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Cheyenne DeShields

God Is My Umpire

Until recently, my life was like a game of baseball that I was winning by a landslide. I had hit many home runs regarding success and happiness. When things were going well in my life, I was energetic and passionate about praising God. I didn't just walk with God, I ran with Him, striding around a predictable and comfortable baseball diamond of normalcy. I thought that I could predict and control what would happen in my life. Whenever I had setbacks, I comforted myself by offering explanations for any curveballs that were thrown at me. As long as everything was going well in my life and I understood God's reason for the hardships in my life, I was satisfied. However, on January 24, 2012, I was thrown a curveball that I couldn't just hit far into the outfield, away from my bubble of familiarity. On that day, Sarah, my classmate and friend, unexpectedly passed away in her sleep. The predictable happiness and bliss that had been my comfort was shattered in an instant. This tragedy challenged my faith in God, forcing me to sit out of this "game" for a while. Sarah's death caused me to question God's love and His very existence, but it also began my journey of faith assessment, healing, and reconciliation with God.

I would be lying if I said that I virtuously decided to trust God despite my pain. When Sarah died, I immediately doubted God's presence and became angry with him. I felt like God had aimed this curveball straight at my heart, and regardless of how hard I tried, I could not provide an explanation for this tragedy. I had no more energy to run on the baseball diamond. In fact, it no longer existed--it was flooded with my bitter tears. Sarah's death was hard to accept. It was heartbreaking to learn that someone who laughed with me every day would never tell any more jokes. That her heart of gold would no longer beat. That she wouldn't even get to come back and say goodbye. I felt cheated by God and I blamed my heartache on Him. I asked myself,

how could He ever have loved me or anyone else if he caused this to happen? I felt as if God had defeated me and ignored the mercy rule, and I thought that He did not want me to ever have joy again. Trusting Him felt impossible because I had cast God away and refused to make room for Him in my heart and in my life.

By the third month after Sarah's death, I had struck out of the game. Bitterness took the position in my life that happiness had once held. Because of this, I was no longer running with God; I was running from Him. God felt like a distant thought that had once given me joy but was now a figment of my imagination. I knew that I was heading in the wrong direction, but I felt too angry to let God back into my life. I didn't know if I would ever trust God again, but I am so grateful He pulled my heart back towards Him. After encouragement from friends, family, and my church community, I began a thorough assessment of my faith. I asked myself, am I just praising God during the good times, or am I strong enough to put my trust in Him during the difficult times also? Deciding to come to God with my grief and to resume my journey with Him was a daunting task. However, the Bible gave me a new confidence that I was making the right decision. Proverbs 3:5 stood out to me, and it is a verse that continues to restore my faith in God's goodness. It says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." At first, this was hard for me to read. I realized that I was naive to believe that I had all control over events in my life. The anger that I had held on to for so long turned into shame. How could I have dared to assumed that God did not love me? Out of fear of being hurt again, I was deliberately separating myself from God's ultimate truth--that He loves and protects us through our times of pleasure and our times of pain, and that he will ALWAYS be there for us. This realization gave me the courage to pursue my new journey of healing with God.

Letting God heal my heart in His own special way was the best decision I have ever made. When I realized that God still loved me despite my rejection of Him, I became more accepting to His love. Throughout this new journey, I have learned to thank God for the curveballs in my life, even when every situation may not be a home run. The journey hasn't been perfect, but it is steadily gaining strength. On days when I lack the energy to run with God by spreading his love, He walks with me at a slower pace and still loves me through the sadness and the anger. God has shown me that He is always on my team and He is always rooting for me to win. Even when I don't have the energy to run with God, I can always run to Him for guidance, and he will be there to lead me.

Losing Sarah so suddenly will always hurt, but now I realize that this trial has taught me that God doesn't want me to run through life. Instead, He wants me to walk slowly with Him and to see every curveball as an opportunity to grow closer to Him. Sarah's death caused me to sit out of the game, spend some time finding God in the dugout, and finally learn how to take baby steps with God again. I have learned to be grateful for small hits and to try to get to each individual base instead of sprinting through life expecting endless homeruns. Her death was a curveball that I couldn't hit, but I have realized that I don't have to deal with the curveballs alone. God is my umpire who catches every curveball in the palm of his hand. He has every problem in my life under control, and He will never leave me to cope with them alone. Most importantly, I know that even when painful curveballs cause me to strike out of the game, God heals my injuries and allows me to rest while he shapes me into a stronger, more faithful person. With God on my team, I will never lose the game!