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Finding God Amid The Pain And Tragedy In Life

The noise was quite unbearable. Our conversation had to stop when we approached the construction site. After finishing at the High Museum, Dad and I walked up Peachtree Street for a stroll around the city. Large construction cranes could be spotted in the area, as new buildings sprung up all over midtown Atlanta.

I stopped beside one particular construction site, where the intense noise was coming from. Peeking through a hole, I saw a sturdy worker operating a jackhammer. Sweat poured down his face as he used the drill to break through some stubborn old foundation. The noise was intense. The effort, seemingly back breaking. The site was filled with people working to ensure that the foundation of this new building would withstand the test of weather and time. Backhoes were digging deep. Hammers, pickaxes and shovels moved up and down in the workers' hands.

Before the beautiful building can embellish the Atlanta skyline and invite new tenants in, there has to be major ground breaking. It's noisy. Dirty. Ugly.

But it has to happen.

We have all experienced the same painful, ground-breaking work in our lives at some point in time. In many instances, the traumatic effects are hard to understand. We cannot help but ask: "Why, God?" Why does God allow bad things to happen to good, innocent people?

I don't know the answer. No one does. Why does he allow a 2-year old to perish in a hot car in the heat of the summer? No. One. Knows. In many of these unthinkable tragedies, people of faith find peace and reassurance as we trust that his ways are higher than ours and that he is still good, even when the inconceivable happens. That the fact that he gave humans free will did not change his character. He is still a good, loving God. But there are many other tragedies, or bad situations in which we may find ourselves, which I believe are often part of the process of spiritual growth.

We don't see the complete picture of our future. Only God knows the plans he has for us. He knows the things that we need to learn, areas where we need to mature, or weaknesses that will prevent us from reaching our full potential. And I fully believe that many of our trials are nothing but the breaking of that stubborn ground where we insist on planting our feet.

A beautiful and new building cannot be erected on an old, crumbling foundation. There needs to be shaking and breaking. Stuff needs to go. It may be habits that need to be overcome. Or fears that need to be conquered. It may be bitterness that needs to be defeated or people who need to be removed from our lives. It's painful. Noisy. And yet, so very necessary.

No, I don't have the answer to some of the tragedies that happen in our world. But in my life, I choose to believe that God is not done making me.

Yes, the process is often painful. But as I look back at who I once was and who I am today, I can see the progress. Undoubtedly, were it not for different painful situations I have encountered, I would not be the same person I am. It does not make it any easier, but I have decided not to question the architect. I trust him because he knows what I need in order to become what he has called me to be. And I certainly know that there are some old, crumbling structures that need to be removed.

Indeed, breaking ground is a noisy and dirty process. But without it, there would be absolutely no progress: Whether it is in midtown Atlanta, Hong Kong, or in your heart.

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