



REFINED

finding JOY in the midst of the FIRE

CAROL BURTON MCLEOD

B BRIDGE
LOGOS

Alachua, FL 32615 USA

DEDICATIONS

*This book is lovingly dedicated to two extraordinary women
who have found joy even in the intense heat
of the fires of life.*

*To my college roommate and dearest friend—
Debby Matthews Edwards*

*Whose husband, Pastor Steve Edwards, entered eternity
on April 30, 2005, following a tragic accident.*

*Debby has continuously lived with and shared the joy of the
Lord with the world around her.*

*Debby's commitment to the Word of God
has changed my life.*

Debby ... you are my hero!

*And to my daughter, Joy's, college roommate
and dearest friend –
Cady Morgan Kendall Lewis*

*Whose dear husband, Jordan, entered eternity on
March 20, 2014.*

*Cady courageously worshipped the Lord and fought on her
knees during Jordan's battle with cancer.*

*Although Jordan and Cady were only married for 9 months,
they have taught us all what true love looks like.*

Cady ... you are my hero!

CONTENTS

Introduction	xi
Trial by Fire	1
A Four-Letter Word	7
Great = Good	13
The Answer to an Unanswerable Question	19
Two Men and One Good God	25
What Exactly Is God's Will?	31
The "P" Words	37
A Hot Little Story	45
The Greater Work	59
Is It Gold Yet?	77
Red + Black = Gold	85
This Little Light of Mine	95
Fire Extinguishers	101
Fire Extinguishers—Take Two	113
And If That Wasn't Enough	121
The Word . . . The Word . . . The Word	127
Back to the Wilderness.	141
Arsonists and Pyromaniacs	145
Safaris, Halloween Costumes, and Meow	155
Honorable Fires	165
As for Me!	181
Acknowledgements.	195

INTRODUCTION

“WHY?!!” AND OTHER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Why?

Why do Christians go through hard times? Why do the beloved children of a merciful, compassionate Father face unspeakable tragedies and heartbreaking circumstances?

Why? Why do children die young? Why do horrific accidents happen? Why do marriages break up, and why are people unfairly unemployed?

Why? Why do young men and women die in wars, and why do earthquakes violently disrupt the lives of kind, giving people?

Why do spouses have affairs ... and why do teen-agers text and drive ... and why does cancer target innocent, precious children?

Why do airplanes fly into buildings, and why do teenagers take guns to school to kill their classmates?

Why? The greatest theologians in every age at every juncture of history have struggled with the question of the unanswerable “Why?”

My prayer for this book and intent in writing it is that it will help Christians understand the purpose of the white-hot flames of life and why believers are allowed to go through destructive and anguished circumstances while serving an omniscient, omnipotent God.

We have all felt the extreme heat of life’s circumstances and wondered, “*God! Where are You? Was this fire in Your plan for my life? Why must I go through this?*”

Although there may be no comforting answer to the

question of why, perhaps there are other questions that can be answered with the compassion of the Scriptures and the eternal loving-kindness of God. This book may not give a satisfactory answer to the question, “*Why?*”, but it will endeavor to answer the other, just as difficult questions.

Does God send hard times into the life of a believer? Or, perhaps, does He simply allow hard times to enter our sphere of existence? Does God ever intervene in the gut-wrenching circumstances of our human lives?

And finally, the most telling and desperate question of all, “God . . . where are You?! Was this fire truly Your perfect will for my life?”

Before you decide to prematurely close the cover of this book, put it back on the bookshelf, and walk away, I can assure you that this book will not be a tragic diatribe, but it will be an encouraging and substantive thesis on finding joy when your world is falling apart.

The truth is, most of us avoid talking about tragic and undeserved pain because we mistakenly believe that if we talk about it, it will somehow happen to us or to someone whom we dearly love. Many Christians refuse to engage in this difficult conversation concerning calamity and hardship because of the spirit of fear that it confronts. Fear should never be a factor when discussing and then celebrating the ways and the wonder of our heavenly Father. This topic that I have framed with the word, “*Why?*” may actually be one of the very most important topics in all of Scripture.

The Word of God gives to the children of God the tools to comfort, encourage, pray for, and believe with people who are broken and disappointed with the circumstances and events of life. The world is filled with people who have been severely burned by the fires of life and who are desperately

looking for answers.

This book is designed to be biblical, practical, helpful, and most of all, hopeful. Regardless of what you or your loved ones are facing today, know that you are not alone, that the Bible holds significant answers for you even in your pain, and that the God of the universe loves you!

Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian, was perhaps the most important thinker of the twentieth century. His monumental work on church dogma filled volumes, and he is known to have preached over five hundred sermons in his adult life. One day a fledgling seminary student asked Barth, “What is the greatest theological truth of all?” Barth thought not an instant and replied, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

I pray that between the covers of this book, you will find the love of Christ and the truth of the Word of God.