

Have you heard their question?

If there's a loving God, why does he allow suffering?

What might be behind the question?

Personal loss, friends in Gaza, abortion,...
Does God care? Or is he really powerless?

What is the BIG PICTURE around this question? Is there a truth about God - Father, Son or Spirit - which links to the question?

Loving God. Fallen world. Some suffering caused by people. Jesus lived as a man, suffered and died. Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died, even though he then raised him. God isn't immune, nor are Christians.

Is there a Bible story which links to the question?

The raising of Lazarus (but note Jesus wept). Prodigal Son - God rushing to a broken man. Jesus' scourging and death.

Bible verses/ideas which might shape my response?

Romans 5.1-8 Suffering leads to character and hope.
Father God even sees birds fall in Matthew 10.29-31.

How does the character of Christ shape my response?

Jesus wept, so this is not easy! But there's also Luke 13.1-5.
Be cautious using, but it's there.

Is there more information that would help?

"Did you have a particular type of suffering in mind?"

Is there common ground to be found?

We are not exempt from suffering but don't trump them.
Suffering stinks! Some suffering, like toothache is important.

What can't I be sure of here?

We don't have all the pieces of the jigsaw. What is the
origin of evil? Why some people and not others?

What hope can I point to (if any)?

God is with us. One day suffering will end.

A response in one sentence...

This is hard, but as a Christian we can be sure that God
understands, He's with us in our suffering and because of
Jesus' suffering in our place, we are redeemed and can be
sure of being with him for eternity in a place where there is
no suffering.