

April 16, 2023

I Got Questions: Week 1

A common way many churches start their service is by repeating a Faith chant...

I say "God is good," you say, "All the time,"
I say, "All the time," you say, "God is good."

But I have a Question that will drive our entire series: Have you ever DOUBTED that?

I know as a Christian, we're not supposed to ever doubt. We should always have faith in the goodness of God... but I wonder if any of you, like me, have ever doubted a moment when you're experiencing something that didn't seem fair, that didn't seem right, and you thought, "God doesn't really feel good right now."

It might have been when you asked the question:

- Why, God, won't you take away these migraines?" Or...
- Why am I still battling with depression?" Or..
- "God, why won't you take this temptation away from me?"

Or if it's not those issues, when you look at the global issues around the world.

If you've ever questioned the goodness of God, if you've ever asked yourself, Why did God let this happen, this series is for you.

The title of today's message is "Why Did God Let It Happen?".

300 years before the birth of Jesus, there was a Greek philosopher named Epicurus who came to these conclusions about the nature of God concerning good and evil. He had two statements and a question.

- 1.) If God is not able to prevent evil, "if he can't stop bad things from happening, "then God must not be all-powerful."
- 2.) If God's not willing to prevent evil, "then he must not be all good."

That led him to ask this question: "If God is both willing and able to prevent evil, then why does evil exist?" Why did God let it happen?

Today as we look at scripture, you're going to see that evil and suffering is actually not contrary to the story of the Bible.

What we want to work through is that Christianity DOES make sense of, gives meaning to, and offers a solution for the evil and suffering that we experience.

Here's a Scriptural foundation...

A.) Jeremiah the prophet, he's known as "the weeping prophet," and he's wailing out to God in grief because of the unrepentance of the people. "God, why won't they turn to you?"

B.) If you look at David, a guy after God's own heart cries out to God, "Are you listening, God? "Do you even care? "Why don't you come to my defense when I'm in trouble?"

C.) John the Baptist, the guy whose sole purpose was to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord is wrongly arrested, awaits potential execution. When Jesus could have come and delivered him, instead, Jesus did not, and John was beheaded. And surely, he sat in that prison cell going, "Where in the world are you, God?"

The Psalm of Asaph- He wrote Psalm 72- He was very close to God, but yet he said, "I was starting to stumble."

Psalm 73:11 (NIV)

They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?"

I want to tell you upfront, I'm not going to have clear, clean-cut answers to ALL your questions or situations, but I will build a foundation that will help us to stand during difficult times in life!

I.) Here's the Question of all Questions

If God is a good God, if God is loving, then WHY would he allow suffering?

Let me say this: if love is a choice, then suffering is a possibility.

What does Scripture teach us? FREE WILL! Free will is simply the ability to choose.

A.) Why did God give us Free Will?

Because that is the only way that love is possible.

The challenge/or problem is this: In order for us to have the freedom to choose love, we also get the freedom to choose evil. And when we choose evil, we choose what the Bible calls Sin. And what does Sin do? Unfortunately, Sin leads to Pain and Suffering. So, for God to remove evil and suffering, what He has to do is either remove our freedom to choose, OR He has to remove us.

II.) The Underlying Question

What if there is no God? If there is no God, who decides what's right and what's wrong?

Question: How many of you have a brother or a sister? How many of you love your brother and sister? How many of you fought with your brother and sister?

Here is the question: What if there were no parents, and there were no rules? Then who would there be to say if there was right or wrong?

In other words, there has to be an Authority in order to have a Standard.

Some have said: If you Suffer, that means God doesn't love you.

But suffering isn't evidence of the lack of love.

The presence of pain isn't a lack of love. In fact what we realize is, the presence of real pain is the evidence of real love.

III.) The TRUTH about our QUESTIONS

Why do bad things happen to good people?

The Truth is, whenever we ask that, we're really not talking about others, we're talking about ourselves! That's what we really want to know.

The TRUTH is... We're not good people. There's only one who ever lived that is truly good: Jesus.

Questions

- Why are you going through what you're going through?
- Why doesn't God do what He could do in your situation?
- Why did someone do what they did to you when God could have stopped it?

And the specific answer is, I don't know. But the full answer is, it's not that God doesn't love you, or God wants you to suffer, because scripture is ridiculously clear when it comes to the love God has over you, and sending us Jesus.

Maybe our Why is entwined with because God knows something better is/was coming.

The Bible doesn't say you won't have a hard time. The Bible doesn't say you'll never hurt. The Bible doesn't say you won't go through something unfair.

But it also says... one day we'll rise.

Those who use our free will, our choice, to follow Jesus, to know Jesus, to serve Jesus, to love Jesus, they will meet him in eternal glory, and one day, you will suffer no more!

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS WEEK 1

- 1.) How often do we think about/struggle with our doubts? Do we have difficulty moving past them?
- 2.) What are your biggest doubts? Why? Does it help to learn that God sent His son for YOU?
- 3.) What did you learn about free will?
- 4.) Has anything good come out of a painful experience you've had?
- 5.) Does it help to know one day, "something better is coming?"