

put him on several medications and nothing has helped. God gave him to me, and today I'm giving him up to God. I'm turning loose of the string." The boy's problem slowly got better and in a short time it went away for good.

FATHER KNOWS BEST

"In the desert they gave in to their cravings / They tested God, so He gave them what they asked for and sent a terrible disease."

(Psalm 106 / See Numbers 11)

This lady knew the pure ecstasy of having God answer a prayer (Psalm 13); But we all know there is an agony side to prayer. That is, when we are in pain and God says "no" and leaves us in our pain. Soon after I came to one of my churches, a young lady in her early twenties did not attend church even though the rest of her family did. I asked her mother about it and she told me her daughter was very active until her Senior year in High School. Her dog, her constant companion, got seriously ill and she begged God to make him well. When he died she seemed to lose all interest in church.

When things like this happen, Jesus said we might be tempted to believe God is *cruel* and has given us a stone when we ask for bread; that He is like a neighbor who does not want to be *bothered*, or worse, like a dishonest judge who has no interest in doing *what is right* (Matthew 7, Luke 11 and 18). This is when we need the faith that God knows and does what is best for **us**; for **others** or for His **kingdom**.

Sometimes it is best **for us**. He knows what we ask for will hurt us. In the wilderness years, the Israelites grew tired of Manna and begged for meat so much that Moses prayed to die. God answered their prayers by sending them millions of quail. They ate them and it caused a sickness that killed thousands of them. God knew meat was not a healthy diet in the desert, but they thought they knew better than God. That girl or boy you wanted to marry might have

broken your heart. That job you didn't get might have broken your spirit or destroyed your marriage.

We might wonder, what harm would it have been for God to heal that young girl's dog; or more seriously, what possible good comes out of Him letting one of our children die. The biggest problem we have with God is that, what we want most in life is to be *happy* and what He wants most is for us to be *holy* – to be a good person who serves Him and helps others.

When a pet dies; is that good or bad? It is both. That girl who gave up on God, missed out on some valuable lessons we need to face life without letting it beat us. We can learn that:

- Pets die and so do mothers, daddies and friends; and this means we need to show our love for them while we can; while they are alive.
- Pain is a part of life and God does not spare His people from it or deliver us every time we pray. If He did, we could not build enough churches to hold all the people who would come for the wrong reasons.
- God is not a grandparent who gives us everything we ask for.

In my first pastorate, a committee from a beautiful church in South Georgia, visited our church to decide if I might be their next pastor. Mary Ann and I actually rode 200 miles to see it and it was like a dream come true. It is humbling and devastating when a committee tells a Pastor they don't want him and they didn't want me. Because of my pride, I was devastated and broken. Ten years later I was serving a church in South Carolina, and we called a Minister of Music. I learned he came from that church and when I told him what had happened, he said, "It was a good thing you didn't go there. They have broken the spirit of every Pastor they ever had". My heavenly Father knew best. Spurgeon said it best:

"God's refusals are our greatest protection. If I knew God would never say 'no' to any of my prayers again, I would never pray again."