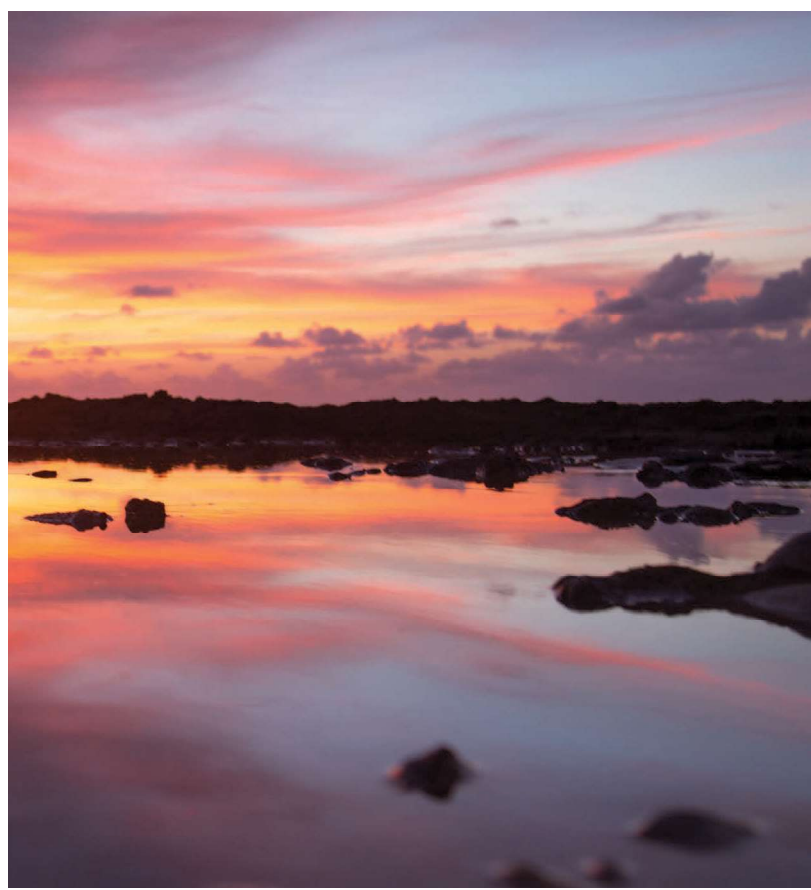


Discovering *the Wonders of God* in the Low Tides of Life



BY RANDY ALCORN

Over the years, God has been faithful in what I call “the low tides” of life. In those times, I’ve seen Him in ways not always visible during high tides—periods of relative ease and comfort. As the wonders of underwater tide pools are only seen at low tide, so the wonders of God and depths of our need for Him can become visible to us in our own low tides.

Perhaps you, like me, have also experienced the truth of what Robert Murray M’Cheyne said: “You will never find Jesus so precious as when the world is one vast howling wilderness. Then He is like a rose blooming in the midst of the desolation, a rock rising above the storm.”

When the Bottom Drops Out

Years ago, my wife Nanci suffered through what she calls her “year of fear and free-floating anxiety that made me fall in love with God.” Nanci knew

God from childhood and trusted Him all through my lawsuits, arrests, and job loss, then through her mother’s death and other losses (and threatened ones). But that inexplicable year of her life, unrelated to any outside traumatic event, changed her. She coped by telling God, morning and night, how much she loved Him.

She has continued her habit of praise and intimacy with God that developed when daily fear and dread fell upon her. The crushing emotions of that time have departed; the sense of intimacy with her Savior remains. To this day Nanci rejoices in God’s love for her and her love for Him in ways she never would have known without that year she otherwise could describe as hellish.

Why do God’s children undergo pressures, suffering, and deadly peril? Paul answers clearly: “that we might not rely on ourselves but on God” (2 Corinthians 1:9, NIV). There’s no nearness to God without dependence on God. And nothing makes us more dependent on Him than when the bottom drops out.

When we're feeling good, too often we rush on with little thought of the God who is supposed to be our Rock and Sustainer and Comfort. He is our friend, and don't we always appreciate true friends most when we need them, in times of difficulty? As Corrie ten Boom put it, "You may never know that JESUS is all you need, until JESUS is all you have."

No Other Way

Ten months after his son was killed in a car accident, Greg Laurie told me, "What I wish is that I could have learned and grown and drawn close to the Lord just like I have, but that Christopher was still here." Greg captured it perfectly—I too wish I could have all the good God has brought me and have learned the things He has taught me through adversity, but without all that pain and loss. But it doesn't work that way, does it?

God knows we'll learn things in those low tides that we would never learn any other way. And He understands our greatest need is to know Him better and trust Him more deeply:

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, *that he understands and knows me*, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight," declares the LORD (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

But grow in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Indeed, I count everything as loss because *of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—*that I may know him* and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Philippians 3:8-10).

Nothing is more important or joy-giving than truly knowing God, even when that knowledge comes about because of our deepest pain.

The Depths of God's Character

As we have dealt with her cancer over the past two and a half years, Nanci and I have spent time meditating on the attributes of God, rereading and listening to audiobooks such as *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A. W. Tozer, *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer, and *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges. Our hearts have been lifted in praise as we've contemplated His holiness, grace, justice, mercy, and every facet of His being revealed to us in Scripture. While we certainly would not have chosen this "low tide," we've drawn closer to the Lord and to each other because of it.

In the midst of our suffering, God makes some of His most profound and precious self-revelations.

Perhaps He does so because only then are we ready to see them. I love what Calvin Miller wrote about going deep into God's character: "...those who plumb the deep things of God discover true peace for the first time."

So if you're experiencing a low tide season (like many are right now), trust that God is at work in your life through these difficulties. Focus on His character, as revealed in Scripture. Look to Him and ask Him to reveal His wonders to you. Then may you say along with Scripture:

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). ■

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CALVIN MILLER

For more perspectives on trusting and knowing God in suffering, see Randy's devotional *90 Days of God's Goodness* (available on Amazon Kindle).

