

Why
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*Making Sense of Trials &
Tribulations in Your Life*

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Why Bad Things Happen to God's People

Making Sense of Trials & Tribulations in Your Life

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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

Why do tragedies happen to God's people, especially those who have lived an exemplary life of faith and service? If God is good, why is there so much misery, suffering, persecution, and injustice in the world? These are questions that, if you and I are honest, have troubled each of us at one time or another. Simplistic answers such as, "We live in a fallen world," "It is God's curse on sinful humanity," "It is the devil's fault," or, "It is God's permissive will," may contain elements of truth. But they do not always settle the deepest questions of our hearts.

In my experience, there are two chief reasons why we go through very difficult times—and both of them are for our ultimate good. The first is a condition we can do something about—the sin of

independence. The second is something we have no control over—God's initiation of hardship out of His desire to raise us up to a new level of intimacy with Himself. This second reason is at the very core of the story of Job.

This book is an attempt to explore, though not necessarily answer, some of these questions. We will address the issue in two parts as mentioned above. Initially, we will explore the common yet sinful problem of seeking independence from God. From that platform, we will turn our attention to a brief study of the Book of Job. My hope is that the fresh perspectives from this study will open your heart and mind to the unexpected ways God chooses to deal with us.

Right from the beginning, I want to say very emphatically that I cannot give you all the answers. Even when you are finished reading this book, you will have some questions for which you have not found an answer. This should not surprise you—for none of us will ever fully understand God and His ways. If we could, He would not be God.

Two Helpful Verses

Two Scriptures shed light on this issue of unanswered questions. In Romans 11:33, Paul

says of God:

*How unsearchable are His judgments
and His ways past finding out!*

If you try to search the judgments of God, you will never reach the bottom. Similarly, if you try to know all the ways of God, you will discover that they are past finding out. Recognizing this reality will help you immeasurably, just by coming to the awareness that events and circumstances will happen in your life that you may never understand and for which you may never know the reason.

The second Scripture, which is very familiar to most of us, is Proverbs 3:5:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and
lean not on your own understanding.*

Some years ago my wife, Ruth, was having a problem with her neck. In the process of seeking the Lord about it, He showed her from this verse in Proverbs that she was actually disobeying Scripture. Instead of trusting the Lord, she was trying to understand what was going on with her neck and what she should do about it. Have

you ever done that? I certainly have, and yet this tendency on our part is actually contrary to Scripture.

The Scripture says we are to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not to lean on our own understanding. It is not wrong to want to understand. But our understanding must be secondary to trusting in the Lord.

Thus, when we approach some of the difficult questions of life, we must begin with this basic understanding—for the most part, God and His ways are beyond our finding out. Therefore, trust, not understanding, is the only secure basis of our walk with the Lord.

Learning from the Word

I would suggest at this point that if you have never read the entire Book of Job, you might want to familiarize yourself with it. I realize Job is not high on many Christians' reading list. But I believe in many ways it is one of the more important books in the Bible. Reading the Book of Job before you start Part 2 of this book will stand you in good stead and will help to give you a much clearer context for the teaching shared in that section.

When I face my own problems or challenges of any kind, I like to read and meditate on those characters in the Bible who have walked a similar path. I find it helpful to ask myself questions like: What was their response to this challenge? Was it ultimately a good response? Can I learn from their mistakes? Was there a sin in their life that God is seeking to highlight in mine? If I follow the right path, what will I experience at the end?

A Total Book

If you are the sort of Christian who sticks to the familiar passages in the Bible or steers away from subjects you feel you don't understand, let me remind you that the Bible says:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete [or perfect], thoroughly equipped for every good work

2 Timothy 3:16-17

If you only read half the Bible, you are never going to be a complete believer. Why? Because