

Why?

When I was in high school a teacher said he would give us a question and he expected us to write an essay on it. On the board he wrote "Why?" Some members of the class wrote "Why not?" and enjoyed visiting the rest of the hour. I wrote a two page essay. In retrospect, I have to think their answer was better than mine.

While attending college I was assigned to home teach a sister who was about 22. Her husband had been killed in an accident at work, leaving her with crushing medical bills and two small children. She was angry and confused, and asked constantly why Heavenly Father had allowed this to happen to her. As I strove to counsel her through that time I gave a lot of reflection to her question. I decided that her questioning of "Why?" was distracting her from the central issues she was facing, which included how to be a righteous mother to her children, and how to grow spiritually herself.

Since that time I have had much more experience with the question "Why?" I have pondered myself why some things must be so. I have heard others ask "Why?" regarding many issues, large and small. And I have decided that there are doctrinal issues involved in merely asking this question.

We were given agency as one of the essential conditions of our eternal existence. The ability to think and reason allows us to use agency to become Gods. It is appropriate – even necessary – for us to ponder on the plan of salvation, God's desires for us, and our course through eternity. However, we need to exercise caution in our questioning. We should be seeking knowledge and faith, but not allow ourselves to be sidetracked from our central pursuit in this life, of preparing ourselves for eternal life.

Asking "Why?" can lead us to some precious insights, as we recognize the hand of the Lord in our individual lives. But it can also be an impediment to growth if we allow it to be an entranceway to doubt. Asking why something has happened in our lives in attempt to learn and grow can bring us closer to our Father. But too many times we allow ourselves to be stained by the disbelief of the world, asking "Why?" in an implicit statement that if we cannot understand then there is not a legitimate reason. That is a pinnacle of pride, hence an invitation to fall.

God does not reveal all of his plan to us, sometimes because we are not

able to understand, sometimes because the answer would limit our agency, as well as our spiritual growth. We are placed on earth to learn and to grow, but that growth requires struggle. If all were plain, and according to our desires, we would not be stretched, we would not have to exercise faith. Faith is one of the building blocks of the universe, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of our religion. Without its development we cannot be prepared for eternity, and must be damned.

In this context we should ask “Why?” with great caution. It should be a search for light, not a demand for proof. Many “Why?”’s will not be answered in this lifetime, except with an increase of faith. If we accept that answer we will be prepared, not just for success in this life, but also for joy in the life to come.