



WHEN KIDS ASK...



“Why did this have to happen to us?”

Why kids might ask:

Kids naturally compare their lives to the lives of others. When something tragic happens, they may wonder why they had to suffer while others didn't. Some may even feel like they have been singled out or targeted by something harmful. They may question whether the tragedy was unavoidable or if it “had” to happen. Often this question comes up after a death because no explanation feels satisfying. Kids might even worry that they—or someone they love—did something wrong that caused the pain. They feel hurt and want something or someone to blame. Sometimes kids also ask “why” because they want others to understand how hard things are for them and to offer sympathy.



...➤ What the Bible says:



The Bible includes many stories about suffering. Sometimes people asked why it occurred.

One example in the Bible about asking why is the story of Job. Job lost nearly everything. His sons, daughters, employees, pets, and livestock were killed. Then he became extremely sick. He felt like God was aiming arrows at him and pushing him to the edge. His four friends were respected leaders, and they tried to explain why everything happened, but Job insisted their explanations didn't match his situation. Job finally asked God "why." God didn't give Job a reason. Instead, God asked Job questions that showed how limited Job's understanding was. God invited Job to look from God's perspective. Job accepted this response, even without getting an answer. Later, God corrected Job's friends, telling them that their explanations—while they might apply to some situations—were not true for Job. The story reminds us that sometimes we get explanations, and sometimes we don't. And sometimes the explanations people offer are simply not correct. Sometimes we may never know why.

That doesn't mean that we shouldn't ask why. The Bible also shows many people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel asking God "why" when they were grieving or witnessing suffering. Sometimes God answered; sometimes God didn't. When God did respond, the answers were different each time. What stayed the same was God's presence: God listened, lamented by expressing sadness about their situation with them, and encouraged them to express their sorrow honestly. Ultimately, knowing the reason for suffering doesn't usually take away the sadness. But sharing our pain with God and with others can bring comfort, new perspectives, and support.

...➤ What you could discuss:



With preschool ages: “We may never know why this happened to us. It’s ok to feel sad and want answers. We can talk to God about it, and God can help us. We can also talk to other people about what happened. Other people have felt sad like this too.”

With school ages: “We may never know why this happened. Our sadness may be very different from others and may feel more intense. It makes sense to want answers when we are sad. We can ask God for answers and talk to God about what happened. We may or may not get an answer. Even if we figured out why, we would still feel sad. God and others can be there for us and talking about our questions can help us feel less alone.”

...➤ What you could do:



Listen to the sadness of others: Sometimes we can find others who have experienced a similar tragedy. Even when experiences are drastically different, good advice and comfort can be received. Even people in the past, like the characters in the Bible, can have good things to say. If we listen, we can receive what matches our situation and recognize what doesn’t.

Ask a respected leader: Asking why this might have happened can bring new perspectives. Respected leaders might have wisdom to give. Talking to them about our questions can help.

...➤ Where you could look for more information:

- ✕ **Chapters where people ask God about why something bad has happened:** Exodus 5 • Numbers 11 • Judges 6 • Isaiah 63 • Jeremiah 12, 15, 20 • Ezekiel 18 • Habakkuk 1 • Job 3, 7, 10, 13, 23, and 30 • Matthew 27 • Mark 15 • 2 Corinthians 1 and 12
- ✕ **Poetry passages where why is asked in prayers:** Psalms 10, 22, 42, 44, 74, 88 • Lamentations 2 and 5
- ✕ **Passages about suffering while others are avoiding tragedies:** Psalm 10, 12, 37, 49, 73 • Job 12, 21, 24 • Jeremiah 12 • Habakkuk 1 • Malachi 3 • Ecclesiastes 7-8 • Matthew 20 • Luke 15 • Revelation 6

