

## CAN I ASK THAT? | FOR THE WEEK OF APRIL 21 | EASTER 4

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "IS GOD GOOD?"

### OPENING PRAYER

Most gracious Father, we believe your ways are higher than our ways and your thoughts than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). Nevertheless, we still ask the question "Are you good?" when darkness surrounds us. Instead, may we fix our eyes on Jesus, who endured the cross to perfect our faith (Hebrews 12:2). And through that faith, may we acknowledge that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture. (Psalm 100:3) It is in the saving name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

### CONNECTING QUESTION

In what situations have you asked the question: Is God good?

### SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God's Word: Psalm 23; John 10:11-18

### WATCH VIDEO

Video Presenter: Nick Stevens

### EXPLORE THE TEXT

*Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.*

1. The word 'good' in Greek (kalos) can also mean beautiful, virtuous, excellent, genuine, better. How do you define the word 'good'? Is it a word you use to describe God? Explain.
2. What do you learn about God's goodness from these verses: Psalm 23:6; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Romans 8:28? How might God's definition of good and your definition of good differ?
3. In Psalm 23 David described the Lord as a shepherd. From his own experience, he knew that sheep were completely dependent on the shepherd for provision, guidance, and protection. Read the Psalm in three parts. In verses 1-3, how does the Lord lead; in verse 4, how is the Lord present; and in verses 5-6, how does the Lord provide? Did you discover any new insights after reading the familiar Psalm this way?
4. If someone asked you the question, "If God is good, why does he let bad things happen?", what would your answer be?

5. "Therefore, though Christianity does not provide the reason for each experience of pain, it provides deep resources for actually facing suffering with hope and courage rather than bitterness and despair." (Timothy Keller) Life can be difficult for countless reasons. Did you ever doubt the Father's love, his plans? In retrospect, how did that time impact your faith? If you are willing, share your story.
  
6. "This is true faith, a living confidence in the goodness of God." (Martin Luther) Read Matthew 8:23-27, Philippians 4:19, and James 1:17-18. If you considered God's goodness continually, would you fret about your circumstances? Would you be anxious over not-yet-answered prayers? (Ruth Chou Simons, "Pilgrim") How does resting in the character of God – his perfect goodness – bring you peace?

### **ANSWER THE QUESTION**

When anyone doubts the goodness of God, one must only return to the cross and the empty tomb. "The ultimate proof of providence is the death of Christ on the cross. No deed was more evil. No other day was so dark. Yet God not only knew of the crucifixion; he ordained it. Everyone thought the life of Jesus was over – but God. His Son was dead and buried, but God raised him from the dead." (Max Lucado, "You Can Count on God")

"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of the lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip." (Acts 2:22-24 NLT)

In meditation and prayer, take time this week to remember the "but God" moments in your life, when his goodness enveloped you in his gracious love, healed you, or brought you out of a difficult place. And think about others who have experienced his goodness too. If you don't see his goodness right now, rest in David's words, "But [God] I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me." (Psalm 13:5-6)

### **SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Genesis 50:18-21; Psalm 69:16; Hebrews 12:7-10; 2 Peter 1:3-4

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

Jesus, you said you were the Good Shepherd. Therefore, we choose to believe you are, even in the painful, harrowing, seemingly endless moments when we do not see, recognize, or experience your goodness. Through the power of your Spirit, may we weather these storms by drawing nearer to you in prayer, through your Word, and in the community that calls you Savior and Friend. May we trust in your faithfulness and submit to the details of your perfect plans for the lives of those who seek you in the security of your flock. In your name we pray. Amen.

*Our Father...*

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