will trust in him. Like Joseph languishing in prison forgotten, or Job surrounded by friends but feeling so incredibly alone, *yet I am always with you*. Note in Psalm 73, it is not God saying he is always with us – it is the Psalmist saying in the midst of his struggle, "*Yet I am always with You.*" The faith of a mustard seed is enough, declares our Lord.

17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.
19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights. (Habakkuk 3: 17 – 19)

By grace alone, Faye Reynolds.
Director of Women's Ministry-Women in Focus, CBWC