

“Can we still go to Grandma’s?”

A couple years ago, a friend and I sought the Lord about the frustrating flu-before-vacation situations that seem to come up every year around the holidays. You know what I'm talking about: Your whole family is preparing for a trip to Grandma and Grandpa's for Christmas. All the cousins will be there. Everyone's excited, you're nearly done packing, and one of your kids throws up! Now what! You quickly try to assess the situation. Is this just a quick case? Are the other children getting sick too? Will the other families catch it if we go? Should we take the risk? Do we even tell them? Who makes the decision and when? Why does this happen right when we're looking forward to being with the relatives?!"

As my friend and I took a more focused look at the situation, we realized that there were some deeper questions involved, such as, "God, why did you let this happen again?!" or "God, are you punishing me?" or "Is Satan trying to harass us?" or "If You're such a good God, why don't you heal this child so we can go?!" We realized a bitterness had grown in our hearts toward God concerning these holiday illnesses. We determined to pray for each other, that God would show us what to do. We also asked our husbands for advice. Then we compared notes. I posted our results on the inside of the medicine cabinet for future reference. It's still there:

When sickness threatens a fun event

- 1) Acknowledge God's sovereignty
- 2) Pray for healing
- 3) Take captive errant thoughts
- 4) Give Thanks
- 5) Ask Tom what to do

1) We realized we liked being in control of what our families did. So when little ones got sick, that forced us to recognize that we really weren't in control, and that hurt. So we confessed pride and saw that we needed to acknowledge God's sovereignty in our lives. He calls the shots.

2) Sometimes I would just get angry at God, thinking, "Why don't you just heal him!" but I hadn't actually asked Him to heal him. Now I ask humbly, knowing He can, if He wants to. And if not, then I need to submit to His better plan which may mean staying home this year.

3) Lots of emotions surface in this situation. As God pointed out the errant ones, we began taking them captive and giving them to Him. (See "Capturing Thoughts" article). For example, I sometimes found myself angry at the child for getting sick, instead of compassionately caring for him. This anger stems from selfishness and I have needed to confess it as sin and to take these thoughts captive. "...and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Cor. 10:5b, NIV

4) We know that in ANY situation, it is always God's will that we give thanks. "...give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NIV Giving thanks increases our capacity for God and His ways. Since, according to Romans 8:28, God can and does work everything for our good, we can even thank Him that our child threw up right before a trip, knowing He will work this all out for good.

5) One of the most frustrating aspects of these "flu on the eve of vacation" situations has been the decision-making. How do we decide if we should make the trip or not? How can we know if the child will get worse or if his siblings will catch it too? How can we know if anyone else will catch it at the gathering? How can we know what the in-laws or other parents will think of us for bringing sick kids to a gathering? How can we know when the child is done being sick? And who makes the final decision? This used to frazzle me, until I learned to submit the decision to my husband. I give him all the gory details, usually complete with my own commentary on the situation, but then I say, "What do you think we should do?" Sometimes he has said, "He'll be fine, let's just go." Other times he's said, "Call Grandma and ask her what she thinks." Another time we just stayed home an extra day and arrived at the gathering late, but much more welcomed. What I like about submitting to Tom is that I can relax, knowing I'm in God's will when I do what Tom says. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." Ephesians 5:22 NIV. Tom seems to bear the weight of the decision more gracefully than I do.

I used to head into the holidays fearing that our children would probably get sick again right when we wanted to visit. I've learned to take those fears captive. I have more confidence, now, knowing that God is in control and He is good! These situations are just part of living in a fallen world. Flu happens. But I don't want bitterness to grow in my heart toward God. I think He uses these "opportunities" to teach us, about ourselves and about Him. He does care. He does know we like to be with our families. He created families! He can and does heal. He is faithful and He is good. So it's safe to put these situations in His loving arms.