



Dear friends, yesterday morning I listened to family members read the names of loved ones who died in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. At times I was moved to tears, especially when I heard statements like, “We love and miss you every day.” It was also painful to hear how many of the family members, who were children or infants when the attacks occurred, have no personal memories of their parents or grandparents. These kinds of tragedies can drive the emotions to the breaking point.

Where Was God? The question “Where was God on September 11?” is a deeply personal and theological question that focuses on how an all-powerful and all-loving God can allow terrible things to happen. Of course, the simple answer is, “God is where He has always been, allowing acts of freedom to have their consequences and waiting for people to recognize their need for Him.” As true as this answer may be, it still leaves most people, including me from time to time, emotionally disillusioned. It certainly would not be my response to someone who may have lost a loved one as a result of some dreadful tragedy.

Why Doesn’t God Intervene? So, what is God like? Does He care about people who suffer? Why didn’t He stop the terrorists on September 11, 2001. Why doesn’t God intervene in these kinds of situations, or at least mitigate the amount of human suffering? At times like these skeptics are not alone in trying to comprehend God’s whereabouts. If we are ruthlessly honest, we would admit our bewilderment as well. These calamities certainly force many of us to reevaluate some of the convictions we have about the nature and character of God. It may be a well-kept secret among Christians, but most of us know it to be true in our hearts. In fact, it may result in a serious modification of our Christian faith. Many people will actually change their view of God in an effort to explain their experiences.

A Grief Observed While C.S. Lewis was grieving the death of his wife he said, “Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not, ‘So there’s no God after all,’ but, ‘So this is what God’s really like. Deceive yourself no longer.’” These words may sound hopeless as Lewis processed his grief. However, Lewis eventually reconstructed a stronger faith that helped him handle the dark realities of human suffering. Ultimately, he concluded that faith is a choice

to trust God's goodness even when emotions seem to override reason. So, how can we help others who are grieving?

Personal And Spiritual Depth It is important to understand that critical thinking involves more than just an academic preparation of the mind. The ability to think on one's feet is important, yet it is no less important to have personal and spiritual depth. We know that only God can ultimately comfort and calm the deep turmoil and emotional struggles in the hearts of people. As for us, our lives need to reflect God's love, peace and light in such a way that people can perceive God's love in us. I am not saying that we should pretend to be perfect, because it is not about us. Instead, it is about letting the Holy Spirit—who lives inside every believer—work through us in such a way that it is evident to the people we are trying to comfort. This may sound good, but does it actually work in real life? Allow me to paint a picture for you that will hopefully answer this question in the affirmative.

Emanating God's Presence When I was training college students in Poland, the topic of one of the sessions was, "God and Human Suffering." During one of the breaks a student asked me if he could have a copy of my notes. I told him that I would be happy to give him a set of my notes at the end of the session. When I met with him, he explained why he asked for a copy of my notes. He said he had a personal ministry to provide some level of comfort for terminally ill children and their parents. I asked him how my notes would be helpful in such a situation. He said, apart from his classes, he spends a good deal of his time going to the hospital. He brings candy and games for the children, sits with them and tells them stories. Inevitably parents get to know him and trust him as they experience, what I would describe as, *God's presence emanating from this young man*. He said he doesn't say much, he listens to grieving parents and simply makes an effort to show that he cares and has compassion for their children.

The Hope Of Redemption Regarding my notes, he said that there comes a time when parents are ready to listen to what he might have to say. So, when a question emerges concerning God's goodness and why children suffer, his replies are rather short. For the most part he responds by saying that he does not know why God allows such suffering. He also said that even if he had an answer it would do nothing to mitigate the amount of anguish and suffering experienced by the children and their parents. However, he said, at the right time, he shares his faith and offers them the hope of redemption, trusting that God will work in the hearts of these hurting children and their parents

I have to tell you that I have never heard of anyone having this kind of ministry. I want you to know that this young man is not part of any organization—it is his personal ministry. Think about it, imagine that you are a single parent with a terminally ill child and you cannot get to the hospital one day. However, you know this young man will be there and you trust him, how would you feel? Then, when he shares the hope that only God can provide would you believe him?

I'd Rather See A Sermon... Allow me to share a quote that I think will sum up the essence of what I have written. Guy Doud, the 1986 National Teacher of the Year authored a book titled, *Molder of Dreams*. In it he shared the tremendous influence his eighth grade math teacher, Mr.

Kopka, had on his life. He said, “Mr. Kopka never pushed his faith on me. His testimony was the example of his life. I have since learned a poem, “Sermons We See,” that applies to Mr. Kopka: “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day; I’d rather you walk with me than merely tell the way. The eye’s a better pupil and more willing than the ear, Fine counsel is confusing, but example’s always clear.”

Finally, as summer is nearing to an end, we can certainly use your help by way of your continued prayers and financial support. When I consider how God has sustained us over the years, I am extremely grateful for His faithfulness and very thankful for partnership in the ministry that He has so graciously entrusted to us. As you may know, we have always had a “no fee” policy. So if you are able to make a donation at this time, I would be most grateful!

By God’s Grace Alone- Pete

To Donate Visit: www.legacyoftruth.org/giving/

If you know a student or young adult who may benefit from our e-book series, “When Students Ask.” You can download the PDF version at no charge here: www.legacyoftruth.org/ebooks/ However, if you can help support our efforts with a donation, that would help us to continue our efforts to train young adults.