

Providence Baptist Church, Charleston, S.C.

A Prayer

We've begun a new year, but nothing seems right, God. Christmas was three weeks ago, but some decorations are still up. The past two weeks have felt more like Spring than Winter. The birds and flowers are excited about the warm weather, but it should be cold. It's January.

January means newness, resolutions, and starting again. We've turned the page on our calendars and we've made decisions to do new things in our lives. But God, our world is still cleaning up the mess from the end of 2004.

God, the Tsunami in Southeast Asia has literally rocked our world. We have never experienced that kind of death and destruction. We have never had instant access to reports and stories of both the victims and the survivors. We have never been able to watch the waves come in and crash on women and children and houses and hotels. We have never been so aware of the power of nature and scared of the destructive force of water.

We want answers, God. We want to know who to blame. We want to know if we caused this. We want to know if you caused this. We want to know if it will happen again. We want to know why it happened. We want to know why.

Why does nature raise its fury and so many are killed? Why are the children swept out to sea? Why are families ripped in two? Why are entire villages and cities destroyed? Why are the saints and the sinners equally punished? Why are some people blaming you? Why are some people blaming each other?

We have cried, "Why?!" since the beginning of creation. God, we want those questions answered because the answers will help us make sense of life. We want answers; we want them quickly; and we want to understand them.

We want to understand because we have so many questions. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why are my children fighting a cold for three weeks? Why does my boss make work miserable? Why can't my newborn sleep through the night? Why can't my spouse pay more attention to me? Why do I have to go to school? Why can't my parents understand me? Why?! Why?! Why?!

God, you never promised to give us answers. All you promised was to love us and be with us. Open our eyes and ears and hearts and minds so that we might understand you. Prepare us to see you in unexpected places. Prepare us to hear your voice. Prepare us to feel your loving arms around us. Prepare us to know you better. Work within us as we still seek the answers we want in a world that provides no easy answers.

Deep down, behind all the questions, you know we love you. We might not show it everyday and in everything we do; but we love you. You created us and you love us. You give us life and

breath and meaning and purpose. Forgive us for not returning that love. Forgive us for being selfish and thinking more about ourselves than about you. Help us to give love freely to you.

God, we have a lot of questions right now. None of them are easy and they are all important. Hear our questions. Hear our prayers. Help us as we struggle.

Amen.

David Woody
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