***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers
“…always being ready to make a defense…” I Peter 3:15***

**If God is good, why do bad things happen?**

**I. God’s Redemptive Use of Evil and Suffering in All Humanity**

A. Evil and suffering demonstrates that we live in a fallen world and that God does not remove the natural consequences of human sin. Genesis 3, Romans 5:12

B. Evil and suffering demonstrate our need for radical outside intervention. Isaiah 53, Romans 5:6-8, Galatians 1:3-5, Isaiah 9:6-7

* We need a Savior who will bear our sin. We need a Savior who will bear our pain. We need a Savior who will repair the injustice of this world and usher in justice in the next life.

C. Evil and suffering demonstrate the eternal reality of failing to repent from our sin and turn toward God. Luke 13:1-5

**II. God’s Redemptive Use of Evil and Suffering in the Lives of Believers \***

The follow list is not exhaustive, but represents some ways God redeems evil and suffering in our lives

A. To prove the authenticity of our faith, I Peter 1:6-7

B. To give us soft hearts that are ready to help others, II Corinthians 1:2-4

C. To produce in us an eternal reward, II Corinthians 4:16-18, Matthew 5:10-12

D. To teach us that certain decisions lead to painful consequences, Deuteronomy 30:15-20

E. To produce maturity in our faith, James 1:2-4

F. To draw us closer in fellowship with Christ, Philippians 3:8-10

G. To witness to the world the glory of the sufferings of Christ, Colossians 1:24-28

\* Always be cautious in attempting to determine why a particular moment of suffering has come into your life or in the life of another.

**Conclusion: God allows evil and suffering as a natural consequence to human rebellion. He then uses evil and suffering for His greater glory and our greater joy. Evil and suffering prove the seriousness of our sin and the risk of impending judgment. Evil and suffering demonstrate our need for a Savior. Evil and suffering provide many spiritual benefits in the current life and eternal benefits in eternity.**

***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers
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**If God is good, why do bad things happen?**

I received an email this week from an individual who has suffered greatly in her young life. When I think about suffering and my role as a pastor, I immediately think about her. And she was so encouraging to me in her email about how God was working in her life and the church she where she was involved and how she looks back at the way Matthew Road ministered to her with great thankfulness.

It was very encouraging and it reminded me that the individual most likely to use this argument against the existence of God and His relationship to humanity the way the Bible describes it, is not usually the person who has suffered.

I also remember an encounter with someone over facebook. I had gone to high school with him and his brother. While I was at college, his brother (one year behind me in high school) took his own life. They had both been involved in church and in some of the campus ministries at the high school. The younger brother, the one that took his own life, went to camp every summer with our church. Now, years later, this older brother is absolutely convinced that the God of the Bible is a false view of God and the universe. His theory goes, if the God of the Bible is true, He would have fixed my brother’s mental illness that led to my brother’s untimely death. He also went on to a Baptist college and met many ministry majors and determined that many of them viewed pastoring as a means to a career and not as a real calling. In other words, he was turned off by the hypocrites at school and his own suffering due to the death of his brother, as the means to walk away from God. He at one time confessed believe in Christ. He attended Saturday morning bible studies in my home on a regular basis.

I think of these two individuals and the very different way they responded to suffering.

This question has been asked in many different ways: Why do bad things happen to God people? Or If God is good why do bad things occur? Or if God loves me how could He let things happen to me? Or, as the title of one book says, “If God is good, why can’t I get my locker open?”

Of all the questions, this is the easiest to ask and the most difficult to answer

* To those who say, there can be no God OR if there is a God He is not good
* If there is no God, your suffering, the evil that has come into your life, is completely unredeemable
* If there is no God, your suffering is a figment of your imagination, you suffering is the invention of your evolved mind and your evolved mind is playing a Darwinian trick on you – your suffering is not real suffering but the random collection of atoms doing random things
* Only through God, a personal, all sufficient God, only through God can you trials and the evil and suffering of this world be turned into something redeemable, something that is in the immediate experience very bad, but in the long-term or eternal perspective can be used to produce something exceedingly good

What types of people do bad experiences produce?

* Wanderers—those who have become bitterly disillusioned by their pain and suffering.
* Wonderers—those who have become obsessed with the unanswerable questions.
* Worshippers—those who have become radically dependent on God and understand their need for Him.
* As we look at answers today, I am cautious because I know you will immediately began to look for YOUR Answer to YOUR struggle in these responses
* Though I will attempt to answer from the Bible some of the reasons bad things happen, I am not here today to tell you definitively the reason something has happened to you
* I don’t know the answer to that (at least not very often can I answer that)
* I do know that God is at work and that for those who trust in Him, He never wastes an experience
* So with those caveats lets look at some of the reasons the Bible gives for the occurrence of bad things in our life

**I. God’s Redemptive Use of Evil and Suffering in All Humanity**

A. Evil and suffering demonstrates that we live in a fallen world and that God does not remove the natural consequences of human sin. Genesis 3, Romans 5:12

* **Read Romans 5:12 (Slide 2)**

B. Evil and suffering demonstrate our need for radical outside intervention. Isaiah 53, Romans 5:6-8, Galatians 1:3-5, Isaiah 9:6-7

* We need a Savior who will bear our sin
* **Read Isaiah 53:4-5 (Slide 3)**
* We need a Savior who will bear our pain
* We need a Savior who will repair the injustice of this world and usher in justice in the next life
* **Read Isaiah 9:6-7 (Slide 4)**

C. Evil and suffering demonstrate the eternal reality of failing to repent from our sin and turn toward God. Luke 13:1-5

* **Read Luke 13:1-3 (Slide 5-6)**
* God does not rejoice over the condemnation of the wicked and He does not honor others who spend their time speculating about His judgment as such
* **Read Ezekiel 18:23 (Slide 7)**
* Nagaland pastor who spoke on one of the evenings during the conference, told a story of when he was here in America as a student in the 1990s
* He was involved in prison ministry in the State of Washington
* Told how he was going from cell to cell in the maximum security unit talking with each prisoner, many of them on death row
* Most of them denied they had committed the crime or they were belligerent
* He described coming to the last cell on the cell block and the man huddled in the corner of his cell
* “I am to be hanged soon for the crimes I have committed. I am an evil man and there is no redemption for me.”
* This pastor described how he shared Christ with the man and the man kept saying, “there is no way for Christ to save me for the things I have done.”
* I prayed to receive Christ that day
* A few days later this pastor said he returned to visit the man ”
* I was so skeptical about this and came back to the states with this event in my mind
* I researched the state of Washington executions and found that in 1993 the hung a man for his offenses which he freely admitted he had committed
* And I found this last statement by this man just before his execution...
* *I was once asked by somebody, I don't remember who, if there was any way* [*someone*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_offender) *like me could be stopped. I said, `No.' I was wrong. I was wrong when I said there was no hope, no peace. There is hope. There is peace. I found both in the Lord,* [*Jesus Christ*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ)*. Look to the Lord, and you will find peace.*

**II. God’s Redemptive Use of Evil and Suffering in the Lives of Believers \***

The follow list is not exhaustive, but represents some ways God redeems evil and suffering in our lives

A. To prove the authenticity of our faith, I Peter 1:6-7

* **Read I Peter 1:6-7 (Slide 8)**

B. To give us soft hearts that are ready to help others, II Corinthians 1:2-4

* **Read II Corinthians 1:2-4 (Slide 9)**

C. To produce in us an eternal reward, II Corinthians 4:16-18, Matthew 5:10-12

* **Read II Corinthians 4:16-18 (Slide 10)**

D. To teach us that certain decisions lead to painful consequences, Deuteronomy 30:15-20

* **Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20 (Slide 11)**

E. To produce maturity in our faith, James 1:2-4

* **Read James 1:2-4 (Slide 12)**

F. To draw us closer in fellowship with Christ, Philippians 3:8-10

* **Philippians 3:8-10 (Slide 13)**

G. To witness to the world the glory of the sufferings of Christ, Colossians 1:24-28

* **Read Colossians 1:24-28 (Slide 14)**

\* Always be cautious in attempting to determine why a particular moment of suffering has come into your life or in the life of another.

* **Conclusion: God allows evil and suffering as a natural consequence to human rebellion. He then uses evil and suffering for His greater glory and our greater joy. Evil and suffering prove the seriousness of our sin and the risk of impending judgment. Evil and suffering demonstrate our need for a Savior. Evil and suffering provide many spiritual benefits in the current life and eternal benefits in eternity.**