

Why God Allowed Hurricane Harvey: 4 Wrong Answers

Louisiana began evacuations for Hurricane Harvey yesterday, on the twelfth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The hurricane has dumped a record 51 inches of rain as of this morning, the equivalent of four typical hurricanes.

Why has God allowed such devastation? Here are the logical options as I see them.

1. We didn't pray enough.

Scripture teaches that "You do not have, because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Did this storm strike because we did not pray enough for God to stop it?

If so, what about those who prayed fervently but still lost their homes to this storm? Is a lack of intercession to blame for every natural disaster and disease? Can intercession prevent all natural calamity?

2. We're being punished for sin.

God brought the plagues against Egypt in response to Pharaoh's "hardened heart." The book of Revelation is replete with natural disasters sent by God to punish those who reject Him. Is Hurricane Harvey an instrument of His wrath against our sinfulness?

If so, does this mean that people living on the Gulf Coast are worse sinners than those living in Los Angeles or New York City? I've lived in Houston and Dallas and cannot say that the former is more sinful than the latter. Clearly, God can use disasters to bring us to repentance, but is this always the explanation for such calamity?

3. Fairness demands that He not intervene.

If God stopped Hurricane Harvey, wouldn't He have to do the same with the next storm, and the next? However, this logic would mean that He cannot cure anyone of cancer unless He cures everyone of cancer. He cannot protect one person unless He protects us all. Since I've witnessed His miraculous healing and protection, I know that such logic is flawed.

4. He doesn't know, doesn't care or can't help.

Skeptics might claim that if God saw the devastation of this hurricane, or cared for those in its path, or had the power to prevent their suffering, surely He would have intervened. Since He hasn't, He can't. But His Word teaches that He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). And his omniscience, compassion and omnipotence are on display regularly in our broken world.

Here's the bottom line: it's a mystery.

I don't know why God sometimes intervenes in natural disasters and sometimes doesn't. I don't know why He sometimes heals and sometimes doesn't. He tells us that "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord (Isa. 55:8).

But I know that our Father redeems all He allows (see Rom. 8:28). I know He suffers with us and loves us unconditionally (see Rom. 8:35-39). And I know that one day, this broken world will be gone, and we will live in "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

Until that day, I choose to trust what I don't understand to the God who does. Will you join me?

NOTE: Ryan Denison has written a fascinating article on the priority of serving those in need. I invite you to read it [here](#).