When God Does Nothing About Injustice

"If God is so good and loving, why does He allow pain and suffering?"

This one question is probably the biggest obstacle to faith in Christ for most people. There are good answers, but since we are very limited in our perspective, many people continue to stumble over the problem of evil.

Because we are made in the image of a just God, our souls long for justice in the wake of injustice. We want *someone to pay* for hurting us or hurting others. We want to exact our pound of flesh. We wonder why God doesn't *do something* about bad people doing bad things, especially when it invades our personal space.

For years, when addressing this issue, my husband has cautioned his listeners that immediate justice may sound good when we think about dishing it out, but we wouldn't like to be on the receiving end of it.

Recently we had the privilege of teaching at a couple of church leadership conferences in Burundi, Africa. Ray asked his audience to consider what it would be like if God zapped us with an electric shock every time we thought or said or did a bad, or even uncharitable, thing. He said, "You're probably sitting there thinking, 'I wish that speaker would just be quiet and sit down. It's been a long day and I'm tired of listening.' But that's not very nice, and let's say you got buzzed with a shock for your thoughts."

Then he got off the platform and stood before one of the men. "I don't like your shirt. I don't like your jacket. I don't like your FACE!" And then he pretended to get a gigantic

electric shock, flailing his arms and head, and fell down on the floor. The men roared with laughter. Ray stood up and said, "*Now* aren't you glad God is patient? We need to be careful, thinking that justice in the moment would be a good thing. None of us would survive!"

Lots of smiles and nodding heads. They got it.

But we also experienced a terrifying example of why immediate justice would not be good.

On our two-hour drive from the capital city to the city where the conference was held, it had grown dark. Ray was in a taxi carrying him and one of the interpreters, along with some of our luggage. As our convoy made its way through one of the villages where a lot of people were gathered along the road, a man that the driver thinks was drunk ran out in front of the speeding car, and the driver hit him. He was thrown onto the hood of the car and smashed into the windshield. As the driver slammed on the brakes, the injured man fell off the car and lay motionless on the pavement.

Horrified, Ray could say or do nothing as the driver backed up and then drove around the man, leaving the scene—and a man who was either seriously injured or dead. The onlookers swarmed the taxi, and that of the car behind them, also containing our people, and started banging on the doors and windows. To the amazement of us Americans, all the drivers just kept on going, leaving the crumpled man and the angry crowd behind.

When we got to our destination, the horror was explained to us. If the taxi driver had gotten out of his car to check on the man he'd hit, the crowd would have killed him on the spot, and possibly Ray and our interpreter as well. In that culture they practice immediate justice—"mob justice," it was called. Our Burundi host said that in that culture, the drivers did the right thing to protect the visitors by not stopping and not opening the door to check on the man.

This experience was deeply disturbing to my husband (who was thankful that I was in another taxi ahead of him and didn't see anything). We prayed together about the awful images burned into his memory and asked the Lord for peace.

And we can both appreciate, at a whole new level, why God's patience in not dealing with evil and pain when it occurs is a measure of His grace and mercy. He *will* bring resolution one day, and we can rest in that. That He is patient beyond our understanding is a good, good thing.

This blog post originally appeared at
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Faith-based Film Faith Like Potatoes

It's movie night with Mom; so I'm at the video store browsing the new releases and I come across *Faith Like Potatoes*. I'm not sure I would have picked it up if I were looking just for myself, but I saw the words, "Based on an inspiring true story," and thought, Mom will like this. She did. But much to my surprise, so did I. Oh, I thought I'd enjoy it tolerably, but I didn't expect to be, yes, actually inspired.

Faith Like Potatoes centers around a young, white African farmer who is forced to move his family to South Africa and start all over. As he does, he must overcome drought, tension in his family and his own deep-seated anger, as well as the

tension and violence between white and black South African farmers. It's a story of pain, truth, beauty, and redemption.

Nonetheless, even though I was able to read all this on the back cover, I wasn't expecting to be very impressed. To be entirely truthful, I've come to expect a fair amount of cheesy dialogue and frankly, poor artistry (cinematography, plot nuance, imagery, symbolism, subtlety, etc.) from Christian film, with a few notable exceptions. To be fair, I like those "weird artsy films" that make you think, and I understand that isn't everyone's cup of tea. But that also means I've seen my fair share of high-quality, low-budget film. And while I think we still have lots of ground to recover as we relearn how to engage the arts, I'm also aware that we have and are making progress.

Faith Like Potatoes from Affirm Films, is evidence of this progress. The producers, editors, directors, and composers are highly experienced, award-winning experts both within and without faith-based film-making, and it shows. Often, faith-based films come across as unrealistic because they lack engaging, believable characters and dialogue and they over-simplify characters and their issues. These movies often provide one-size-fits-all answers and end up resolving problems and characters so pristinely that there are no complications, no loose ends, no lingering struggles or doubts, no ambiguities, no room for interpretation… no depth. Real people in real circumstances aren't like that. People are complicated; what's right and what's wrong is sometimes unclear; accepting Jesus doesn't make everything rosy and happily-ever-after all at once.

As Christians we ought to know better than anyone that complete resolution will never take place until Christ returns at long last to bring Justice and Peace to a hurting world. If we want our productions to speak to real people in real ways, we need to get real. We need to stop avoiding the wonderfully complex simplicities of the paradoxical life God designed (the

last is first, die to live, etc.). *Potatoes'* Regardt Van Den Bergh understands this. The well-known South African actor and director writes this of his work (of which *The Visual Bible's Matthew* is his best known): "I, as a director, love telling true stories. To tell stories of how God impacts the lives of people is the best, but with it comes an awesome responsibility: the responsibility of being truthful and also representing the way of God in the person's life accurately." (www.sonypictures.com/homevideo/faithlikepotatoes/about/production-bios.html).

Overall, I think the film is successful in doing this. It doesn't shy away from the tragedy that happens in Buchan's life. (*Faith Like Potatoes* is based on the life of Angus Buchan, and is also the title of Buchan's autobiography.) I did, however, feel that the aftermath of the death of his nephew was covered a bit speedily. I understand there are limits on film as a medium, and time is almost always a factor—*Faith Like Potatoes* is almost an even two hours long as it is—however, I still feel it was an important part of the whole of this man's experience that shouldn't have been rushed. We only glimpse rather than truly encounter the shame and guilt and anger Buchan struggled with. The film brings us face-to-face with Buchan's immense sadness, but his other, darker feelings and struggles are only hinted at. Nonetheless, this dose of realism which portrays both the triumphs and tragedies of life is a good step in the right direction.

You've heard the old adage: It's not what you say, but how you say it that matters most. We all have experience with this. We know that how we say what we're saying affects how people receive it, and often whether they receive it at all. This being the case, we can see how bad art is an impediment to a good message; we begin to understand how it is nearly impossible to communicate a good message through a movie that just isn't good. This is why I want to highlight Regardt's *Faith Like Potatoes*. It's good art. Not exceedingly great

perhaps, but good. This film has quality acting, dialogue, cinematography—all believable, which allows its message to be believable too. And that is inspiring.

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"What Part of the Bible Was Written in Africa?"

In your article "The Authority of the Bible" you said it was written on three continents (Africa, Asia and Europe). Where in the Bible does it say about the continent of Africa?



The first five books of the Bible (called the Pentateuch) are traditionally held to have been written by Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai (which is in the country of Egypt and continent of Africa). Also, Jeremiah may have written at least some of his book from Egypt, where he was taken after the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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