

Is God Punishing Me?

So often when we experience times of suffering we long to know why and seek biblical explanations. Well-meaning individuals offer the best explanations they can form from their understanding of scripture. But just because an explanation is offered, does that mean it's always right in every circumstance? As Job's friends enter into his suffering, they too try to explain why bad things happen to good people. In their explanations, we recognize many of the same rationalizations and questions we have as we try to make sense of undeserved suffering.

AWARENESS Before listening reflect on what you already know or understand about topics we'll cover in the episode.

- Why do you think bad things happen to good people?
- What are some explanations you've heard from other Christians about why bad things happen?



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE: [Is God Punishing Me?](#)

READ [Job 4-8](#)

REFLECTION After listening, consider the following questions:

- In segment 1, host Dave Bast recalls the words of a seminary graduation speaker who said, "I urge you to move toward the pain in peoples' lives; move toward the pain in the world." Why do you think it is hard for us to move toward pain? Should our faith make a difference in our reaction to suffering in our world—why or why not?
- In segment 2, Scott describes Job's friends as "orthodox, and wrong." Warren W. Wiersbe reflects on the arguments made by Job's friends in his commentary *Be Patient: Waiting on God in Difficult Times* and makes a keen remark that helps us better understand why Job's friends can speak biblical truth and yet be so wrong. "The right words, spoken at the right time, and with the right motive, can make a tremendous difference in the lives of others. Your words can nourish those who are weak and encourage those who are defeated. But your words can also hurt those who are broken and only add to their burdens, so be careful what you say and how you say it" (p. 36). Reflect on this statement and consider: what did Job's friends miss as they tried to comfort him? What word or phrase might be a valuable reminder to you as you think about offering comfort to someone going through a difficult time?
- Later in segment 2, Scott says, "I remember my colleague, John Cooper, who taught apologetics and philosophical theology at Calvin Seminary for many years, always pointing out to people the Bible teaches us that the punishment for our sins was laid on Jesus. God does not punish us for our sin anymore, so that is something we need to point out to ourselves and to each other." Is this difficult or easy to remember when we're in the midst of suffering? Why do you think that is? What can we do to remind ourselves of this truth?

- What does it mean to draw near or turn to the Lord when we experience suffering? Which spiritual practices help you move toward God in the midst of your suffering?

RELATED PASSAGES for further study

[Psalm 145:17-20](#), [Proverbs 3:11-12](#), [Hebrews 12:5-6](#), [Galatians 6:7-8](#), [Luke 13:1-5](#), [John 9:1-5](#)

CONCLUSION

In her book *Canyon Road: A Book of Prayer*, Kari Kristina Reeves writes, “We are most desperate for illumination when circumstances are darkest. When pain overwhelms us, we may not have the ability or strength to pray a long prayer...Candle prayers that repeat God’s word back to him are a sure resting place for us when we do not know what else to say to God...When you need God, but you don’t know what to say, reach out through your sighs and short prayers to strike a flame against the darkness that you face. God gives us the promise in Scripture that whenever we call upon him, he will hear us, as we take him at his word” (p. 226).

In the pages that follow she offers verses like [Psalm 34:18](#), [Psalm 91:1](#), [Isaiah 40:31](#), and [Hebrews 11:1](#) as candle prayers. Read those passages and consider why they function well as prayers during our times of suffering. Then think about additional verses that would be meaningful candle prayers and make a list for your own reference to keep in your Bible for times when you experience suffering or desire to comfort someone during a time of suffering.

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