

# KIDS WANNA KNOW: WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Elementary

**Read: Genesis 3, Nahum 1:7**

**Why do bad things happen? If God is good, how can he allow evil?** Often, the inability to find a satisfying answer to these questions is the biggest hurdle to people trusting God and following him. But these are important questions to ask, and it's necessary to wrestle with the answers. God is big enough to handle our wrestling and our doubt, our questions and our fear. He created us with minds that are able to ask these questions, and his desire is that we would know him, lean into him, trust him, and come to him just like kids come to their loving parents. This process is how our faith becomes real.

The fact of the matter is that we live in a fallen world where people choose to do horrible things. God gives people the space to have free will so that we can respond to him in a way that isn't coerced. All people, at times, respond poorly, starting with the very first people on earth. Sometimes people do horrendous evil with that free will. However, God DID do something about that evil. Because he is holy, he is not able to condone such evil, and therefore all evil must be punished. And because he is also perfectly loving, he overcame that evil by taking on the punishment so that we would not have to bear it ourselves. This substitutionary atonement, or grace, is applied to whoever has faith in Jesus Christ. Whoever does not will have to pay for their own sins through separation from God after death. Either way, not a single evil act will go unpunished. Justice will be served.

Obviously, there are still painful consequences of evil before justice is fully realized. But Jesus himself said "in the world you will have trouble, but take heart; I have overcome the world," John 16:33. He is our only hope in terrible circumstances. And we hold onto the hope that at the end of time, God will make everything new. When Jesus talked about his second coming in Matthew 19, he called it "the renewal of all things" which is the Greek word "palingenesis". Pastor Timothy Keller explains it like this:

**"This was a radically new concept. Jesus insisted that his return will be with such power that the very material world and universe will be purged of all decay and brokenness. All will be healed and all might-have-beens will *be*...Everything sad is going to come untrue and it will somehow be *greater* for having once been broken and lost." (*The Reason for God* pg. 33)**

In other words, God already dealt with the *justice* of evil on the cross, and he will eventually deal the earthly consequences of evil by *undoing* everything evil has caused. For now, he is giving people free will to allow for more time for more people to be reconciled to him. In the

meantime, we are to persevere (James 1:12), find our hope in Christ (Ephesians 1:11-14), and tell as many people as possible about his invitation to this new life (Matthew 28:18-20).

**Where are you on the spectrum of wrestling with the question, “If God is good, why do bad things happen?” Can you lean into any doubt you might have? What are some ways you can draw near to God with your big questions?**