Book Review: Who Is God When We Hurt?

Who is God When We Hurt? A Pastor-Caregiver wrestles with loss, grief, faith & doubt, by Beth Scibienski

Beth Scibienski shares a beautiful reflection on struggling with faith when her husband Pete is diagnosed with M.S. A pastor herself, the author admits that she doesn’t find God easily in her daily life; it’s something that she has to work for, and uses the image of exercise. This image resonates with me deeply and my personal experience. While the circumstances are very different, as a caregiver for a child with a disability I’ve sometimes wanted to ask the question, “why?” even though I know it’s the wrong question to ask.

Each chapter is a short reflection on a theme, packed with insight and deep thought-reflecting moments. It seemed like this would be a quick read at first, but I found that I could only read a few chapters at a time, sometimes even just one, because there was so much to think about and reflect upon in my own experience of finding God in the midst of life’s difficulties, especially through grief. Intermixed with biblical reflection, personal anecdotes, and deconstructing the platitudes and well-meaning actions of others that often don’t help, Beth shares her struggles in faith and relating to others.

Throughout the book, the reader is led on a journey to discovering that God is not in every single detail that happens to us, but that God is present with us throughout. The question the author never asked was why did this happen; rather, the book presents the reader with the understanding that God is with us through it all, the good and the bad; but God’s intention is good.

This is a good read for pastors, but I highly recommend this for those who are caregivers for others. The short chapters are easy to read in five minutes: a brief doorway into a room of understanding for those who don’t have much time to themselves.

I received an Advance Reader Copy in exchange for an honest review.