

Why God Says It's OK to Ask 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 perhaps the biggest of all questions, and when you lose a loved one, it becomes intensely personal. How can you reconcile a good God with the badness of what you're experiencing right now? Theologians and philosophers have wrestled with those questions for millennia, and we won't finish that discussion here. But as you go about asking those questions, there are some useful things to know and do that will help you move toward their resolution.

Some people feel guilty for even asking *why* questions. Some of the people you discuss these issues with may give you the impression that "good" Christians don't ask such questions. They may offer "answers" that feel demeaning, superficial, insensitive or meaningless. The first thing to remember is that God's Word demonstrates that it's OK to ask these kinds of questions. See Exodus 5:22-24; Job 7:20; Psalm 10:1, 22:1-1, 74:1; 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 painful human emotions that accompany grief, such as frustration, anger, desperation, confusion and fear, are real, and God understands that. Asking such disturbing questions is fine. 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 that He do what you want as though you're greater than He is; that's not what we're talking about. But when you bring Him your deep and troubling questions like a hurt child going to a loving parent, you actually honor Him. So yes, ask.

Time and again, you will see examples in Scripture of Bible heroes directing their questions to God. In fact, He welcomes that: "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord" (Isa. 1:18). The Hebrew word translated "reason" can also be translated "argue." God invites us to come to Him with tough questions. You won't hurt His ego or make him mad.

In fact, God is the only reliable place to go for answers. Reading books, 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 a book or other believers are truly helpful in addressing these 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 that ultimate answer. And He's the only one who can speak those answers to the deepest places in your soul.

How do you hear God's answers? Often our thoughts and overwhelming emotions during a time of grief 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 for you to find ways for you to get quiet. It's when your heart and mind have become relatively still that you are more likely to hear Him. You do that primarily by intentionally entering the presence of God and inviting Him to go with you into the deepest hurts and darkest places of your heart.

Find times when you can get alone with God. You may be tired and emotional, and your mind won't have the same ability to focus as you normally do, but just be still. You may wish to begin by reading a few verses in the Psalms or listening to some worship music. You may cry or beg or scream. 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 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 through the dark valley.

Just keep coming back to Him. Find times, even if they're short, when you will intentionally enter God's presence. Do it over and over again. When you're there, let your emotions flow out and then get quiet. Direct your questions to Him. Stick around, and your questions can be satisfied.

✖ *Adapted from The Christian's Journey Through Grief by Carol Peters-Tanksley, copyright 2019, published by Charisma House. This book will help you take the necessary steps toward healing after suffering great loss so that you can embrace renewed hope. To order your copy, click on this link.*

Prayer Power for the week of June 30, 2019

This week, seek God in a quiet place and allow yourself to release your pent-up emotions to Him. Go before Him as a little child and let Him know how you feel in the deepest parts of your heart. Use Scripture to reinforce your faith and declare the Word over your situation, regardless of how you feel in the circumstance. Thank Him for His faithfulness and that He will never leave or forsake you. Continue to lift up our nation and its allies and ask God to give our leaders godly counsel and wisdom to make the decisions that affect us and the world. Pray for revival. Read 2 Chronicles 7:14, Hebrews 13:5.

For more from Dr. Carol on grief, be sure to check out the

podcast included with this article!