

TALK IT OVER

Key Scriptures

from the Message:

Hebrews 11:6
Hebrews 4:16
Hebrews 3:12-15
Genesis 1:1
John 1:1-5
Exodus 3:14
John 14:9
John 14:5-11
Hebrews 1:2-3
Psalm 8:3-4
Romans 3:23
Romans 3:9-12
Psalm 14:1-3
Ecclesiastes 7:20
Romans 3:20
Ephesians 2:1-10
Proverbs 16:33
James 1:13-15
Romans 9:10-23
Acts 17:29-30
Acts 17:24-28

Start **reading**.

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- During your lifetime, did you ever have an authority figure who made you feel comfortable coming to them with your questions and doubts? Share memories with your group.

Start **thinking and sharing**. Ask a question to get your group thinking, to create openness.

- How do the opening words of Genesis 1:1, John 1:1, and Exodus 3:14 help you address the questions, "Who is God?" and "Where did he come from?"
- Read Exodus 3:14 again and John 8:58. Discuss the quote, "But God alone can say "I AM" without saying anything more."
- Read and discuss Ephesians 2:1-3. Discuss the article, "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?" on the back of this sheet.
- Read and discuss Psalm 139:1-4 and Romans 11:33-36. We can go back and forth discussing how do free will and predestination co-exist, but ultimately it comes down to trusting God. Read and discuss the following passage/verses from "How does God's sovereignty work together with free will? *"First, we are to trust in the Lord, knowing that He is in control (Proverbs 3:5-6). God's sovereignty is supposed to be a comfort to us, not an issue to be concerned about or debate over. Second, we are to live our lives making wise decisions in accordance with God's Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5). There will be no excuses before God for why we chose to disobey Him. We will have no one to blame but ourselves for our sin. Last but not least, we are to worship the Lord, praising Him that He is so wonderful, infinite, powerful, full of grace and mercy—and sovereign."*

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Think of times of great difficulty or crisis in your life or in the life of someone you love. How did (or is) God use those times in your life or the lives of those around you? Share stories to encourage one another. Remind yourself of these experiences the next time bad things happen to good people.
- Challenge each other to start going to God by journaling and praying about any doubts or questions. Encourage each other to remember to listen to His answers through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and other Christians.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray that God will help you focus on Him, His power, His presence, and to trust Him in every situation. Remember Isaiah 49:23 *"Those who hope in me will not be disappointed"* and Joshua 1:9 *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."* AMEN!

Start **digging**. For further study.

- For further study on your own or with your group, check out "Why does God allow good things to happen to bad people?" www.gotquestions.org/good-things-bad-people.html.

Question: "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?"

Answer: We live in a world of pain and suffering. There is no one who is not affected by the harsh realities of life, and the question "why do bad things happen to good people?" is one of the most difficult questions in all of theology. God is sovereign, so all that happens must have at least been allowed by Him, if not directly caused by Him. At the outset, we must acknowledge that human beings, who are not eternal, infinite, or omniscient, cannot expect to fully understand God's purposes and ways.

The book of Job deals with the issue of why God allows bad things to happen to good people. Job was a righteous man (Job 1:1), yet he suffered in ways that are almost beyond belief. God allowed Satan to do everything he wanted to Job except kill him, and Satan did his worst. What was Job's reaction? "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15). "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21). Job did not understand why God had allowed the things He did, but he knew God was good and therefore continued to trust in Him. Ultimately, that should be our reaction as well.

Why do bad things happen to good people? As hard as it is to acknowledge, we must remember that there are no "good" people, in the absolute sense of the word. All of us are tainted by and infected with sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). As Jesus said, "No one is good—except God alone" (Luke 18:19). All of us feel the effects of sin in one way or another. Sometimes it's our own personal sin; other times, it's the sins of others. We live in a fallen world, and we experience the effects of the fall. One of those effects is injustice and seemingly senseless suffering.

When wondering why God would allow bad thing to happen to good people, it's also good to consider these four things about the bad things that happen:

- 1) Bad things may happen to good people in this world, *but this world is not the end*. Christians have an eternal perspective: "We do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16–18). We will have a reward some day, and it will be glorious.
- 2) Bad things happen to good people, *but God uses those bad things for an ultimate, lasting good*. "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). When Joseph, innocent of wrongdoing, finally came through his horrific sufferings, he was able to see God's good plan in it all (see Genesis 50:19–21).
- 3) Bad things happen to good people, *but those bad things equip believers for deeper ministry*. "Praise be to . . . the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3–5). Those with battle scars can better help those going through the battles.
- 4) Bad things happen to good people, *and the worst things happened to the best Person*. Jesus was the only truly Righteous One, yet He suffered more than we can imagine. We follow in His footsteps: "If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:20–23). Jesus is no stranger to our pain.

Romans 5:8 declares, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Despite the sinful nature of the people of this world, God still loves us. Jesus loved us enough to die to take the penalty for our sins (Romans 6:23). If we receive Jesus Christ as Savior (John 3:16; Romans 10:9), we will be forgiven and promised an eternal home in heaven (Romans 8:1).

God allows things to happen for a reason. Whether or not we understand His reasons, we must remember that God is good, just, loving, and merciful (Psalm 135:3). Often, bad things happen to us that we simply cannot understand. Instead of doubting God's goodness, our reaction should be to trust Him. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5–6). We walk by faith, not by sight.