

FACE TO FACE

DIVINE ENCOUNTERS

The Face of God in Crisis and Death

Focus God is definitely with us during times of crisis and death.

Open When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Read Many of us would like to avoid the topics of crisis and death. However, it is in the dark valleys of life when we ask important questions. Is God really there? If He is there, how do we know? Is the Bible true? Is God true? Is Jesus true? Does our faith really work? These are questions we each must settle for ourselves.

The crises in life reveal what's inside of us. For example, Father Colby was a Polish priest in Auschwitz prison camp during World War II. In his time of crisis, he showed courage and love as he stepped forward to sacrifice his life in place of another prisoner.

When we go through a valley of crisis and death, it can take many shapes. The valley may not be physical death. Things happen differently than we expect, and distressing times leave us confused. Sometimes our hopes and dreams die. During these times, even if we can't see or understand, God is there to take care of us (Psalm 23:4).

Pastor Steve Riggle shared a riveting personal story of when he and his wife were taken as hostages in a Philippine prison many years ago. In this personal crisis where he faced certain death, he found himself asking God questions. He also experienced a peace that was beyond his understanding as God answered those questions (Philippians 4:7). After 18 days in the hospital, he received a miraculous healing overnight. His wife's healing took many months, but in this crisis they both saw God's faithfulness.

Talk

1. What stood out to you from Pastor Steve Riggle's story about being taken hostage?
2. Most of us probably haven't been taken hostage, but we all experience crisis at some point in our lives. What are some examples of crises that cause us to dig deeper and ask those difficult questions?
3. The apostles Peter and John were threatened by the Jewish leaders after healing a lame man and proclaiming Jesus' name (Acts 3 and 4). They continued to preach in spite of the threats. What was inside them that was revealed through this crisis?
4. Read Philippians 4:6–7. Discuss these verses as a group. What precedes the peace that is beyond understanding? How do we live this out in our daily lives?
5. Tell a story about a crisis you experienced (or are experiencing) in your own life. Did you question God in the middle of it? What did you learn about yourself? Did you see miracles?

Live

Read Psalm 23 several times throughout the week. Slow down and think about what each verse means. Spend time considering the analogy of the Lord being our shepherd. Pray as you read it, asking God to reveal Himself to you through this Psalm.

Pray

Thank You, God, for always being with us. We praise You that You are faithful in every crisis we face. You are able to answer all our questions. Please help us to trust in You even when we can't see or understand where You are.