

First printing: January 2007

Copyright © 2007 by Ken Ham. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews. For information write: Master Books, Inc., P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638.

ISBN-13: 978-0-89051-504-4

ISBN-10: 0-89051-504-2

Library of Congress Number: 2006937545

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quoted is from the NASB.

**Printed in the United States of America.**

Please visit our website for other great titles:  
[www.masterbooks.net](http://www.masterbooks.net).

For information regarding author interviews, please contact the publicity department at (870) 438-5288.



*A Division of New Leaf Publishing Group*

This work is dedicated to the sincere believer  
in Jesus Christ who sees — and feels — the pain,  
destruction, and decay on this earth . . . and then asks  
“Why?” May the answers from Genesis to Revelation  
bring perspective, determination, and tangible hope.

And to the memory of my brother Robert.

And to the memory of Henry Morris,  
whose work and words transformed my life and  
bolstered the faith of millions.

# Contents

Foreword by Steve Ham .....	9
Introduction.....	15
Chapter 1    And It Was Good.....	21
Chapter 2    Only “Time and Death”? .....	39
Chapter 3    The Big Picture .....	59
Chapter 4    A Voice from the Past .....	79
Chapter 5    Beyond the Grave .....	103
Chapter 6    Beauty from Ashes .....	119
Chapter 7    Bowing the Knee .....	139
Chapter 8    Now, But Not Yet .....	163
Epilogue.....	189
Resources .....	197





# Foreword

BY STEPHEN HAM

**I**f you are anything like me, you sometimes get frustrated because of your own limitations. If only I could do more than one thing at a time. If only I could be more than one place at a time. If only I could instantly access knowledge to complete any task I wanted to complete. But I am limited, and no matter how much I improve my fitness, strength, or knowledge, I am always going to remain limited to the extent of my

own mortal potential — limited by power, presence, and knowledge.

Ken has written a book that is going to make you consider your limitations. Maybe you have been suffering a terrible loss or a devastating tragedy and your limitations have become all too real for you. Maybe life is going terrifically well for you and you are feeling ten feet tall and bulletproof. Either way, reality abounds, and we are one day going to come face to face with our ultimate limitation — mortality. It seems to be only when we consider such issues as death and suffering in general that we actually begin to consider our own individual mortality. As Ken deals with the subject of death and suffering in this book, you are going to have plenty of opportunities to consider your own mortality. But as I read through this book, I found a much greater subject. Hope.

As you read through these pages you are going to have a clear choice. Will you get aboard the blame train with the rest of the world or will you find the clear message of hope in a God who can save us from this tragic existence? Humanity is always looking for someone else to blame and it seems that it may as well be God. Do you notice, though, that the blame is always laid before a “loving God.” How could a loving God . . . ? If your God is a God of love . . . ?

Before we read this book, I think it is important to consider the God we dare to blame. Paul describes God



in 1 Timothy 1:17: “Now to the King *eternal, immortal, invisible*, the only God, be honor and *glory for ever and ever*.” Or how about Psalm 102:27: “But you *remain the same* and your *years will never end*” (NIV); Job 26:14: “Who then can understand the *thunder of his power*?” (NIV); Romans 11:33: “Oh, the *depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge* of God! How *unsearchable his judgments*, and his *paths beyond tracing out*!” (NIV); 1 Timothy 6:16: “Who alone is *immortal* and who *lives in unapproachable light*, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be *honor and might forever*. Amen” (NIV) (emphases added).

These are just a few verses that tell us that the God we dare to blame is eternal, immortal, invisible, glorified forever, has thunderous power, riches of knowledge and wisdom, is unsearchable in judgments, is beyond our imitation, lives in unapproachable light, and will have honor and might forever. Perhaps we’d better have very good reasons for playing this blame game. Perhaps we should think very carefully before shaking our finite fists at the infinite Creator.

It really isn’t a fair fight, is it? The finite against the infinite. The limited against the unlimited.

It seems impossible, doesn’t it? How do limited, mortal, finite humans even comprehend a God like this, let alone have the arrogance to blame Him for something we have no idea about? If God is unsearchable and



unapproachable, how can we even bother to ask? Reading this book made me contemplate an amazing truth about God. He has revealed himself to us to save us from an impossible task of the finite finding the infinite.

Psalm 19:1 tells us, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (NIV). God has revealed himself to us through the work of creation. But as Ken will also explain clearly, we cannot know the mysteries of this world by looking at creation alone, especially in its current form. In Psalm 19:7, the Psalmist tells us, “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.” The unapproachable God has revealed himself by giving us a written account. The Psalmist says that this account makes wise the simple. It’s the ultimate instruction book for the finite. The limited now have the opportunity to understand something that the unlimited has told us. The truths in God’s Word matching the physical environment we see around us has helped millions of believers to walk in a knowledge that most of this world have only dreamed of. From God’s Word, it is a powerful knowledge that becomes ours, and it’s ours to share.

Through the following chapters is something very special. My brother Ken will take you through a biblical study of death and suffering with the help of my brother Robert who has suffered and died and is now in the presence of the infinite God. Ken will recount some of Rob’s





own words that he preached on death and suffering as a Baptist pastor before entering the suffering of a cruel and fatal brain disease. You will see answers to our problems of suffering and finite limitations in this world, but you will not get them from mere mortals. They are answers from the revealed Word of the unlimited. As Ken and Rob will outline clearly, the all-knowing and all-powerful God has revealed many answers to us in His Word. When we carefully and seriously take God's Word as the authority, not only in our spiritual life but also in all matters that it deals with, we are left with eye-opening answers to the hardest questions in life. Not the least of these questions is "Why is there death and suffering?" Or if we dare to, we could be so arrogant as to ask it with a hint of blame by saying "How could a loving God. . . ?"

It is true that our limitations in this life have us struggling with mystery. We all want answers to the things we desperately want to know and we often don't like the answers we do get. We particularly hate it when part of the answer to our mystery is mystery itself. There are certainly times that we have to let God be God, and that excites no man. It is in these times that the answers God has given us create the foundation for a faith that makes us comfortable knowing that we are in the hands of someone infinitely more wise than us.

My biggest concern with books that answer questions such as these is that we walk away without asking

the question most needed. While it is a good thing to study the questions relating to our life's problems, it is the answer itself that forms the most profitable question. If we can shed ourselves from our arrogant human pride long enough, perhaps we can ask it. Perhaps we can avoid, even for a short time, asking why we are suffering and contemplate why God has given us a solution. The great impact for me is that God has revealed not only the answer to our "why" question but also the solution to the world's entire problem. He is the solution. He became the solution and He remains the solution.

When you have finished reading this book, please take some time to consider a different "why" question. Ask yourself this: "*Why has an infinite God bothered to save me from a problem that I created by rejecting Him?*" This is a question that does not have you arrogantly shaking your fist from the finite to the infinite but instead has you bending your knees in tears of thankfulness and amazement.

Yes, please read this book, enjoy it, and learn from it. But at the end, please ask the right question.

God bless you as you find hope in a hopeless world.

Steve Ham

(Ken Ham's youngest brother)



## Introduction

**W**e buried what was left of Robert's body on the 12th of June in a quiet cemetery on the outskirts of Brisbane, Australia. Later in the day, we would gather with others in a public celebration of his life, but only those who were closest to him during his earthly life gathered around the freshly dug grave that morning. As the cool winter breeze blew through the forest and the Australian gum trees around us, we held each

other close and sought comfort and rest in the words of the pastor and the words of Scripture.

It was the end of a long road. For months, a disease called “frontal lobe dementia” had been slowly and persistently eroding the networks of cells in his brain. For months we stood by helplessly as the disease ate away at his independence and physical presence, contorting his mind and body into a twisted, empty shell. Now, we were standing together, returning to the ground the body of our brother and friend . . . one who was also a husband and father. Standing among us was Brenda, a widow now; and pressed against her side were Joshua and Geoffrey, ages 18 and 16 at the time. There was a certain sense of relief and peace among us — and a thankfulness that his agonizing battle was now complete — but deep in our souls stirred thoughts and feelings that would not rest, echoes of questions that could not be quieted.

Why Robert? He was a good man and devoted father and husband, serving as a pastor in a Bible teaching/defending Church? Why this way? The disease had robbed him of everything that he valued most . . . his mind, his ability to communicate the gospel, his awareness of those he loved and who loved him. Why Now? Robert was only 43. His ministry, born out of sacrifice and determination, was beginning to grow. And then there were Brenda and the boys . . . boys who would never



again hear the counsel and comfort of their earthly father's voice, nor would they feel the guidance and touch of his caring hand. Why did this happen when they all needed him the most?

We stood at the grave for some time, quietly, with little left to say . . . but the questions would not be silenced among us: *Why? Why? Why?*

As we wiped the dirt from our hands and said our last goodbyes, the questions hung heavy in the air. Underneath these questions was a deeper question still — a question that has perplexed mankind for ages, but was now amplified by our circumstances and our pain — and it was a question that demanded an answer: *Why would a loving God allow, or even cause, such pain, decay, and death?*

As the oldest sibling in the family, I felt the full weight of the question. How would I answer? What would I say to Brenda and Joshua and Geoffrey? I'm a Christian and I believe and love God's Word. I teach it all over the world. I preach the message of salvation and tell people about the wonderful God of love who created us; but how could I reconcile all of that with what had happened to my brother Rob? What was I to say to my mother, my own wife and children, my brothers and sisters, nieces, nephews, and so on? And what about the non-Christians who looked on and saw our Christian family struggling to cope with this



terrible disaster? What were they thinking; what were they asking? What could we tell them in the midst of this tragedy that would cause them to look to the God of the Bible?

As these thoughts swirled without rest, yet another question came up in my mind: *What would Robert say about it all?* As a devout and gifted teacher of the Word, what would be his answer to these questions? What would he have said about the Bible and the God it portrays, had he been able to understand what had happened to him? Would he be angry? Would he turn his back on the Word of God he so faithfully preached? What would he say to God if he had been able to comprehend the nature of his disease, decline, and death?

Robert's disease and illness, as you might imagine, has been a struggle for me and our whole family. No, there are no easy answers in one sense, but in my search for how I should respond as a Christian, I believe that light can be shed on this seemingly unfair, contradictory, and irreconcilable situation. After all, if the God of the Bible Rob believed in is real, and if His nature is as revealed in the pages of Scripture, then there has to be a way of reconciling what seems to be so grossly unjust with a just and holy Creator — otherwise *nothing* makes sense.

For decades I've known and taught that the Word of God makes sense out of confusion when it comes to



issues of history, geography, family, anthropology, morality, paleontology, etc. Since my brother's death, and the deep soul-searching it has caused, I now also know that the truth of the Word can make sense out of the deepest confusion of the heart, offering answers to the most perplexing, painful issues a person can face.

As we now turn to the infallible Word of God, may we, by His mercy and grace, be given the ability to understand the past, live powerfully in the present, and look to the future with hope, knowing that God himself has given us the answers to the questions we so desperately ask.







## C H A P T E R   I N E

*In the beginning God created the heavens and  
the earth. . . . God saw all that He had made,  
and behold, it was very good  
(Genesis 1:1–31).*

# And It *Was* Good

**T**he words of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 present to us the incredible chronicle of the first six days of existence. From nothing, God created the heavens and an earth. He spoke forth the first rays of light, separating them from the darkness; then He made distinction between the heavens and the waters below. Gathering the waters into seas and drying the land, God then spoke into reality plants and trees of every kind. With His voice He



scattered the stars and hung the sun and moon. Filling the waters with living creatures and the skies with birds, He then filled the land with living creatures . . . and then He declared that it was “good.”

But God was far from done. The entirety of day 6 was given to the creation of humanity. From the dust of the ground God shaped the first man, breathing life into his nostrils, and giving him dominion over everything else that had been created. Not satisfied with Adam’s aloneness, he then formed a mate from the man’s side, and together they began their rule over all that had been made . . . and then He declared it was *very* good.

I believe that we are incapable of imagining the perfection that existed in Eden at that time. The harmony, the beauty, the unity, the way everything worked together in peace . . . it *was* very good, but a glance at the morning newspaper or listening to the evening news makes it graphically evident that we no longer live in the beautiful world He made. Murder, divorce, abortion, starvation, and war are the norm now; devastation is common, punctuated by disasters that appear to be both natural and man-made. To get away from it all, many retreat toward undisturbed nature, but even there — no, *particularly there* — we find the world to be extremely disturbing.

Whenever I mention my homeland of Australia, people often say, “Australia is such a wonderful country.” It

is. It's a tremendous country. It's a wonderful country . . . compared to most others. But let's be honest; it's a rough place. We have some of the most dangerous sea creatures on the planet. Some of our sea stingers will happily kill you in minutes, and our sharks will eat you so fast that no one will know what happened to you. The bite of many of our spiders is the beginning of a slow and excruciating death. We have some of the most dangerous snakes in the world, too. Australia is also home to the most dangerous octopus in the world. If you are walking along a rocky shoreline and accidentally step on one, you'll be dead within the hour. We have the most dangerous crocodiles in the world as well (their favorite food being American tourists). We even have a deadly stinging tree! If you were to just brush up against the leaves of this tree, you would receive a painful sting that can last for years.

So imagine you've come to Australia for a vacation in order to get away from "the real world" for a while. While walking on one of our "wonderful" nature trails, let's just say you brush up against the stinging tree. The pain is so great that you rush down the hillside to the nearby ocean to wash your arm. Immediately you get stung by one of the deadly tropical sea stingers, which almost immediately makes you dizzy and delirious (not to mention the pain), so you crawl out of the ocean and fall into a nearby freshwater creek, and "chomp!" just like that you become lunch for one of our man-eating crocodiles.

Yeah, it's a wonderful country, all right. Isn't Australia a beautiful country?

I think we are sometimes very guilty of giving the wrong idea to the non-Christian when we look at nature and say, "Can't you see there's a God? Look how beautiful this world is? Can't you see there's a God?" And they're looking out there and you know what they are seeing? They're seeing people dying, they're seeing tragedies, they're seeing suffering, they're seeing death, they're seeing disease — and they don't see a beautiful world.

I even think we are sometimes giving the wrong message to our kids through most of our Sunday school literature. When we want to talk to kids about God being "the great Designer" or "the great Creator," we often turn to nature as an example of His creative "beauty." Look at the pictures you see in the Sunday school books and in Christian school textbooks, aren't they "beautiful"? Sure, look how God beautifully designed this little fox to rip the insides out of the bunny! See the dinosaur bones? Yeah, his body was crushed under the weight of tons of sediment. Look how that mosquito sucks the blood out of that little fawn!

We point at nature and life and teach our kids to sing "All things bright and beautiful! The Lord God made them all!" In reality, maybe we should be teaching them to sing "All things maimed and mangled! The Lord God cursed them all!"

A friend of mine lived in the mountains near the coast south of Brisbane. He said, “I take my non-Christian friends up on the mountain here, and we look over this beautiful countryside and the beach and I say, ‘Can’t you see there’s a God? Look at the beautiful world He made!’ ” I differ with him. What we see in Australia is not the world that He made — and it’s only beautiful compared to other countries! At those beaches around Brisbane, you’re liable to have the blue ringed octopus and sea stingers bring an abrupt end to your beautiful afternoon outing.

No, it’s not a beautiful world; it’s a dangerous and deadly one. In Australia, even the Sprint phone company understands this. They have advertisements around Australia to remind you to call home . . . so people know you’re still alive. (Actually, I thought it was a pretty great ad really; playing off the fact that it’s not a wonderful world anymore.)

In nature, we do see a *remnant* of beauty, a shattered reflection of the original perfection of Eden. But it’s all in the context of death and destruction . . . *all* of it. Take the Grand Canyon, for example. If you took a non-Christian to this magnificent place — and it is magnificent, by the way; the views are indescribable, particularly at sunrise and sunset — and the two of you were sitting on the edge of the mile-deep canyon, and you say to your friend, “Can’t you see there is a God of love in the beauty of



what He has created?” Would that be an accurate lead in to a spiritual conversation? Is nature really an illustration of His love?

Certainly there is a beauty there, but it’s *not* an expression of love. The Grand Canyon is residue from a cataclysmic act of God’s judgment, a violent worldwide flood that tore into the earth and entombed billions of living organisms. That’s the *real* bigger picture, and to communicate something else to a non-believer isn’t communicating biblical Christianity.

I remember being in the British Museum in London. It’s an impressive place. The Museum of Natural History is filled with excellent dinosaur specimens as well as the Darwin exhibit. Then they have the British Museum of Art. It too is filled with an impressive collection of statues and artifacts that the British have ripped off from around the world over the years. I was watching a group looking at one of the statues from ancient Greece. It was missing part of the head, both arms, and part of the torso. Still it stood tall, the white marble shining in the light. People were looking at it, saying, “Wonderful!” “Inspiring!” “Beautiful!” But a little boy nearby said, “What are you talking about? It looks all broken to me!”

Both observations were correct, of course. The adults could imagine the beauty in the fact that a tremendously talented sculptor had, at one time, captured the wonder

of the human physique in stone . . . but the boy saw it for what it was today: a chunk of worn, shattered, and incomplete rock. And you know, it is really the same with this earth. How many times do we as people look at this earth and say, “Look at this beautiful world and the trees and the birds and look at the other animals and isn’t that a beautiful world that God made?” Well I’ve got news for you: It all looks broken to me. It’s a broken world. And when we use nature as an example of God’s beauty and love, we are giving the wrong idea.

The movie *Madagascar* does a great job of playing off of this. (That’s a great movie, by the way; very funny.) At one point all these animals are skipping through the forest. They’ve recently escaped from the zoo to find a better life in the wild. As they meander through the woods, the song “What a Wonderful World” by Louie Armstrong is playing in the background . . . but every time they turn around, an animal jumps out of the bushes and grabs some cute little furry creature and rips its head off, or swallows it, or puts the squeeze on it.

The irony is hysterical. Sure, it’s very funny in an animated movie like *Madagascar*, but it’s not so funny when it’s in your own neighborhood, or in your own family. This world is filled with disease, destruction, decay, and death . . . and when it comes to our home, the ramifications can spread like shock waves through every aspect of our being.

### Facing Reality

On the telephone 10,000 miles away, my sister was trying to describe my brother's physical appearance. "Do you remember the TV programs that showed those horrible pictures of prisoners from the concentration camps?" she asked. "Remember how thin they looked from starvation? Ken, in a way, Robert reminds me of them." I tried to imagine it; then, as the image appeared in my mind, I tried to *not* imagine it. All I knew was that I wanted to see my younger brother at least one more time. He was so young — early forties — how could this be happening to him? I boarded a plane for 20 hours of flying, giving me lots of time to reflect on the past and contemplate the future.

A few hours after arriving in Australia, I walked into the nursing home with my mother. My visit was a surprise for her, but our joyful reunion quickly dissolved into tears as Mother conveyed what had taken place the last several weeks. I hadn't seen Robert for a few months and I knew that no matter how hard I tried, I would not be prepared for what I was about to experience.

My heart began to race as we walked the corridors of the nursing home. It was a pathetic sight. In one large area, a dozen or so mostly elderly people sat in silence, gazing into nowhere. One lady whistled continually while another kept saying certain words over and over again. Periodic groans were heard from a man in the



corner, and beside him another lady kept moving her legs and body in a peculiar continual motion. Some sat motionless, their contorted faces and glassy eyes glued on the television. Only one person seemed aware of my presence, but when he spoke, the words were fragmented and unintelligible.

Inside, my heart was breaking. I was looking at someone's wife and mother, a husband and father, a son or daughter. On the walls hung pictures of some of these people — images of life before the horrible sicknesses overtook them. The contrast was so stark it was hard to believe I was looking at the same people.

This was a Christian nursing home. Most of these patients were dedicated Believers — Sunday school teachers, deacons, and devoted parents. One 78-year-old man in a room nearby had been an active evangelist. His family was gathered around him as he was breathing his last after a seven-year battle with Alzheimer's disease.

Then I saw Robert. He was lying there, hardly moving. He showed very little (if any) signs of recognition of his mother and eldest brother. Mum tenderly stroked his forehead and then began the arduous task of trying to get him to swallow a special drink she had prepared for him. Increasingly, his swallowing ability was disappearing. His food had to be put through a blender and fed to him teaspoon by teaspoon or through a drinking cup.

He would swallow and then choke; swallow and then choke. Mum would wipe his face and wait to give him another sip. At times, tears would run down her face. She was so patient and so loving, talking to him and caring for him just as one would for a baby. At times, we both held his hands. He would look at us, and once or twice I wondered whether I saw a flash of recognition in his facial expressions — and then it was gone.



Yes, when disease, destruction, decay, or death come “home,” it’s time for a difficult reality check. In those hours we stare life — *real* life — in the eyes, and face issues that can often be avoided in the course of normal life. Perhaps you’ve been there too. Maybe you’re there now, facing the bitter realities of life. Even if you haven’t, make no mistake, you *will* face these realities soon enough — and with the reality comes questions.

### The Question

The issues of suffering and death beg one of the most perplexing and pressing questions that’s being asked in our culture: “How can there be a God of love if there is always death and suffering in the world?” The question is far from hypothetical or philosophical; it’s both theological and highly practical . . . and it’s usually asked when we face what appears to be a tragic inconsistency in the world.

After the tidal wave hit Indonesia, many asked how could there be a God of love. *Look at the masses of poor and*

*struggling who were pulled back into the sea.* A man ignites a truck bomb outside of a federal building in Oklahoma. The collapsing building crushes a day care center filled with children. *Where was God when that happened?* What about the wars? What about the Holocaust? I mean, how *could* there be a God of love?

The Christian believes that God is love, that God cares, that He is present everywhere, and that He is all-powerful. We believe that He knows everything and is merciful and forgiving. We believe that God created the universe and everything in it, declaring that it was “very good.” And yet even superficial observations indicate we’ve got some “problems.” How do we reconcile what we see and what we believe as Christians?

We see what happened on 9/11 in New York. We look at massive famine in Africa. We hear of girls suffering at the hands of their own fathers in our own neighborhoods. Just think about death in general (let alone the death of those who are young and “innocent”). It doesn’t seem right at all and people get angry at God over these things. “How can there be a God of love if He allows this? How can you Christians believe in your God of love? Why would a God of love let my mother die or my wife die? If You are a God of love, why would You do this?” How do we understand it? How do we put all that together?

I don’t think I can overstate the importance of answering the questions correctly. All we have to do is look

at how some non-Christians in the world have responded to this sort of thing. You've probably heard of Ted Turner. A man of great wealth and a bitter heart, he is leaving a powerful legacy in the atheistic media. It's easy to view him as an enemy of sorts, but let me give you something to think about. Consider this quote from an interview he had with the *New York Times*:



Turner is a strident nonbeliever having lost his faith after his sister Mary Jane died of a painful disease. "I was taught that God was love and God was powerful," Turner said, "I couldn't understand how someone so innocent should be made or allowed to suffer so."<sup>1</sup>

Turner is not an isolated case. Some of the most atheistic, humanistic, ardent opponents of our creation ministry claim they were brought up in Bible-believing churches — and yet heart-wrenching circumstances caused them to walk away from their faith. You know what I believe has happened? Many were brought up in churches where Christianity was imposed upon them but they weren't taught how to defend the Christian faith. They never learned to interpret circumstances with the truth of the Word. Instead, they grew up interpreting the Bible according to circumstance. When they faced the tension regarding the difficult questions about evil and

suffering, the circumstances led them to believe that God either didn't exist or that He was uncaring or passive.

Significantly, we see this again in the life of Charles Darwin. Darwin grew up going to church and his family continued to do so after he married. But Darwin had a daughter named Annie, and when she became ill, Charles' life was deeply impacted. It is said in his biography that:

Any vestige of belief in God left him when his daughter Annie died. Annie's cruel death destroyed Charles' tatters and belief in a moral and just universe. Later he would say that this period claimed the final death nail for his Christianity. Charles now took his stand as an unbeliever.<sup>2</sup>

A couple of years ago, PBS did a series on evolution. In one of the programs they portrayed the progression of Darwin's life after his daughter Annie died. At one point they show him going to church with his family. But once they get there, Charles waits outside as his family goes into worship . . . he's unwilling to play a hypocrite and go through the motions of religion as his faith continues to flounder. While the family is in church and Darwin ponders the fate of his daughter, the singing of a hymn filters out of the church. Do you know the hymn they had them singing? "All Thing Bright and Beautiful, the Lord God Made Them All." You know what PBS was



trying to say here, don't you. Here is Charles suffering over the death of his daughter Annie and everyone in the church is singing "All Things Bright and Beautiful, The Lord God Made Them All." It's the same irony we found in the movie *Madagascar*, except in Darwin's case, the loss of his daughter was *real*, the tears he shed were *real* . . . and the questions he wrestled with deep in his soul were *real*. Finding no suitable answers to the issues that tormented his soul, he turned his back on the church, abandoned his childhood beliefs, and set out to explain the origin of life without "god."

It's easy to point the finger at non-Christians who have struggled with "the question." But the Christian response hasn't been much better. Many tend to ignore the issue altogether; some just hide the doubt under the surface of their faith while others cloak the problem under a covering of spiritual-sounding clichés.

I think one of the reasons that many people — and many young people — in our churches struggle with their faith is because the teaching and music give the message that the Christian life is supposed to be carefree and problem free. We teach children songs that say "I'm happy all the time. Since Jesus Christ came in, and saved my soul from sin . . . I'm happy all the time." Meanwhile, they are getting beat up on the playground, watching the latest flooding on the 5:00 news, and listening to their parents fight in the evening. Nowhere does Scripture promise a "happy" life,

and we should not insinuate otherwise. Again, we point at nature and try to tell them it's all good and beautiful, but in reality, it is *literally* a "dog-eat-dog world," full of anger and death . . . and the Christian is not exempt.

While some struggle, some just deny reality. Even though we all see people dying around us every day, many of us have, at some level of our consciousness, convinced ourselves that this will not happen to us. In a way, we try to avoid reality in order to somehow think that we can get out of dealing with death. But when someone close to us dies, or there is a major tragedy like the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, we don't know how to deal with it. We sorrow for a while, but soon we shelve the issue again and get on with life.

In the long run, it doesn't help to deny. The issues will re-surface in some way, at some time. Those who are most honest, yet have the fewest answers, seem to be at risk the most . . . and sometimes they lash out in the process. Consider issues of school violence. Every day, anger and frustration boils over in our youth, sometimes with deadly force. One of the two young men who carried out the Columbine High School massacre had written these words:

It is easier to hate than love because there is so much more hate and misery in the world than there is love and peace. Look at our history — it's full of death, depression, rape, wars, and diseases.<sup>3</sup>

Are you beginning to see that “the question” is a big issue out there? *How can there be a God of love? Look at all the hate. Look at all the awful things in the world. A loving, caring God must not exist.* As Christians, if we are going to be consistent, we have to be able to explain a world where we have joy and we have sorrow, a world where we have both life and death, both love and hate . . . all at the same time. How do we do that? Reality seems so incompatible with the concept of a God of love. How *do* we explain it?

### QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. If someone came to your church and asked the question “If God is love, why is there suffering and death?” what might the average member say? How would your pastor respond?
2. Do you agree that it is not accurate to use “the beauty in nature” as an example of God’s love and creativity? Why or why not? How do you think nature should be used for evangelism?
3. Do you know of other people who, like Ted Turner and Charles Darwin, abandoned their faith in God after the devastating death of a loved one? What other tragic circumstances might cause someone to question God?



## QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. If someone asked you why bad things happen to good people, what would you say?
2. In what ways has the Christian life not lived up to your expectations? What specific circumstances cause you to doubt God's goodness or power?
3. Do you have a good answer to "the question"? If you don't, how might that affect your faith in the future? How might your life be different if you had a clear and concise answer to this important question?

BIBLE VERSES FOR CONTEMPLATION  
AND MEMORIZATION:

Genesis 1

Romans 1:20

John 16:33

**Endnotes**

1. "Turner Was Suicidal After Breakup," NYTimes.com, April 16, 2001.
2. Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin: The Life of a Tormented Evolutionist* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), p. 387.
3. Kip Kinkle, excerpts from "Love Sucks," www.pbs.org.