



SERMON NOTES

ASKING FOR A FRIEND

Week 2 (January 31):
“Why Does God
Allow Evil if He is
Really in Control?”

*Genesis 1:28, 2:15-17; Joshua 1:9; Isaiah
41:10; Psalm 55:22; Romans 8:18*

I. Misguided Assumptions

- A. If I believe in God and try and be a good person, it means nothing _____ will happen to me.
- B. Everything happens for a _____.

II. Foundational Ideas

- A. God is the creator of all things and God places _____ in charge of the earth.
- B. To be human is to have the ability to _____ right from wrong.
- C. Human beings tend to _____ from God's will.

III. God's Providence and Human Suffering

- A. Forces from natural disasters can cause death and devastation, but the forces themselves are _____ to life on our planet.
- B. Suffering can be caused by the _____ of freedom by ourselves or others.
- C. Our _____ are not indestructible; they are susceptible to certain common problems.

IV. God's Response / Our Response

- A. God promises to never _____ us or forsake us.
- B. God works through _____ to help those in need.
- C. God forces evil and suffering to accomplish _____ purpose.
- D. We are to place our sorrows and _____ in God's hands.

Things I Would Like to Remember About This Message

ASBURY DAILY STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Many people are not followers of Christ because of the problem of suffering, the problem of evil and how you reconcile that with the scriptures that proclaim a God of love and mercy. I think we all wrestle with this question from time to time; even if you are a person of faith. So how do we reconcile an all-powerful God with the existence of evil and suffering. Is it even possible?

Monday: Job 1:20-22, 42:1-8

In chapter 42, Job saw that he needed more than the “why” answers he asked God for (which never came). God said Job’s friends’ answers had “not spoken rightly” (Job 42:7). Have well-meaning friends ever given glib explanations of your suffering? How can God’s caring presence with you help more than any explanation?

Tuesday: John 16:33-17:11, 14-17

Like Job’s friends, many in Jesus’ day and ours feel (maybe subconsciously) that “being good” is a kind of “suffering insurance.” Jesus didn’t see it that way. How do you react to his direct words: “in this world you will have trouble”? How can you live into the flip side of Jesus’ words—to “take heart” because he’s overcome the world?

Wednesday: Romans 8:18-28

“Paul is not expressing a...superficial optimism that everything tends to everybody’s good in the end” (Stott, *The Message of Romans*). Verse 28 does not say (as some think) that “everything” is good, but that God works for our good in everything. When in your life has God’s power brought good out of what was clearly a bad thing?

Thursday: 1 John 4:4-10, 5:1-4

On one hand, John’s churches faced teachers who used Greek philosophy to deny that Jesus was God. On the other hand, brutal Roman persecution threatened to imprison or kill anyone who didn’t recognize Caesar as “Lord.” In that hostile world, the only “weapons” Christians had were trust in Christ and love for each other. That was enough, John said—it would defeat the world. How does your faith in Christ help you to overcome evil in our world?

Friday: Genesis 3:8-15

Evil entered the world when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Evil brought the human race terrible problems, but this was not a story of despair. The Hebrew storytellers were confident that evil would be defeated in the end. God firmly told the snake that, though he would strike humanity’s heels, Eve’s offspring (particularly Jesus, as it turned out) would strike (or crush) his head. How does this story give you hope?

MOVING FORWARD

Our disappointment with God in the face of suffering and injustice typically stems from our assumptions about how God is supposed to work in our world. God never promised that we would never struggle and suffer in this life. But God does promise to never leave you or forsake you, He works through others to help people in need, and he can bring beauty from ashes. Our job is to trust Him and place our sorrows and suffering in his hands.

*Answers to the sermon notes: IA) bad, B) reason. IIA) humanity, B) choose, C) stray
IIIA) essential, B) misuse, C) bodies. IVA) leave, B) people, C) His, D) suffering*