

IN GOOD FAITH: BASIC CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

God, What Have You Done for Me Lately?

THEME: Many people who admit that believing in God “makes sense” to them nevertheless wind up as unbelievers. They reject Christianity. They sometime express a harsh attitude toward the God Question. The reason they typically give is this: *There is too much pain, suffering, and evil in the world God is supposed to have created.* In other words, how can there be a God when there is so much wrong with the world he is supposed to have created?

ICE BREAKER

1. Next weekend will be a special one for Grace Chapel, with the visit of our potential new Senior Minister. The selection process has been grounded in and sustained by prayer. Begin your time together with prayer for the process to close on a high and positive note.
2. In your prayer, be sure to thank God for the Shepherds’ willingness to empower this process and for the diligent work done by the Search Committee.
3. Pray for God to bless the upcoming weekend to reveal his purpose and blessing for the future of Grace Chapel.

THINK

1. The issue summarized in the “Theme” paragraph above is called the *problem of evil*. Do you know the term? How would you summarize it in your own words?
2. Do you recall a situation when some form of the *problem of evil* was posed to you? The event(s) that occasioned it?
3. How did you respond? As you think back on it now, are you satisfied with the response you made?

EXAMINE

Read [Job 1](#) to answer the following questions:

1. The well-known story of Job is an OT response to the idea that *one’s life circumstances reveal his or her true character* (i.e., someone who is suffering a terrible fate is being punished by God).
2. What does this chapter tell you about the *source* of the reversals, losses, bereavements, and illnesses of Job?
3. Why did God *allow* Satan to bring these terrible things into Job’s life? Was there any “limit” to what would be allowed to happen? (See 1 Cor 10:13)
4. As the story of Job unfolds, what unkind assumption did his friends make about his circumstances? See Job 8:1-6.
5. Yes, suffering is *sometimes* the result of one’s personal sin. But always? Are you ever tempted to think as Job’s “friends” did?
6. What does the Job story teach us about compassion?

Read [Matthew 13:24-30](#) as background for the following questions:

1. After reading this parable, can you see any parallels between its storyline and the Book of Job? Explain.
2. Why were the farmer's workers shocked at what they saw happening in his field of well-prepared and good soil?
3. What was his explanation? Who is represented by this unnamed "enemy"?
4. *When* and *how* are things ultimately put right in this story? What events do these anticipate in the unfolding story of Scripture?
5. Do you find any insights in this parable that help you with the problem of evil?

THIS WEEK: Pain and suffering, family and financial stress, wars and criminal activity – these things are hardly “abstract elements to the problem of evil.” They are terrible life circumstances people face, and compassionate hearts break for persons going through hard times. Is anyone in your small group facing a special difficulty right now? How can your group rally to that person (or family) to help? Will you allow this week's study to help you be more prepared to show compassion to hurting people you may encounter in the days ahead?