

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: I'm having a great deal of difficulty in explaining to my 9-year-old why God doesn't always protect us from bad things. Can you help?

ANSWER: **This is a wonderful, but difficult, opportunity for you and your child to have numerous conversations.** Realize that YOU might grow far more from these discussions than your child. It is critical that parents have a well-developed set of theological convictions, from both Scripture and life experience, which they can impart to their children. You will never be able to explain or convince that which you do not solidly know yourself. Sit down, pray, and write the answer to your question. Then rewrite the answer in the language of a 9-year-old. **How you handle this question is pivotal to your child's understanding of God...**it may in fact determine whether or not your child will embrace the existence of a strong and good God. Some underpinnings to help you...

Why doesn't God do more to rid the world of "bad things"?

1. Removing all the "bad things" in life will not build the kind of faith God wants us to have. Faith is fortified by endurance through struggle.
2. Some "bad things" require the use of miracles for their elimination. Miracles do not ultimately produce the kind of faith God wants. The effect of miracles on building faith is short-lived. (Check out Scripture.)
3. God chooses to limit himself (The Hebrew concept of *zimsum*.) so people are free to choose and act. (See #6.)
4. Faith and trust in the midst of "bad things" are the best ways to show our true love for God.
5. God chooses to postpone the miracle of eradicating all evil until Heaven. We will never have the perfect life on earth. God desires that we long for Heaven.
6. God chooses to use us to ease many of the effects of "bad things". With the coming of his Holy Spirit in us, God delegates much of his work to his church. (See #3.)
7. God wants us to develop a relationship with him that stands apart from circumstance. This is most difficult for us.
8. We don't see the whole picture; we exist in the temporal. We don't know how many "bad things" God continuously prevents...things that might have happened.

Your words will be ineffective if your child doesn't see them lived out in your faith-walk. Your child will watch how YOU handle "bad things". Philosophical arguments in the absence of deep convictions are rarely persuasive. Understand that some questions cannot be answered completely in this world; some problems have no good solutions in this world.

A misunderstanding of "bad things" often causes a crisis of faith calling into question both the goodness and strength of God, propelling the child to ask: "If God is good, why does he let evil happen? He must be weak. If he is strong, why does he let evil happen? He must not be good."

You stand on a precipice, with your child looking to you to find sure footing.

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