

How can a good God allow suffering - Discussion

May 2018 John Robertshaw

Look at these three cases. Discuss your approaches to these tricky situations!

Case #1

Your son James is 14 years old and is an intelligent and thoughtful teenager. He would like to be a doctor. He recently became a Christian at a Summer Camp.

One evening you are watching the news and there is an item about war in the Middle East and there is horrific footage of injured men, women and children in a very basic, poorly equipped hospital. James is clearly shaken by what he sees and asks you how God can allow this sort of thing to happen to innocent people. It seems to be the first time that he has faced this problem. You realise that James is going to need a considered answer.

- What would you say to James?...

Case #2

Peter is the pastor of a church in a village near Cambridge, he is married to Emily. One day they are faced with the bad news that their 8 year old son, Isaac, has a form of cancer. Isaac is treated at Addenbrookes Hospital.

Peter and Emily believe in the healing power of God and enlist all the help they can from many churches in the Cambridge area and widely circulate information. They attend many healing services and prayer meetings locally and elsewhere.

You are the pastor of a charismatic church in Cambridge city and your church is also involved in praying fervently for Isaac.

Unfortunately, after about a year, Isaac dies and his parents are devastated.

Many people in your own church ask you why Isaac was not healed when he had such godly parents and there was so much prayer from hundreds of Christians near and far.

- What do you say to your church when you announce the bad news?...
- What would you say to Emily if you bumped into her in town?...

Case #3

You run a toddler group and Linda comes along with her toddler. You know her and her family quite well but you've noticed recently that she seems depressed. You have been praying for her. You decide to invite her to an Alpha course but get a very cool reception.

She says that she has lost both her parents during the last year and she blames God for her sadness. She says she won't be coming to Alpha at the moment.

- How can you help her?...
- What can you do?...
- What can you say?...