

Dear God, Can You Tell Me Why?

I held her in my arms as she sobbed. After 23 years of marriage, he just left. He claimed he was looking for love. But she knew *love* would have stayed. Why? Why did this happen? Why didn't he talk about it? Why didn't he think about their son? Why could he find someone else so easily?

"Why" questions like these absorb my thoughts during life's most difficult times. Unwelcome and maddening, they insert themselves into situations already overcome with sorrow, loss and pain. There they wait, demanding an answer, but only giving doubt and fear. Why can't I find work? Why does *my* child have special needs? Why can't I make ends meet? Why doesn't anyone understand me? These "whys" ricochet through my mind, leaving me beat up and frustrated. I want validation. Understanding. Peace. But *these* questions don't have answers. Not easy or satisfying ones. And so they remain, lurking in the shadows, only to reappear at my most vulnerable moments. And in those moments, the lack of answers drives me to question everything: myself, my actions, my God. *Why?*

In Scripture, I find I'm not alone. Moses, Job, David, Jeremiah and countless numbers of God's children asked him the same questions: "Why? Why is this happening? Why would you do this? Why does my enemy prosper? Why don't I? Why have you forgotten me?"ⁱ They asked these questions with full expectation of an answer. We can, too. God does rebuke a challenging "why" with these words: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (Deuteronomy 16:6) But Jesus *encourages* us to pray and not give up. (Luke 18:1) God *wants* us to bring our "whys" to him, expectant of an answer. He longs to be gracious to us.

Even Jesus, God's own Son, asked his heavenly Father, "Why?" In the midst of his agony on the cross, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

And as I hear those words, my own "whys" fade away. *I know the answer to Jesus' question.* I know he was rejected because of me. I've doubted his love in my circumstances and blamed him for the spot I'm in. I've asked only what his hand will do to make it better, and not his blessing of wisdom and acceptance in the situation. In sorrow, I have turned elsewhere for comfort, hoping to make it all go away. But it didn't go away. It went to the cross. There, God took the payment required for my resentment, bitterness, and rage. He took his righteous anger out on Jesus so that I could be forgiven and given new life.

And then another "why" looms large. Why would God do that? Why would he punish his perfect Son for something I did? Why do *I* benefit? I can't make sense of these "whys." But they *do* have an answer. God *is* love. In other words, he can't help himself. The Bible says it like this: "God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:8-10)

Why did God forsake Jesus? So he wouldn't have to forsake me.

Jesus made it possible for God to keep every single one of the promises he made to me. No matter what rejection, failure or loss come into my life, I know God will be faithful to the promises he's made. He will always be with me. (Hebrews 13:5) Nothing can separate me from his love. (Romans 8:38-39) I will not be ashamed. (Psalm 25:3) I have nothing to fear. (Isaiah 41:10) His presence will always be with me to comfort me with the assurance of forgiveness and a future with him in heaven. In the difficult times, when all I can do is ask "Why?" God will not reject or abandon me. Instead, he will wrap me in his promises of hope, and point me to the cross where he showed the full extent of his love for me.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for being rejected so that I wouldn't have to be. Forgive me when I lose sight of what that means for me in my current situation. Calm my troubled heart with your promise of the new life you have won for me. In your name I pray. Amen.

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ⁱ For examples of "why" questions asked by believers in Scripture, see Exodus 5:22, Exodus 32:11, Joshua 7:7, Job 10:18, Psalm 42:9 and Jeremiah 12:1.