

“When pain and disappointment hit hard, even young hearts seek to understand why. Chris Morphew has responded to the age-old question in his excellent little book *Why Does God Let Bad Things Happen?* This small but powerful volume certainly would have helped me when I broke my neck at an early age—I was desperate to make sense of it all as I searched the Bible for answers. Thankfully, Morphew’s book addresses the tough topic about God’s goodness in a world of great suffering, and he does it in a winsome, easy-to-read way. Yes, it’s for young people, but I’m recommending it to people of all ages—and I commend this remarkable book to you!”

**JONI EARECKSON TADA**, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

“Suffering, sickness, betrayal, racism, war—all make us ask, ‘Why is our world so broken?’ Chris Morphew gives us gospel responses—not just to answer the questions in our heads but to address the issues in our hearts.”

**BARBARA REAOCH**, Former Director, Children’s Division, Bible Study Fellowship; Author, *A Jesus Christmas*

“Chris Morphew is like Tim Keller for teens. In this short book, he tackles some of today’s tough questions with Scripture, wisdom and clarity—and just the right amount of fun to keep young readers turning the page. I cannot wait to put this book into the hands of my three children.

**CHAMP THORNTON**, Pastor; Author, *The Radical Book for Kids* and *Why Do We Say Good Night?*

“Chris is the teacher you wish you had. He gets where you’re coming from and takes your questions—and you—seriously. If this is your question, or if you just want to know more about God and the meaning of life, this is the book for you.”

**DR NATASHA MOORE**, Research Fellow, Centre for Public Christianity

“What an excellent series—seriously excellent! I am certain Chris Morpew’s chatty style, clear explanations, relevant illustrations and personal insights will engage, inform and equip tweens as they work through some of the big questions they and their peers will be asking.”

**TAMAR POLLARD**, Director for Families, Children and Youth Ministry, Grace Community Church, Bedford

“Bad things happen all around us every day. Perhaps bad things are happening to you or someone you love right now, and you’re asking why a good God who is in control of all things doesn’t just stop all the badness. Well, I think you’ve found your next book to read right here. Reading a Chris Morpew book is like sitting with a friend with an open Bible between you, asking all the tough questions that are on your heart and getting solid, straight, honest answers that line up with God’s word—answers that bring you to the light and hope and truth of Jesus. I love friends like that!”

**COLIN BUCHANAN**, Singer/Songwriter

Why does  
**GOD**  
?  let  ?

**BAD THINGS  
HAPPEN?**

**CHRIS MORPHEW**

*Illustrated by Emma Randall*

the goodbook  
COMPANY

*For Alegra,  
who knows Jesus better than I do.  
See you on the other side.*

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# Chapter 1

? How COULD A ?  
? **GOOD GOD** ?  
:ALLOW: **SO MUCH**  
*suffering?*

**R**ight now, at this very moment, all around the world, things are going wrong.

Bad news is everywhere, and it comes in all shapes and sizes.

Some problems are pretty easy to solve. The littlest kids at the school where I work come to me with heaps of problems—but to be honest, most of them aren't that big a deal. I can usually fix them with a band-aid or sticking plaster, or by telling them to go get a drink of water or to pick someone different to play with.

But as we get older, our problems often get more complicated. If you came to me for advice about a crisis you were having with a friend, and my solution was “Go get a drink of water”, I'm guessing you wouldn't come back to me for advice any time soon.

Real life is too complicated for easy answers.

“Chris, can I tell you something?”

The girl’s eyes flashed around the room at the other kids, to make sure they wouldn’t overhear, and she sighed like her heart was breaking. “I don’t think my mum and dad are ever going to love each other again.”

She looked miserable, obviously. But more than that, she looked *exhausted*—like all that sadness had worn her out.

A few weeks later, it was official. Her dad had packed up and moved out.

When I asked how she was feeling about it all, she stared at the ground for a long time.

“At least I won’t have to listen to them yell at each other anymore.”



I first met Alegra when she was five years old, on her very first day of school.

Alegra was this fun, thoughtful, big-hearted kid—the kind of person who was always way more interested in paying attention to other people than trying to make them pay attention to her. And even though, as one of her teachers, I’d been told that Alegra was recovering from brain surgery and still had a bunch of medical stuff going on, you never would have guessed it by how enthusiastic she always was about school.

But then one day, Alegra didn't come back to school. And as the days went on, we got the news that she *wouldn't* be coming back to school.

Alegra's cancer was back, and this time it wasn't going away.

Not long after her sixth birthday, I found myself standing in a crowded church, surrounded by the hundreds of other friends and family who had gathered for Alegra's funeral.

As we prayed and hugged and cried and said goodbye, the same questions burned through my mind over and over again.

*God, how could you let this happen?*

*Don't you care?*



If you've picked up this book, maybe that's your question too.

Maybe you're going through something awful and heartbreaking yourself—or maybe someone you love is. Or maybe it's just that the constant stream of horrible stuff on the news is making you feel anxious and scared about the world, and you don't know how to make sense of it all.

Maybe you wonder where God is in the middle of all this.



When you think about it, all this hurt and brokenness in the world seems like a pretty big problem for God. Or at least, it seems like a pretty big problem for *us*, if we want to believe what God says about himself in the Bible: in particular, that he is all-loving and all-powerful.

Because if God truly is all-loving, then surely he'd want to stop all the suffering that's going on in the world, right?

And if he truly is all-powerful, then he could stop all that suffering whenever he wanted to.

But he hasn't. The world is still full of suffering.

So why doesn't God do something?

Is God not actually as strong as he says he is? Does he want to stop our suffering, but he's too weak to do it?

Or, worse, is he not actually as loving as he says he is? Is he powerful enough to stop our suffering but too cruel to do it?

Or is he both? Is God weak *and* cruel?

Or is all this suffering just proof that God's not really there at all?

Like I said, suffering seems like a pretty big problem for God.



Here's the thing, though: if your biggest question is *How could a loving, powerful God allow so much suffering?* there's actually a really easy answer.

The whole reason why people ask God for help in the first place—and blame him when he doesn't seem to give it to them—is that God is meant to be so much bigger and wiser and more loving and more powerful than we are.

But if that's true—if God really is that much bigger and wiser than us—then couldn't he have all kinds of good and loving reasons for letting our suffering continue, but which are just too big for us to see right now?

Just because *we* can't see a good reason for our suffering, that doesn't mean there isn't one.

If God is big enough to *blame* for our suffering, he must also be big enough to have great reasons for allowing our suffering to continue that we just don't understand yet.



So there you go.

There's your answer to the problem of suffering.

And I actually think it's a great, solid answer. But if you're anything like me, it probably doesn't feel very helpful. Because what I've just given you is a tidy little "head answer". But suffering isn't just a puzzle for our heads. It's a problem for our hearts.

When we're actually going through something awful, I don't think our biggest question is *How could a loving, powerful God allow so much suffering?*

When it feels like life is falling apart, the cry of our hearts is something bigger and deeper and way more personal: *God, how could you let this happen? Don't you care?*

If we're going to believe that God is as loving and powerful as he says he is, *that's* the question we really need to answer.

And that bigger, deeper, way more personal question is what this book is all about.