



Why Does Bad Stuff Happen?

Hi. My name is Susie. I'm a teenager, and I'm just wondering—if there is a God, why are there wars, people starving and bad stuff like that? If there is a God, why are people who say they believe in him blowing themselves and others up all the time? God never gets hurt, but those who believe in him do. Why should I believe in him?

It was a question I have answered many times, but this time it hit me in a new and profound way. Maybe because it was from a young person. Maybe because of what seemed to be Susie's dilemma—that she wanted to believe in God, but she just couldn't.

Where is God when planes and buses and trains are blown up by suicide bombers? Where is God when people die every day because of hunger and malnutrition? Does our world of terror and violence and inhumanity disprove the very idea that God exists?

For the record, here's the short answer I gave to Susie:

Susie—This is a question we all struggle with. Many, instead of asking why God lets bad stuff happen, ask why he permits suffering and evil. But I think your term—"bad stuff" might be more descriptive.

The argument that God does not exist because bad stuff (evil) happens is an old one—and it's just as flawed today as it ever has been. If bad stuff only ever happened to humans and never to God, then we might have some reason to question God and if he really exists.

But the truth is that God, in the person of Jesus, came to our world and personally experienced lots of "bad stuff." Even though Jesus never did anything to hurt anyone, he was betrayed, misunderstood, hated and finally killed. He came to tell us that bad stuff won't last forever. Even though bad stuff is still happening, it won't be long before it's all history.

That's why the ultimate meaning in life is found in him—his life, his death and his resurrection.

Susie's question is not just her question—it's a perplexing problem, maybe the biggest

question that any one of us will ever encounter.

I gave Susie a short answer—as much as I thought she could comprehend at the time. But what about you and me—how do we answer the question?

Why does God allow suffering, heartache and misery?

Why do senseless tragedies occur?

Why do "good people" suffer?

Why does God let little children die and suffer horrible pain?

Where is God when life hurts?

There are several possible logical answers:

1) *Bad stuff happens because God doesn't exist.* There is no supreme, loving, moral authority. We're on our own. It's time and chance, it's survival of the fittest.

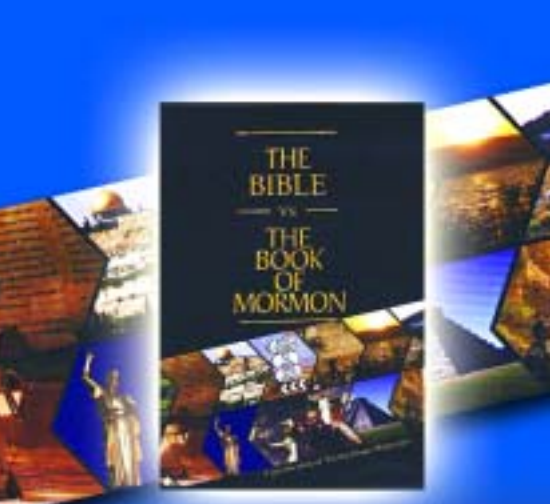
2) *God exists, and bad stuff happens because he doesn't care.* Our pain and suffering is not a priority with him.

3) *God exists, and he does care, but he is just not powerful enough to stop bad stuff from happening.* This option means that God is not God—for he lacks the power to stop evil.

As a person who believes in the God of the Bible, I can't accept any of those first three logical possibilities. There has to be another solution—another explanation.

4a) *God allows bad stuff to happen for the same reason he allows us to live.* If God were to remove sin and suffering from the universe overnight he would have to remove all human choice and decision making. If God were to remove sin and suffering from the universe tonight, you and I would have to be "removed"—we would not be alive tomorrow morning—for each of us make choices that are part of the problem.

4b) *God allows bad stuff to happen because it's part of the way we come to know him.* Our God is not a distant, detached god who is emotionally removed from the world in which we live or the sufferings we endure. He knows our pain, because he has visited our planet and consequently knows our



The Book of Mormon claims to be “a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible.” Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon declare themselves to be ancient, historical and reliable rules of faith...the Word of God.

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commentary

human predicament firsthand. Isaiah foretold a Savior who would be “familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3).

The Bible tells us that God loves us, that he is approachable and available, and that even though he knows all about us he still wants us to know him and enjoy a close, intimate relationship with him.

Why does God allow bad stuff to happen? Here's a brief summary:

A) Bad stuff is the necessary and unavoidable consequence of free will.

We humans are given the opportunity to choose, and in giving us options, God gives us freedom to make bad choices—decisions that can lead to bad stuff.

B) Bad stuff happens because of the wrong choices men and women can and do make. Selfishness, malice and hatred all have negative consequences. One of the lessons of history is, apart from God, bad stuff will continue to happen because of human lust, pride and greed.

C) Bad stuff that happens is not meaningless for Christians—there is hope beyond bad stuff! In the person of Jesus, God himself has suffered in the flesh. He has paid a price he did not owe because we owed a price we could not pay. He has paid the price for all the bad stuff of all time through his own suffering and death.

The ultimate answer and solution to all of the bad stuff that happens, and has ever happened, is found in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29; Revelation 13:8).

We may not completely understand why bad stuff happens, but we do know that God not only allows it to happen to us, he didn't declare himself immune to the suffering we endure.

But the story of our salvation—the story of our redemption—does not end with the price Christ paid for us on his cross. The cross was not and is not the end.

The good news continues! Jesus was buried and he rose victoriously. Jesus' death on the cross

cleanses us from sin, but we remain sinners—albeit forgiven sinners.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave gives us new life, because it is an eternal sign of his victory over sin and death. The grave could not contain him. He is

The resurrection of our Lord is the good news we all so desperately need! The message of Jesus' resurrection is that this life, with all of its bad stuff, is not what life is all about.

risen and lives forever that he might live his resurrected life in us (Galatians 2:20).

We all experience grief, loss, heartache, pain and misery. When teenagers, like Susie, first begin to experience bad stuff and become aware of others who are suffering, they discover that this life is not just one big day at the beach. The longer we live, the more painfully aware we are that bad stuff happens.

The resurrection of our Lord is the good news we all so desperately need! The message of Jesus' resurrection is that this life, with all of its bad stuff, is not what life is all about.

The cross of Christ and his empty tomb are the twin cornerstones of our faith. Because of the cross and the empty tomb our hope is in eternity, beyond the grave. Our treasures are in heaven.

Because of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord the bad stuff that happens in our lives and in the world at large is overcome through the new life of Christ he offers to us (John 5:24).

If you don't yet know the risen Lord, you need to discover the new life he can and will live in you.

He wants to know you. □

—Greg Albrecht

THE PLAIN TRUTH