

Accepting Adversity and Tragedy

Lesson 1 Class Goals and Purpose

Overall Goal

Most of us would agree profound questions deserve profound answers. Yet often we expect others to be satisfied with short pat answers to their deeply troubled questions about the tragedies and problems of the world. The Scriptures are a gift from God to mankind, and they provide an opportunity to learn things about the nature of the world that would otherwise lie beyond human understanding. We should search them carefully and look to them for guidance whenever we are confronted with the most difficult and puzzling circumstances of life.

This class will deal with the tragedies and adversities of life and attempt to give more than superficial answers to the questions they provoke. The ultimate goal is to find Biblical, and thus God-given, answers wherever they are provided. But at the beginning, we must acknowledge full or satisfactory answers may not exist to all of the questions we pose. While it is perfectly natural to have questions, and clearly God's desire is for us to look to his word for answers, it is equally important to be able to accept those circumstances where no answer is provided.

The Bible is full of examples of hard questions going unanswered, the best known, perhaps, being those of Job. Job was befallen with personal tragedies beyond what any of us have ever faced, and he questioned God, seeking answers. He received none, and when God did speak to him, he simply reminded Job of his might and power (Job 38:1 ff).

Questions

With those principles in mind, we turn to a list of questions that are frequently asked when tragedies and adversities are faced:

1. Why is there suffering in the world?
2. Why did God create humans but allow them to suffer and eventually die?
3. Why must I grow old?
4. Why are some individuals so cruel and why does God allow it?
5. Why are some people blessed with material goods and others have nearly nothing? And why is it often true the wrong people are the ones who are either blessed or left without?
6. Why did God allow (fill-in the natural disaster) to happen?
7. Why was (name of loved one) stricken with (fill-in disease or accident)?
8. Why are there wars and will they ever stop?
9. Why was my prayer for (a tragedy to stop or not happen) not answered?
10. What should I say to someone in grief or pain?
11. How do I deal with the grief over a loved one's lost soul?
12. Does God providentially prevent some deaths or illnesses? If so, why some and not others?

13. Does God determine the timing of death and illness, or does He allow some things to occur naturally?

Individuals in the Bible asked similar tough questions about life, about God, and about adversity. Read the following and note their questions:

- Job 23:1-7
- Habakkuk 1:2-4, 13
- Judges 6:13
- Ecclesiastes 1:3, 13
- Psalms 10:1
- Psalms 74:1, 10-11
- John 9:1-2
- Psalms 8:3-4

One tendency we will note throughout the class: the broader and more generic the question, the greater the likelihood that there is a Bible answer. For example, the Bible really does explain why there is death and disease in the world. But, the more personal and detailed the question (e.g. why do I have cancer?) the less likely there will be a fully satisfactory answer. Of course, these are the questions we most intensely want answered.

Overview of the Class

Our approach in this class will be as follows:

Lessons	Date	Contents
Lesson 1	Sunday, June 14	Class Goals and Purpose
<i>Lessons 2 - 3</i>		<i>Establishing a Firm Foundation</i>
Lesson 2	Wed., June 17	Dangers to Our Faith – A Study of Psalms 73
Lesson 3	Sunday, June 21	Listening to God
<i>Lessons 4 - 6</i>		<i>Dealing with Large Scale Tragedies</i>
Lesson 4	Wed., June 24	Basic Considerations
Lesson 5	Sunday, June 28	Answers in a Fallen World
Lesson 6	Wed., July 1	Further Answers in a Fallen World
<i>Lessons 7 - 8</i>		<i>Dealing with Tragedies Among Loved Ones</i>
Lesson 7	Sunday, July 5	Biblical Examples and Related Spiritual Dangers
Lesson 8	Wed., July 8	Paradox of Pain and Accepting God's Answers
<i>Lessons 9 - 10</i>		<i>Personal Suffering and Trials</i>
Lesson 9	Sunday, July 12	Biblical Examples, Value of Trials
Lesson 10	Wed., July 15	Accepting God's Plan
<i>Lessons 11 - 13</i>		<i>Roles of Prayer and Hope</i>
Lesson 11	Sunday, July 19	When and How to Pray
Lesson 12	Wed., July 22	Accepting No as an Answer
Lesson 13	Sunday, July 26	Hope, the Ultimate Answer