

Why DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?

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"There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless." (Ecclesiastes 8:14-15)

At the Cross we see Suffering:

- Notice Jesus, Mary, Jesus' family, and His followers.

We cannot definitively say why God allows one set of circumstances vs another, but we can consider general truths to begin wrestling with the broader question of why God allows us to live in the tensions of a fallen world.

Considering this question about good, evil, and suffering raises another question: Why did God enter into our suffering with us instead of just getting rid of it right away?

Notice Two Parts to the Christian Story:

1. On the Cross we see Jesus cry out in the middle of his suffering, affirming that suffering is real, often not fair, and not as it ought to be. This tells us it is right to acknowledge our suffering for what it is.
2. In the resurrection we see that no matter how real and awful our suffering may be, it is always true that hope is real. It is right to believe hope is real, even when we feel consumed by suffering.

Those two parts of the Christian story make our faith unique compared to other belief systems.

1. Suffering is real, not as it ought to be, and we are right to acknowledge it as so.
2. Our suffering has meaning and will be redeemed and made right.

To experience suffering can be a shocking experience. If we could also see all the ways that the Spirit of God protects us from pain and suffering each day, we may find ourselves even more shocked.

The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us, no matter what we are going through in life (bad or good), don't lose sight of the ordinary gifts we have each day.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you struggled most with this question: "Why bad things happen to good people?"
2. What is the best thing anyone ever did for you when you were suffering?
3. How has God entered into our suffering with us?
4. Why did God enter into our suffering instead of getting rid of it immediately?
5. How is Christianity's explanation of suffering unique?
6. Why is it important to acknowledge our personal suffering and grief?
7. What hope was revealed in the resurrection of Jesus?
8. In what ways do you believe God actively protects us from suffering each day?
9. What are ordinary things give you the most life and encouragement?

DIG DEEPER:

- Read the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and prayerfully try to imagine what it felt like for everyone involved, i.e. Jesus, Mary, etc.
- Make a list of the people you know to be suffering and pray for them by name.
- In prayer ask God what He wants you to know about the suffering you are experiencing.