

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

Message 3 of 6 in the series: "Apologetics: The Defense of Christianity Through Rational Argument"

A. As Christians, we should always be ready to gently and respectfully explain what we believe and why we believe it.

"...you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a **gentle and respectful** way." 1 Peter 3:15-16a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! A necessary part of apologetics is acknowledging that we cannot explain or even understand everything that God does.

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,' says the Lord. 'And **my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine**. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.'" Isaiah 55:8-9 (NLT)

"**The Lord our God has secrets known to no one**. We are not accountable for them, but **we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us**, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions." Deuteronomy 29:29 (NLT)

VERY IMPORTANT! We don't need to be able to understand or explain all God does in order to trust/ have faith that He is good. "For **the Lord is good and his love endures forever**; his faithfulness continues through all generations." Psalm 100:5 (NIV)

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and **assurance about what we do not see**."

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

B. Three Biblical reasons why bad things happen:

1. Bad things happen because we're all sinners. Much of the pain and suffering we experience is because of our own sinful choices and the sinful choices of others. "**Not a single person on earth** is always good and never sins." Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NLT)

"What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? **Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you?** You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them."

James 4:1-2a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! God gives us free will even though we often use it to do bad things because He wants a personal relationship with each of us in which love is freely given and received. Love is a choice, and the same freedom that makes love possible also makes evil possible. God wants children who choose to love Him, NOT preprogrammed robots. "**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God**, to those who believe in His name..." John 1:12 (NKJV)

"Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And **because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them** and reveal myself to each of them."

John 14:21 (NLT)

2. Bad things happen because we live in a fallen world. "Against its will, **all creation was subjected to God's curse**." Romans 8:20a (NLT)

"...I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in **pain** you will give birth. And you will **desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you**.' And to the man he said, 'Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, **the ground is cursed because of you**. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For **you were made from dust, and to dust you will return**.'" "

Genesis 3:16-19 (NLT)

3. Bad things happen because the devil is real, and he wants to bring as much pain and suffering as he can into our lives. "Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. **He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour**." 1 Peter 5:8 (NLT)

"You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. **He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God**."

Ephesians 2:2 (NLT)

C. How God has responded to sin, the devil, and our fallen world:

1. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. Jesus' sacrifice makes it possible for all who believe in Him to be born again and live new lives. "God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and **sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.**" 1 John 4:9-10 (NLT)

"For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, **now we also may live new lives.**" Romans 6:4 (NLT)
2. Jesus is preparing places in heaven for all who follow Him. In heaven, everything will be made new and bad things will never happen again. "...I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared... I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and **there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.**' And the one sitting on the throne said, '**Look, I am making everything new!**'" Revelation 21:1-5a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! The promise of heaven gives us a new perspective on the hardships, pain, and suffering we face in this world. "For **our present troubles are small and won't last very long**. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So **we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen**. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever." 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NLT)
3. One day, God will punish the devil and his angels forever in hell. "Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. **There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**" Revelation 20:10 (NLT)
4. Amazingly, God can and does use bad things for good. "And **we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God** and are called according to his purpose for them." Romans 8:28 (NLT)

"But Joseph replied, 'Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? **You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good.** He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.'" Genesis 50:19-20 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. In 1 Chronicles 16:34, David said, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever." How was David able to praise God's goodness even though his life was filled with fierce battles, intrigue, murder, adultery, and betrayal? (2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:1)
2. Read Isaiah 55:8-9 & Deuteronomy 29:29. When is it OK for Christians to say "I don't know" in answer to questions about God?
3. Discuss the following three Biblical reasons bad things happen:
 - Bad things happen because we're all sinners. Much of the pain and suffering we experience is because of our own sinful choices and the sinful choices of others. (Ecclesiastes 7:20, James 4:1-2)
 - Bad things happen because we live in a fallen world. (Genesis 3:16-19, Romans 8:20)
 - Bad things happen because the devil is real, and he wants to bring as much pain and suffering as he can into our lives. (Ephesians 2:2, 1 Peter 5:8)
4. Discuss the following ways God has responded to sin, the devil, and our fallen world:
 - God sent His only Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. Jesus' sacrifice makes it possible for all who believe in Him to be born again and live new lives. (1 John 4:9-10, Romans 6:4)
 - Jesus is preparing places in heaven for all who follow Him. In heaven, everything will be made new and bad things will never happen again. (Romans 8:20, John 14:1-3, Revelation 21:1-5)
 - One day, God will punish the devil and his angels forever in hell. (Revelation 20:10)

5. How does the promise of heaven change our perspective on the hardships we face today? (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)
6. Spend some time as a group sharing about times when you realized that God used something bad or painful in your life to bring about something good later on. (Genesis 50:19-20, Romans 8:28)