What Is God's Purpose in My Suffering? Betsy Hake's Story

Episode 337

Rachel Winchester [00:00:02]:
You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carol Joy Side. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably.

Carole Joy Seid [00:00:12]:
This is Carole Joy Seid, and I'm so excited to replay for you one of my favorite interviews from our archives. I recorded this conversation while in Guatemala with my dear friend Betsy Haake, the founder of Jericho Ministries. I like to say that Betsy is a modern-day Amy Carmichael who has rescued countless children from human trafficking in Honduras. Betsy has asked us to come to Jericho this November to teach her staff how to implement a read-aloud program with the Jericho children. We would love you to partner with us financially as we build a library from our book lists there in Honduras. Please visit our website at homeschoolmadesimple.org/jericho to donate to this life-changing project. I am sitting in the beautiful country of— where am I? Guatemala— with my friend Betsy Haake, who is a missionary, and we're going to talk about her and her life. But for those of you who would like more information, kind of the to this interview today.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:26]:
I did 2 interviews with Betsy. The sound quality are pretty terrible because it was during COVID and Betsy was in a closet in a store where she could find internet during COVID And those were episodes 17 and 18 in July of 2020. And we're going to talk, kind of bring you up to date about her story. But I'm so grateful you're here, Miss Betsy.

Betsy Hake [00:01:55]:
Ah, it's a great— it's a privilege.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:59]:
We are on a little trip together, and, and we'll explain what that's about in a bit. But I wanted to share a scripture, Betsy, that this morning as I was having my quiet time using my St. James Fellowship readings for the day using the lectionary, this was my reading in 2 Corinthians 6, and it says, we put no obstacle in anyone's way So that no fault may be found with our ministry. But as servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, Genuine love, by truthful speech and the power of God, with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left, through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as imposters and yet are true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold, we live. As punished and yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing everything. And I just think of your life, Betsy. In our first interviews, we called that— our interview back in 2020— a modern-day Amy Carmichael.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:45]:
And you are Makes me cry, but carrying on her legacy, wearing her mantle. And I'm just so honored and excited to talk to you today. So for our listeners, just a quick update. Betsy has been working in the country of Honduras primarily for 43 years, and she's been working with prostitutes and their children and rescuing children just as Amy Carmichael did. Very similar situation. Most of her children have been trafficked as well as their parents. And the most heartbreaking, overwhelming situation. And yet, just as the little story of the little boy on the beach with the starfish, she has rescued one child at a time for 43 years.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:37]:
And wow. But through it all, her life has not been a day at the beach. So tell us a little bit about your story and then share about your perspective on hard things.

Betsy Hake [00:04:51]:

To share a little bit about the story, um, there's so many things that God has done over these years. It was— it's hard to sum it up, but I have just seen him because of his heart for the poor and his heart for those who are marginalized and suffering and in extreme risk, high-risk situations because of his heart. I feel like he has given me the privilege of being a part of his work, of probably going to places I would never ever have dreamed that I would go, and certainly not in this role. In this role.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:38]:
Yeah, for our listeners to get a little backstory, Betsy was raised in a very well-to-do home in Wisconsin. She's a blonde, blue-eyed sorority girl that the Lord brought to a very, very different culture and time and way of life. And it's not an easy road, but it's been a blessed road.

Betsy Hake [00:06:02]:
That's right. Yes, because I think if there's one thing that the Lord has taught me is that it's truly a privilege. It's truly a privilege to share in his sufferings. And as we do that, as we share in his sufferings, as we suffer for Christ, we see him do amazing things, and we get to participate in his sufferings and in the victories that he has over suffering.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:35]:
Mm-hmm.

Betsy Hake [00:06:36]:
And so in the end, it becomes an incredible privilege. Many people have said to me, oh, you sacrificed so much to go to Honduras. But I really see it as a privilege because he allowed me to understand things I would never have understood had I lived a normal, normal, very comfortable life.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:02]:
Mm-hmm.

Betsy Hake [00:07:02]:
He's allowed me to understand how he comes through when we get to the end of ourselves and when we get to the end of our resources, how he continually

makes his presence known, makes a way through where there seems to be no way, and then he is glorified.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:22]:
Amen. So, um, you started a ministry here called Jericho, and you have a ministry in the city of Tegucigalpa but also out in the country, right? And you're on how many acres out in the country?

Betsy Hake [00:07:41]:
Yes, the, the— our children's home is on 130 acres. It's kind of— we call it our mountain out in the country.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:50]:
And that's a whole nother story in itself of miracle upon miracle. But you have how many children now in the children's home?

Betsy Hake [00:07:58]:
Um, there are 43 Okay. Girls that we're ministering to.

Rachel Winchester [00:08:01]:
Wow.

Betsy Hake [00:08:02]:
Yes, mostly teenagers.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:03]:
Yes, yes, because they've grown with the ministry.

Betsy Hake [00:08:06]:
That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:06]:
They all came young, and but now they have this bad habit of growing up.

Betsy Hake [00:08:10]:
That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:11]:
Yeah, I know. And then how many staff out there with you?

Betsy Hake [00:08:15]:
Ah, we have 12 on staff.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:17]:
Okay, so you've had a lot of challenges in many areas of life, but I thought it would be good to tell a little bit about your health. So in our first interview, I think we talked about the first journey you had with health challenges, but the Lord seemed to think that there was more to be squeezed out of that lemon. And so what's happened since 2020?

Betsy Hake [00:08:46]:
Yes, um, well, I did want to talk about suffering. just how God really uses suffering. Because in 2008, as you said, I came down with 2 incurable cancers. And God was so gracious from the beginning to tell me, to give me his perspective on what I was to go through. And, um, one of the things that he really did through that first journey was to help me understand the power of the Word of God. Because honestly, I read the Bible every day, you know, as a good missionary does. Yes, you did. But going through this particular affliction made me understand in a whole new way just how powerful the Word of God is.

Betsy Hake [00:09:44]:
And I want to read a scripture.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:46]:
Good.

Betsy Hake [00:09:46]:
That says, It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.

Rachel Winchester [00:09:52]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:09:53]:
The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold. And I remember clearly during that time that there were people that said to me, oh, this is just so unfair. I can't believe that you are going through cancer because you're doing good works and you're being, um, so helpful in our country. And I remember really, you know, struggling too. At first I was like, yes. I remember saying to the Lord, why, Lord, why would you allow that? And he spoke to me very clearly and he said, Betsy, do not ask me why, ask me what for.

Rachel Winchester [00:10:37]:
Mm-hmm.

Betsy Hake [00:10:37]:
Because I have a purpose in your suffering. And I'm telling you, one of the biggest blessings was learning just how powerful and life-giving the Word of God is. Because as I said before, God was so gracious before the doctor even diagnosed me with these 2 particular cancers. I read in scriptures in a devotional before I went up to have a biopsy done of my liver. And the scripture that God gave to me was Psalm 41:1-3. And the first part of it says, oh, the joys of those who serve the poor! The Lord will be with them in their time of trial, and he will — the third verse says, and he will raise them up off their sickbed.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:29]:
Mm-hmm.

Betsy Hake [00:11:30]:
And so when I read that verse, it's hard for me to explain it, but I knew it was for you. It was for me in that moment. And, um, later learned that that's called rhema, that the Greek word for word is rhema when it's for a particular situation. Logos is the word of God.

Rachel Winchester [00:11:52]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:11:53]:

And so in this particular situation, I already knew before I even was diagnosed that God was going to heal me. And He gave me such an assurance that this was true. This was His perspective.

Rachel Winchester [00:12:09]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:12:09]:
The doctor's perspective was another, but this was His perspective. And so the challenge, because He did allow me to get to the edge of death, I went through — I was able to have 3 chemo treatments. And after the third one, um, my liver completely shut down because it was an experimental treatment they were doing. And so, um, I was given too much and my liver shut down. The doctor basically said, if you don't die tonight, you will die tomorrow. But by that time, we were so steeped in the scriptures, the promises, the promises of God. He had given us Scripture after scripture. I was so thankful for the body of Christ because people were praying and sending me scriptures.

Betsy Hake [00:12:58]:
Another one that was so powerful was, this illness is not unto death, but for the glory of God.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:04]:
Amen.

Betsy Hake [00:13:05]:
And so every morning, my medicine really was the scriptures. I would say them out loud. I wrote them on cardboard.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:15]:
3x5 cards.

Betsy Hake [00:13:17]:
And put them on the walls.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:18]:

Yes.

Rachel Winchester [00:13:19]:
Amen.

Betsy Hake [00:13:19]:
So that I was just assaulted by, by the word of God. And I would say them as I walked the halls of the 5-star hotel that God put us in, in my— in Manhattan, which was another, um, miraculous story.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:35]:
Miraculous story.

Betsy Hake [00:13:36]:
But really, it was just the affliction caused me to understand and appreciate the word of God. As it, as it says here, it's more precious to me than gold or silver.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:48]:
Amen.

Betsy Hake [00:13:49]:
And it became more precious to me because truly it was life and death.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:53]:
So the Lord raised you from that bed of affliction.

Betsy Hake [00:13:57]:
That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:58]:
And you were like, done. You wiped your feet, you're like, onto the mountain. And then what happened several years now later?

Betsy Hake [00:14:08]:

Well, that was in 2008, and, um, it took about a whole year for me to be able to work again full-time, to be able to minister again. And really, I thought I was done with that portion of suffering.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:25]:
Exactly.

Betsy Hake [00:14:26]:
There's been a lot of other, other challenges, other afflictions, right? And then, um, kind of to my surprise, uh, a year ago last May, I was diagnosed once again with not both of the same cancers, but one of them. It's called amyloidosis. This time it was affecting my kidneys rather than my liver, and I knew that once again we had to cry out to God and ask him what he wanted to do through this situation.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:02]:
And one interesting wrinkle— your ministry is a total faith ministry. You never know if you're gonna be able to pay your teachers, if Feed your children. It's daily bread, literally.

Betsy Hake [00:15:13]:
Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:14]:
But now the interesting— the Lord pours water on the altar before he sets it on fire. Talk about that, the health insurance situation.

Betsy Hake [00:15:26]:
Yes. Well, the good news with this amyloidosis was I was always able to go to Mayo Clinic, and they told me that in the 14 years between the first time and the second time, The treatments have improved drastically, and they explained to me that they would never use the first one again. So that was great news. The bad news was that my insurance would not cover the treatments. The treatments cost $31,000 per treatment, and they told me that I needed one treatment per month for 2 months. And then it would be twice a month for several more months before then they—

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:14]:
So a total of how many treatments?

Betsy Hake [00:16:15]:
Oh my goodness.

Rachel Winchester [00:16:17]:
A lot.

Betsy Hake [00:16:19]:
Yeah, I guess like 16 treatments. 16 treatments at $31,000 each. Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:27]:
Okay, just so we can wrap our head around that number.

Betsy Hake [00:16:30]:
Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:30]:
So it was well over $100,000, wasn't it?

Rachel Winchester [00:16:33]:
Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:33]:
The number that stuck in my mind.

Betsy Hake [00:16:35]:
Well over.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:36]:
Yes, that number put fear into my soul when we heard that little piece of information. Okay, and so what did the Lord do?

Betsy Hake [00:16:46]:

Yes, well, we, we cried out to him as we always do.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:52]:
That's right.

Betsy Hake [00:16:53]:
And, um, the first thing— well, the first one treatment that I needed, they told me that I needed it within 5 hours. And so I was with Elvia Madrid, who is a doctor who works with us in the ministry. And so together we just sat on this little bench outside of the treatment center at Mayo, and we prayed together. We just cried out to God. And, um, the Lord put a couple people on my heart, and I called them, and there was pretty much no response. And then Elvia remembered a sister in the Lord who had helped us build one of the homes for our children. And we contacted her, and within 5 minutes she said, of course I'll help you with the $31,000.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:45]:
And I just wept with gratitude because at that point they were saving your life.

Betsy Hake [00:17:50]:
Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:51]:
I mean, it was that close.

Betsy Hake [00:17:52]:
It was, yes, it was definitely life and death. Life and death. So she just was used by God to help us with that first treatment. And we just praised and thanked him for such a generous heart. And so the next— of course, then we had one more week to come up with the next amount of money.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:17]:
I remember that. Yes, like you didn't even get your head above the water before the wave hit you again.

Betsy Hake [00:18:23]:

Yes. Yeah. And so dear sisters in Christ of, of mine from St. Luke's Church in Hilton Head Island. They came down and prayed with us and said, let's start a GoFundMe.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:39]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:18:40]:
And that was hard for me because being a faith ministry, we pray, and it kind of goes against everything that—

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:48]:
George Müller would have said.

Betsy Hake [00:18:50]:
Yes, George Müller, exactly. But I really sensed that this was the right thing to do. And so we started a GoFundMe, and the Lord just began to fill that up. It was just beautiful just to see how God moved.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:06]:
And some of my listeners, um, received an email from me during that time, and, um, I had just read a story about Mother Teresa. Have I told you this about—

Betsy Hake [00:19:16]:
yeah, yeah.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:17]:
Um, she was traveling with this real successful businessman many years ago, and, um, through a series of events, she kept demanding things and demanding things from You know, the airline. And it's a beautiful story. And he was mortified because he was a very wealthy man, and it felt awkward for him. And at the end of the story, she called him Bub because she couldn't pronounce his name. She said, Bub, never be ashamed to beg for the poor. Makes me cry because the Lord spoke that to me. And so the Lord said, I want you to beg. for Betsy.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:53]:

So some of you were part of her miracle story and sent large and small donations to Betsy. And so how did it end? How'd that $100,000— how'd that work?

Betsy Hake [00:20:10]:
Well, by God's grace— well, I wanted to share this part too. I kept thinking in my mind, I don't want to spend $31,000 on a shot. I want to spend it on a van. There are just so many needs in the ministry. I wanted to spend it on the children. I wanted to spend it on homes that they needed, on a school that they need.

Rachel Winchester [00:20:32]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:20:33]:
But at the same time, I knew that that was part of God's humbling, that I needed to be humble enough to receive. And it was just overwhelming to me to see how people, like you said, It's beautiful. Participated in this miracle. And, um, people that I, I never dreamed— there was a woman that we had helped her children in our school, that they live by the dump, and they're— the way that they live is by collecting refuse and selling it. And she gave, she gave in order for me to have a treatment.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:12]:
So widow's might.

Betsy Hake [00:21:13]:
Yes, it was just a beautiful picture of the body of Christ coming together and using God's resources.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:21]:
And God getting all the glory, and no man.

Betsy Hake [00:21:24]:
That's right, that's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:26]:
A millionaire could have easily just written you a check for that amount.

Betsy Hake [00:21:29]:
Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:29]:
But the Lord chose to do it where his name was glorified because it was dribs and drabs and money from unexpected sources.

Betsy Hake [00:21:39]:
Yes, it was just amazing. And I want to share one more part of that story because it was another place where God had to humble me. During the— in the middle of the first treatments, not enough came in for one treatment.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:56]:
Mm-hmm.

Betsy Hake [00:21:57]:
And I sat all day in the treatment center until 5:30 when the nurse came out and said— I kept praying that God would do a last-minute miracle and that enough would come in, but enough did not come in. And so—

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:11]:
That one day.

Betsy Hake [00:22:12]:
That one day. And so that day that this happened, we'd already been given permission to go back to Honduras the next day in order to have— I wanted to celebrate the 15th birthday of one of my girls who was so precious to me. And so the Lord allowed us to go back for 4 days. And on the plane, I got an email saying— from Mayo Clinic— saying that I had to have enough for 3 more treatments, which was over $90,000, before they would give any more treatments. And it just felt like adding salt to the wound.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:56]:

Yes.

Betsy Hake [00:22:57]:
And I remember that night, just going before the Lord and complaining and thinking about all the things I, I wanted to write to Mayo Clinic about how, how just—

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:09]:
Heartless.

Betsy Hake [00:23:09]:
Heartless they were and lacking compassion for people who were like me. And, um, when I got to the end of that, um, I finally said to the Lord, okay, well, Lord, you're in charge of my healing. You promised that you would heal me. So if you want me to stay here in Honduras and just allow you to heal me however you want here without medication, I am willing. And if you want to heal me through the treatments, then I trust you to provide.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:42]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:23:43]:
And the next morning at 6:30, I got news. I got a text saying that a woman in one of our churches in Wisconsin, had felt led by God to give 2 full treatments. And within the next 4 days that I was there in Honduras, different people gave enough to cover all 3, to cover enough for all 3 treatments to be made. And God knew that that's how he wanted to do it, but he needed to get me to the place of just surrender before him. And saying, you do it your way so that you will get the most glory.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:23]:
Amen. So then you got all these horrible treatments, and after you'd get them, you became very ill.

Betsy Hake [00:24:31]:
Actually, it wasn't—

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:33]:
those weren't the ones that made you sick.

Betsy Hake [00:24:37]:
That was not— what made me the most ill was, um, the treatments worked, uh, Worked enough to stabilize my kidneys enough to do a bone marrow transplant.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:51]:
Okay.

Betsy Hake [00:24:51]:
So after the treatments, the treatments ended in December and the doctors scheduled the bone marrow transplant for February. And that was a whole nother level of suffering because What I realized later, as I looked back on it, the Lord allowed me to go through a type of death just to experience just a fraction of what he went through.

Carole Joy Seid [00:25:20]:
Yes.

Betsy Hake [00:25:20]:
And what it showed me was, you know, the nurses and the doctors gave me this chemo that was very heavy duty, and the whole purpose of the chemo was to kill my cells. and to kill my white blood cells and to kill my platelets. And they said, we're gonna do your blood counts every day and you're gonna watch it go down. And as the blood counts were going down, so was my strength.

Carole Joy Seid [00:25:49]:
Yes.

Betsy Hake [00:25:50]:
So was my ability to eat. So was, you know, it was a type of death. But I realized, you know, this death was to give me life. And it, it made me understand in, in a small way just how much Christ suffered for us. His suffering was for the whole world.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:10]:
Amen.

Betsy Hake [00:26:11]:
My suffering was for me so that I could have life, right? But his suffering was for every single one of us. And it just gave me an appreciation more. I still feel like I don't understand the full impact of how much Jesus did for us on the cross.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:27]:
Yes.

Betsy Hake [00:26:28]:
But it gave me a little glimpse of how much death, um, he went through to bring us life.

Carole Joy Seid [00:26:35]:
Amen.

Betsy Hake [00:26:36]:
And that death in, in my body, then, um, when those new stem cells that were actually my cells they'd taken out before they gave me the chemo, um, brought back life to my body. And little by little, um, my strength came back little by little. My hair came back in little by little. And there were miracles within the miracle.

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:01]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:27:02]:
And if we have time, I wanna share that just quickly.

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:04]:
Yeah.

Betsy Hake [00:27:05]:

That when they took out my stem cells, it was a process that normally takes 3 days. But I really was praying for a very vain reason. I was like, Lord, I just want it to be done in 1 day. The doctors told me they needed 3 million stem cells in order to be able to do this transplant. And so I prayed and I was—

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:34]:
Were they harvesting them from your body?

Betsy Hake [00:27:36]:
Yes, from my own body.

Carole Joy Seid [00:27:38]:
Okay.

Betsy Hake [00:27:39]:
And you'll remember this 'cause you were part of the miracle. You called me right at the moment when they were harvesting those cells. And together we prayed for that miracle that it would be $3 million. And the reason— part of the reason I wanted it to be done in one day was because they had this catheter in my neck that looked like it was a rabbit— rabbit ears.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:05]:
Oh.

Betsy Hake [00:28:06]:
And, um, I just couldn't imagine walking around, you know, with that hanging out of my neck for 3 days. Oh my God, was so gracious. And At the end of the harvesting, the nurse brought me the lab report and she said, I've rarely seen something like this. She said, there are 3 million, exactly 3 million cells. And so it was just one more encouragement of how God—

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:36]:
That he was with you.

Betsy Hake [00:28:38]:
Yes.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:38]:
You were not abandoned.

Betsy Hake [00:28:40]:
That's right. That's right.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:42]:
Wow.

Betsy Hake [00:28:43]:
And that He was in control.

Carole Joy Seid [00:28:44]:
Amen to that.

Rachel Winchester [00:28:45]:
You've been listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. If you like what you heard in this episode, please leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or share this episode with a friend. It means so much when you help us spread the message of Homeschool Made Simple with others. Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. Remember, Jesus's commandments are not burdensome. What He calls you to do, He will enable you to do. Blessings!