

When God Doesn't Make Sense Paperback 2012 Author James C Dobson R T Kendall

When God Doesn't Make Sense: Exploring Dobson and Kendall's 2012 Paperback

The 2012 paperback edition of *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, co-authored by James C. Dobson and R.T. Kendall, tackles a profoundly human question: how do we reconcile our faith with suffering and unanswered prayers? This book, a significant contribution to the Christian apologetics and theological discussion of theodicy, offers a blend of pastoral care and theological reflection that resonates with readers grappling with doubt and pain. Understanding its core message and exploring its impact requires examining its key themes, exploring its strengths and weaknesses, and considering its lasting relevance in contemporary faith discussions. This article delves into the book's core arguments, its writing style, and its enduring impact on readers navigating difficult questions of faith.

Understanding the Core Message: Suffering and God's Sovereignty

When God Doesn't Make Sense doesn't shy away from the harsh realities of life. Dobson and Kendall acknowledge the pain, confusion, and anger that often arise when believers face seemingly inexplicable suffering. The authors directly address the problem of evil, a central theological challenge that has plagued thinkers for centuries. The central message revolves around the concept of God's sovereignty and His mysterious plan. They don't offer simplistic answers or easy solutions, but instead provide a framework for understanding suffering within a faith context. This includes exploring various biblical perspectives on suffering, emphasizing the importance of trust, prayer, and perseverance even amidst immense hardship. The book's emphasis on faith during times of adversity is a key strength, offering solace and hope to readers.

Key Theological Concepts Explored

The book masterfully weaves together several key theological concepts:

- **Sovereignty of God:** A central theme is the unwavering belief in God's ultimate control and plan, even when it's impossible to comprehend. This addresses

the common question: "If God is good and all-powerful, why does He allow suffering?"

- **The Mystery of God's Ways:** The authors readily acknowledge that God's ways are often beyond our understanding. They encourage readers to trust in God's wisdom and goodness even when the reasons for suffering remain obscure.
- **The Role of Prayer and Faith:** The book highlights the vital importance of persistent prayer and unwavering faith as crucial responses to suffering. This isn't passive acceptance, but active engagement with God.
- **The Significance of Suffering:** Dobson and Kendall explore the possibility that suffering can refine character, deepen faith, and ultimately lead to spiritual growth. This perspective counters the purely negative perception of suffering.

Writing Style and Accessibility

When God Doesn't Make Sense is notable for its accessibility. While tackling complex theological issues, the authors avoid overly academic language. Their writing style is conversational and pastoral, making the book relatable to a broad audience, including those with limited theological background. The book utilizes personal anecdotes and biblical examples to illustrate its points, enhancing engagement and making the complex theological concepts more digestible. This conversational tone, coupled with the inclusion of relevant scripture, makes the book a compelling and accessible read for a broad range of Christian readers. This focus on accessibility is a significant factor in the book's continued popularity and enduring influence.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths: The book's primary strength lies in its compassionate approach to suffering. It offers comfort and hope to those struggling with faith during difficult times. The authors deftly balance theological depth with practical application, providing a framework for navigating faith crises. The blend of pastoral guidance and theological reflection is particularly effective.

Weaknesses: Some might find the book's emphasis on God's sovereignty to be overly simplistic or insufficient in addressing the complexities of human suffering. Critics might argue that the book doesn't adequately address the issue of divine justice in the face of seemingly arbitrary suffering. Additionally, some readers might desire a more in-depth exploration of alternative theological perspectives.

Enduring Relevance and Impact

Despite being published in 2012, **When God Doesn't Make Sense** remains strikingly relevant. The questions of faith, suffering, and God's role in the world continue to resonate deeply with people from all walks of life. The book's enduring appeal lies in its ability to offer comfort and guidance to those grappling with doubt and pain. Its message of faith, perseverance, and trust in God's ultimate plan continues to provide solace and strength. The book's lasting legacy is its ability

to guide readers through times of intense spiritual struggle and encourage them to maintain faith even in the midst of adversity. The impact is seen in its continued use in small groups, Bible studies, and individual spiritual reflection.

Conclusion: A Guide Through Spiritual Darkness

When God Doesn't Make Sense, by James C. Dobson and R.T. Kendall, provides a valuable resource for navigating the complexities of faith when confronted with suffering. While not without its limitations, the book's strengths lie in its accessibility, compassionate tone, and practical application of theological concepts. It offers readers a framework for understanding and responding to doubt and pain while maintaining a steadfast faith. The book's enduring relevance confirms its ongoing value to those seeking guidance on this profound and timeless question.

FAQ: Addressing Common Questions

Q1: Is this book suitable for all Christians?

A1: While primarily aimed at Christians, the book's themes of suffering, faith, and trust in the face of adversity are relevant to anyone grappling with existential questions. The book's accessible writing style makes it engaging for individuals with varying levels of theological knowledge.

Q2: Does the book offer easy answers to the problem of evil?

A2: No, the book doesn't offer simple solutions. It acknowledges the complexity of the problem of evil and encourages readers to wrestle with these difficult questions while maintaining faith. It emphasizes the mystery of God's ways and the importance of trust.

Q3: What makes this book different from other books on suffering?

A3: The book uniquely blends pastoral care with theological reflection, offering both comfort and intellectual stimulation. Its accessibility, coupled with its use of personal anecdotes and biblical examples, makes it more approachable than many purely academic theological works.

Q4: How does the book address the anger often felt towards God during suffering?

A4: The authors acknowledge the validity of anger towards God in the face of suffering. Instead of dismissing this emotion, they encourage honest dialogue with God, allowing for the expression of doubt and pain. The book offers a safe space to explore these complex feelings.

Q5: Is this book primarily focused on theological arguments or practical guidance?

A5: It effectively balances both theological exploration and practical guidance. The authors use theological concepts as a basis for offering practical strategies for coping with suffering, maintaining faith, and fostering spiritual growth.

Q6: Who are James C. Dobson and R.T. Kendall?

A6: James C. Dobson is a well-known American psychologist and author of numerous books on family and faith. R.T. Kendall is a respected British pastor and author known for his work on prayer and spiritual formation. Their combined expertise offers a unique perspective on the topic.

Q7: Where can I purchase a copy of the book?

A7: The 2012 paperback edition of *When God Doesn't Make Sense* can be found on various online retailers like Amazon, Christian bookstores, and used book marketplaces.

Q8: Are there any similar books that explore similar themes?

A8: Yes, many books address the problem of evil and theodicy. Some examples include works by C.S. Lewis, Philip Yancey, and various other authors exploring faith and suffering from different perspectives. However, *When God Doesn't Make Sense* uniquely blends pastoral care and theological reflection to offer a distinct approach.

Wrestling with the Unseen: Exploring James Dobson and R.T. Kendall's "When God Doesn't Make Sense"

The year publication of James Dobson and R.T. Kendall's "When God Doesn't Make Sense" marked a significant contribution to the ongoing conversation surrounding faith and suffering. This book, a collaboration between two prominent figures in evangelical Christianity, tackles the complex and often painful question of why bad things happen to good people, especially within a framework of a loving and omnipotent God. Instead of offering easy answers, the authors delve into the nuances of faith, examining both the theological and personal struggles that arise when life diverges from our expectations. This article will explore the central themes of the book, its impact, and its enduring relevance for those wrestling with similar questions.

The book's strength lies in its dual perspective. Dobson, known for his focus on family and practical Christianity, provides a more pastoral and experiential approach. He shares personal anecdotes and illustrates theological concepts with relatable stories. Kendall, a renowned theologian and pastor, offers a richer

intellectual exploration of the relevant scriptures and systematic theology, providing a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in reconciling faith with suffering. The combination of these two distinct yet complementary voices creates a powerful and engaging reading experience.

One of the core themes of the work is the importance of wrestling with faith rather than abandoning it in the face of difficulty. The authors emphasize the validity of doubt and the necessity of grappling with difficult questions. This is not presented as a sign of weakness but as a crucial part of spiritual maturity. The book doesn't shy away from the raw emotion and confusion that can accompany moments of deep spiritual struggle. Instead, it validates these feelings, offering a space for readers to process their own experiences without judgment.

The authors also address the misconceptions that often surround God's intervention in human affairs. They challenge simplistic notions of a God who only intervenes to prevent bad things from happening. Instead, they explore the concept of God working through suffering, allowing it to shape and refine us. This is not a comfortable or easy message, but it is one that is essential for developing a robust and mature faith. The book uses numerous examples from scripture and contemporary life to support this perspective.

Another key element of the book is its emphasis on the importance of community and support during times of trial. The authors stress the critical role of fellow believers in helping us navigate difficult circumstances. This includes the value of prayer, counseling, and simply having a listening ear during moments of despair. This aspect of the book is particularly relevant in today's increasingly isolated society.

The writing style of "When God Doesn't Make Sense" is accessible and engaging. While the theological discussions are substantial, they are presented in a manner that is understandable even to those without a formal background in theology. The use of personal stories and anecdotes makes the complex ideas more palpable and relatable. This approach makes the book suitable for a wide audience, from long-time believers seeking a deeper understanding of their faith to individuals struggling with their beliefs.

The book's enduring relevance stems from its ability to address questions that transcend specific denominational boundaries or historical contexts. The struggle with faith in the face of suffering is a universal human experience. "When God Doesn't Make Sense" provides a framework for processing these experiences in a way that fosters growth, resilience, and a deeper connection with God.

In conclusion, "When God Doesn't Make Sense" is a valuable resource for anyone wrestling with the challenges of faith and suffering. The authors skillfully blend theological depth with pastoral care, offering both intellectual stimulation and emotional support. The book's emphasis on wrestling with faith, rather than abandoning it, its exploration of the complexities of God's intervention, and its celebration of the importance of community offer readers a path toward greater faith and resilience in the face of life's inevitable hardships.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q1: Is this book only for Christians?

A1: While written from a Christian perspective, the book's exploration of faith, suffering, and the search for meaning resonates with individuals of all belief systems or even those with no religious affiliation. The themes of grappling with doubt and finding support during challenging times are universal human experiences.

Q2: Does the book offer definitive answers to why bad things happen?

A2: No, the book doesn't provide simple answers to the age-old question of why suffering exists. Instead, it encourages readers to engage in a thoughtful and honest exploration of faith, acknowledging the limitations of human understanding in the face of mystery and tragedy.

Q3: What makes this book different from other books on faith and suffering?

A3: The unique contribution of this book lies in the combination of Dobson's practical and pastoral approach with Kendall's theological expertise. This combination provides a holistic perspective that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally supportive.

Q4: Is this book suitable for people who are new to faith?

A4: While some sections delve into more complex theological concepts, the overall tone and writing style are accessible to readers of all faith backgrounds and levels of theological knowledge.

Q5: How can I apply the principles in this book to my own life?

A5: Begin by honestly examining your own beliefs and doubts. Seek out supportive relationships with other believers or trusted friends and family members. Engage in prayer and reflection, allowing yourself to wrestle with the complexities of faith and suffering without feeling the need for immediate answers. Remember, the journey of faith is often a life-long process of learning, growth, and spiritual discovery.

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