

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

Why Would God Do That?

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I don't recall how, but earlier this year I learned that the Contemporary Christian Music act Newsboys was performing at the Walworth County Fair. Ramona and I are fans, and after a brief discussion, we ordered tickets and booked a hotel. As the September 2 concert neared, I kept a watchful eye on the forecast for Elkhorn, Wisconsin, where the fair is held. Sunny, hot and humid with an 80% chance of rain in the evening, the time the concert was to start.

We had a pleasant day at the fair and about 6:30 p.m. started discussing when we would head to the grandstand. That's when it happened. Skies to the west of the fairgrounds became downright menacing; a cross between a scene from "The Ten Commandments" and a horror movie. Ramona and I took shelter under the grandstand with hundreds of other concert goers. And then the rain came. And came, and came and came. The storm was frequently illuminated by lighting. After several hours of standing, the announcement finally came – the concert was canceled.

It would be reasonable for any of the thousands of Christ-followers there for the concert to ask – "why would God do that?" Why would he open the skies and stop a concert designed to give glory to Him? The honest answer, of course, is that we don't know. But I can offer some possibilities.

We learned something interesting. The Walworth County Fair is dry; it doesn't allow alcohol sales and hasn't in its 169-year history. It's one of just two county fairs in the state that doesn't; Rock County is the other. I noticed it immediately; not just the absence of beer sales, but the atmosphere it created. How many people can imagine a successful county fair in Wisconsin without beer? This one is. Then God shared a more personal lesson with me – humility.

There is a strong church presence at the fair and one of them had a display with a series of yes or no questions on what it takes to get to heaven. Me, in full Christ-follower smarty pants mode, rattled through them without really reading and got one embarrassingly wrong. Thank you, God. Duly humbled.

Ramona and I also spent hours with fellow Christ-followers under the grandstand. We chatted, we laughed. Very few grumbled. We all tried to make the best of it. It was a great teaching experience. As the Newsboys sing in their song "Your Love Never Fails" (borrowed from Romans 8:28)

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Were we still disappointed that we missed the Newsboys concert? Yes, of course. Are we also confident the hours-long deluge at the fairgrounds that day somehow served God's purpose, not only in our lives but in the lives of other concert goers? Yes. How? *"When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.'" John 6:12*

God doesn't waste anything. That includes calling thousands of His followers together in Elkhorn, Wisconsin to spend time huddled under a grandstand during a torrential thunderstorm. I don't need to know exactly what it is. All I need to know is that He makes all things work together for my good. And it's all you need to know the next time you're disappointed, even over something that you're sure would be pleasing to Him.