

Why Won't God Just Solve All Our Problems Right Now?

My atheist friend and I got into an argument—a very hurtful argument. The kind of argument that makes you wonder if you should stay friends, despite five years of friendship logged.

The inciting event was that my friend read something about Christians using religion to take advantage of the poor and decided that this awful claim was true of all Christians. “Christians are crazy,” she said to me. “They’re all manipulative.”

Here’s the statement that hurt the worst: “Sam, I thought you were smarter than to be part of a group like that.”

I said something equally unkind to her, and then we disconnected the call. Without even saying goodbye.

At the center of our disagreement was this idea: “If God is so great, then why doesn’t He solve all the problems that need to be solved now? Why do we have to wait until Jesus returns before things get better down here?”

Not long ago, during a trip to London, a group of pastors and I were able to spend time in the presence of one of the greatest living theologians of our time, N. T. Wright. During a Q&A session at the end of Wright’s lecture, I stood and said, “It’s an honor to be with you, sir. What you’ve done for the faith of my generation is truly astounding. One question: Why does God allow suffering instead of fixing everything now?”

I didn’t record Mr. Wright’s response verbatim, but I will tell you that his answer fell in line with the answers I’ve received over the years, as I’ve traveled the world asking the greatest minds in Christianity this same question on my show.

Doctors, professors, speakers, influencers, you name it—I asked them all why God allows suffering, why God doesn't fix stuff that's broken, why God doesn't intervene. And the responses I've received fit into two main categories of thought.

Let me give them to you here:

—We just don't know. That's a very honest response, by the way—but we don't have to know why, to trust God. God is good, which means that everything He does or does not do reflects that goodness. Even what we deem to be bad, God is working for ultimate good. We don't have to understand God's ways to believe that He exists and to trust that His ways are right. Trying to understand God's ways is like a toddler trying to understand every decision his or her parents make. There is much we simply can't understand.

—God never promised us perfection in this temporal reality but rather that He'd be with us in the imperfection and give us strength to make it through. Perfection is reserved for eternity with Him, when every last tear will be wiped away. As we commune with the Holy Spirit, we will see glimpses of that redeemed reality here on earth, but that redemption will not unfold fully until the time of Jesus's return.

These conversations have led me to a core belief, which is that being a Christian who walks by faith requires becoming content with the unknown and trusting a good God you won't always understand.

This line of thinking wouldn't satisfy my atheist friend, but it definitely satisfies me. I wonder, is it enough to satisfy you? Think of it: It isn't logical to believe in a Savior who died for us on a cross, descended into hell for our sin and rose again on the third day to rule and reign for all time. Such belief requires serious faith. You can't go headfirst into that line of thinking; you've got to go spirit-first.

Further, it isn't logical to love your enemies.

It isn't logical to give away your money.

It isn't logical to forgive those who hurt you.

It isn't logical to lay down your will and serve God.

We who walk with Jesus walk entirely by nothing but faith.

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