

IT'S ALL RIGHT TO ASK WHY

There's a man in the Old Testament who had a difficult life, not just for a few months or years, but for decades. What he had to say to the people he lived with wasn't very pleasant nor was it accepted. They didn't want to hear his pleas to turn to God. He pleaded with them for almost 40 years, and then they were taken captive. He kept at it even when he wanted to give up. He wrote:

I have become a laughingstock all day long...
But if I say, "I will not remember (God)
Or speak anymore in His name,"
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding it in,
And I cannot endure it
(Jeremiah 20:7, 9 NASB).



Jeremiah was very honest. He let God know he was upset and unhappy. He hadn't asked for his job as a prophet. He didn't want it, and now he was suffering because of it. He felt God wasn't honest with him. This is what he said:

O LORD, You have deceived me...
Everyone mocks me.
For each time I speak, I cry aloud;
I proclaim violence and destruction,
Because for me the word of the LORD has resulted
In reproach and derision all day long
(Jeremiah 20:7-8 NASB).

Jeremiah was so upset he cursed the day he was born, asking:

Why did I ever come forth from the womb
To look on trouble and sorrow,
So that my days have been spent in shame?
(Jeremiah 20:18 NASB).

Listen to what Ruth Graham said about life:

When life becomes burdensome and all but impossible to bear, often the only question we have to ask is, "Why?" I have heard people say, "You can't ask God why." Yes we can. We can ask God why. We're in good company when we ask. Jeremiah asked God why. Many heroes of the faith have asked God why.

Asking why does not mean we have lost our faith. As I came to understand, asking why can be, rather, a sign of faith. When we ask why, we are asserting our desire to dialogue with the God in whom we have put a measure of trust. We expect he is listening and believe he is the source of the answers.

But won't we offend God if we ask why? Won't we make him angry? God is not threatened by our emotions. He is not shaken by our "why?" He did not strike Jeremiah down for expressing frustration and despair.

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