

Would a Good Christian Ever Ask God 'Why'?

For as long as human beings have tried to survive in a sinful world, they have asked, "Why?" The problem of good and evil is one of the biggest of all questions. As I talk about in my just-released book *The Christian's Journey Through Grief*, when you lose a loved one, this becomes intensely personal. In the last couple weeks, I've had so many conversations with people wrestling with whether it's OK to ask why.

Beyond the death of a loved one, this also applies when you experience anything painful or see any kind of evil. Life isn't fair! How can you reconcile a good God with the badness of what you see, or what you're experiencing right now?

Theologians and philosophers have wrestled with these questions for millennia, and we won't finish that discussion here. But there are some useful things to know and do as you go about asking those questions that will help you move toward their resolution.

God's Friends Asked *Why*

Some people feel guilty for even asking "why" questions. Some Christians say, or at least give the impression, that "good" believers don't ask such questions. They may suggest answers that feel demeaning, superficial, insensitive or meaningless.

The first thing to know is that God's Word demonstrates that it's OK to ask why.

Here are just a few biblical examples of God's friends plying Him with "why" questions:

- "Moses returned to the Lord, and said, 'Lord, why have You caused trouble for this people? Why is it that You have sent me?' For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in

Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all" (Ex. 5:22-23).

- "Have I sinned? What am I doing to You, O You watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself?" (Job 7:20).
- "Why do You stand far off, O Lord? Why do you hide Yourself in times of trouble?" (Ps. 10).
- "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from delivering me, and from my roaring words of distress? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not answer; and at night, but I have no rest" (Ps. 22:1-2).
- "O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?" (Ps. 74:1).
- "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Or cry to You, 'Violence?' and You will not save?" (Hab. 1:2).
- "Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died'" (John 11:21).

God has no problem with you asking such questions. Those who knew Him well, His very best friends, asked those kinds of questions. The human emotions that accompany grief or pain of any kind are real, and God understands that.

In fact, wrestling with such questions opens the possibility of an even closer relationship with God in the future. It's possible to shake your fist at God, demanding He do what you want as though you're greater than He is. That's not what we're talking about. But like a hurt or troubled child going to a loving parent, you actually honor Him when you bring Him your deep and troubling questions. So yes, ask.

Direct Your Questions to God

In the biblical examples above, notice that these biblical heroes directed their questions to God. He welcomes that; ""Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord" (Isa.

1:18). The Hebrew word here translated “reason” can also be translated “debate” or even “argue.” God invites us to come to Him with the tough questions. You won’t hurt His ego or make Him mad.

In fact, God is the only reliable place to go with your questions. Direct your questions to Him. Reading books or articles, talking with friends, family and other believers, and searching your own mind for answers may all have their place. But there is an important sense in which one human (you) going to another human source for answers to the really big questions is like the blind leading the blind. At some point, you need to go to the source.

The only way in which books, media or other believers are truly helpful in addressing your questions is when the Holy Spirit takes a thought or statement you read or hear and applies it to your own heart. He’s the only one who knows the ultimate answers. And He’s the only one who can speak those answers to the deepest places in your soul.

Hearing God’s Answers

How do you hear God’s answers? Our confused thoughts and overwhelming emotions can make hearing God’s voice difficult. He doesn’t usually shout over the clashing barrage of sound in your head.

That’s why it’s important to get quiet. It’s when your mind and heart have become relatively still that you will hear Him. You do that primarily by intentionally entering the presence of God, by inviting Him to go with you into the deepest hurts and dark places of your heart.

Get alone with God and just be still. You may begin by reading a psalm or two, or listening to some worship music. You may cry or beg or scream. Or you may find journaling your prayers to God a helpful way of expressing your deep emotions. Let whatever emotions you have flow out to God.

And then don't rush away. Stay there a little longer. Let the wave of your emotions subside and choose to allow your heart to hear if He has something to say to you.

Sometimes you will feel nothing except an emotional release, a crashing of the emotional wave in your soul. Sometimes you may sense a simple presence, a quiet knowing from God that says, "I'm here." Sometimes you may sense something specific and clear that can become like an anchor you will be able to hold on to during your journey.

God's answers may not always satisfy your intellectual curiosity, but they will satisfy your soul. He will respond to you in a way that uniquely addresses what you need to hear. If you keep coming back into His presence, God Himself will become the answer to your questions.

Your job? Just keep coming back. Find times, even if they're short, when you will intentionally enter God's presence over and over again. Direct your questions to Him. Stick around. And your questions can be satisfied.

Your Turn: *Have you wrestled with any why questions? Have you directed them to God? How has doing so affected your relationship with Him? Leave a comment below. {eoa}*

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

This article originally appeared at .

For more from Dr. Carol and her journey through grief, listen to the podcast included here!