

Why?

Psalms 77:19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

One of the first questions a young child learns to ask is “Why?” They ask it repeatedly and relentlessly, eager to learn about the world around them. Even as adults, it is the question we all want to know. About everything. Always. Why did this happen? Why did you say that? Why am I being taxed like this? And on and on and on until we die. But even then, we ask it – why am I dying now? And we reserve special questions for when we’re actually dead. “When I get to see God, I’m going to ask him why....”

While meditating on the nature of curiosity the other day I was struck with how dangerous a question it is. As a young child, we ask it primarily to explore and learn about the world around us. As we grow older however, the motivation for the question changes. We begin to ask it to understand and manipulate the motivations of others “...but mom, *why* can’t I have a cookie?”. Eventually we no longer ask it seeking understanding of God’s universe at all, but rather control. Understanding something is the first step to controlling it, and the question “why? is the key to understanding. How is this dangerous? Chiefly for two reasons: it assumes we are equal with God in understanding His infinite ways and demonstrates a subtle attempt to control His providence.

Job spends chapter after chapter establishing his innocence but also seeking to understand why tribulation has come upon him. God’s answer to Job in chapter 38:4 is stark: “*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.*” To put it in modern language, God essentially says “none of your business ...” I have often felt that if I could understand why God is doing something, I might better be able to react in the appropriate way. This seems innocent enough but deep down it presumes we have the capacity to understand the infinite, immortal, eternal God. To assume as much is to place Him in a very small box indeed. So here’s a daily dose of truth for us all: Beyond what scripture says, you cannot and never will fully (or maybe even partially) understand why God does anything, perhaps even after death. And it is injurious to your soul to try. He is working at infinite levels in infinite ways with infinite numbers of beings connecting infinite dots across an infinity of time. What He’s doing is none of your business. Better to be content to be obedient and trust that He is working for the good of those who love him. That doesn’t mean we should lose the wonder of His creation all around us – that is part of His glory. It also doesn’t mean that you can’t recognize an infinitely small slice of what He’s doing and be grateful. Just stop there. He doesn’t have to explain Himself to anyone.