

“I Want to Believe But...Heartless God”
Psalm 103:10-12, 1 Peter 6-7, Psalm 46:1 (NIV)
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<https://open.life.church/items/155914-promo-video-mp4>

I want to believe, but God doesn't seem to care. Why would a good God allow tragedies and bad things to happen?

We are in the third of our 4-part series. Special thanks to Pastor Craig Groeschel and life.church for their notes.

How can we believe in a God who doesn't seem to answer our prayers to keep us safe from tragedy? Why should we believe that God?

School shootings, terrorist attacks, hurricane devastation, racist shootings, innocents being killed by drunkenness, children being abused, elder abuse, sexual harassment and abuse, discrimination.

Why does God allow that to happen? He must be a heartless God. It doesn't seem fair. Even in the simple things---prayers for God to do something, you know He can...why doesn't He?

You try to live a good life, not just a good life, but a Christian life and yet bad things happen. C'mon God, give me a break!!!! God are you there? Are you good? I want to believe, but you don't seem to care. I want to believe, but you seem so heartless.

Have you ever felt like that? XXXX You are not alone. **(image) Sometimes instead of answering our questions, God wants to be our solution.**

I've wondered; I've questioned. I've even clenched my fist at God and said, "I can't take much more of this!"

In the Old Testament, David is called a man after God's own heart. And yet he basically cries out, "Where are God? Why don't you hear my prayers? Why don't you do something? God are you even listening?"

Sarah just finished leading a ladies Thursday morning Bible Study on the Book of Job. Oh my. Now I don't go to the class, but I get to hear not only all about you ladies...but I get to hear the gems and spiritual nuggets she shares with me from the study. This study she did was one by Lisa Harper.

The story of Job begins in the first verses of that book in the Old Testament by saying, “In the land of Uz (I mean land of Uz---however at some point in the story I’m pretty sure Job would have rather been in Oz with Dorothy and Toto)

In the land of Uz there was a man named Job who was blameless and upright and feared God and stayed away from evil. And yet---and yet he suffered greatly. He lost his wealth, his family, had sores all over his body and then his faithful wife says, “Job, honey, why don’t you just curse God and die.” Oh sweetie, thanks for your kind words.

Here is one of the nuggets Sarah shared with me. (point to God) “The Boss,” (point to self) “Not the Boss.” (repeat)

When God Doesn’t Seem Fair

1. God has a purpose in your pain.

Even when you are hurting, God is still working. Whenever you are hurting, at whatever level---God is there.

1 Peter 1:6-7 New Living Translation (NLT)

‘So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. ⁷ These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

Huh, be truly glad? Wonderful joy ahead? But we must endure many trials. It is like being tested by fire.

God is doing something, notice I didn’t say God caused it---that is different. He’s doing something; God is in the middle of it. You may not understand. God may strengthen you as a result. God may have your spiritual roots grow deeper.

Let’s look a little at the concept of refined by fire. A refiner’s fire. Tested by fire. I found the following story very interesting.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities. The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about the verse that says: ‘He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver.’ (Malachi 3:3) Or as in our scripture today that says refined by fire. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed. The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, ‘How do you know when the silver is fully refined?’ He smiled at her and answered, ‘Oh, that’s easy — when I see my image in it.’

God's image, your maker's image seen in you in the refiners' fire.

God doesn't necessarily cause pain, but God can use pain for His glory and your deepening spiritual life.

When God Doesn't Seem Fair

- 1. God has a purpose in your pain.**
- 2. God is present in your pain.**

God is a source of what we need. A young seminarian by the name of Dave Baldrige clinched his fist and said, "God I can't take it anymore." And I heard a still small voice of God say, "No you can't, but I can."

Psalm 46 ¹ God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

The apostle Paul is a very interesting Biblical example. He was a major witness for Jesus. Most of the New Testament was written by Paul. And yet he gets this "thorn" in the flesh. We don't exactly know what this ailment or affliction was. He pleads for God to take it away. And you would think that if God were going to heal anybody that it seems like it would be Paul. I mean after all he was shipwrecked for the cause of Jesus, he has been beaten, imprisoned, snake bitten, stoned.

3 times, "Heal me. Heal me. Heal me. Change my circumstances, fix my problems. But noooo, God doesn't. In fact, he tells Paul that God's grace is enough (2 Corinthians 12:9) It's as if Paul says, "This is what I need God." And it is as if God says, "No, I am what you need."

(image) Until God is all you have, you won't realize that He is all you need.

Oh, to know and experience His presence in the rough times.

2 Corinthians 12:10 New International Version (NIV) ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

This is what I need. And God says, "No, I am what you need." God is present in your pain.

Now I have issue with the phraseology...I delight. I delight in weaknesses..woo-hoo. In insults. Yes, that's what I live for. In persecution. Please, bring it on. And difficulties. Ah, the more the better. Nope---I just am not a too delightful person in these regards.

Craig Groeschel give some examples and puts it this way: "I delight in this long season, because I've experience Emmanuel, God with us, like I've never had before."

"I delight in my job search because my God is truly my provider."

I delight in this difficult season because God is breaking me of self-sufficiency and training me to depend on Him."

Groeschel said these---now me I'm more apt to say these things AFTER not during the event. But that's not reality and how things work.

You may have every right to say, "I don't like it. I don't understand. It doesn't seem fair."

There are times we have to look back and say, "you know, God was with me during that time. I could have never done it on my own. I would never choose and don't want to go through it again, but now I know He was there for me. Sometimes I have an easier time remembering this AFTER the fact rather than when I'm in the middle of it.

Why do bad things happen to good people? And the flip side of that is also true: Why do good things happen to bad people?

Is God fair? Hold on to your seats. Is God fair? NO. However, God is just, but not always fair. If God was fair He would give us what we deserve, but instead He is just.

Psalm 103:10-12 New International Version (NIV) ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

He does not treat us as our sins deserve. Aren't you glad? Xxx Let me repeat that: He does not treat us as or sins deserve. But great...GREAT is His love for us.

Some times we just want God to do something. Have you ever been in a situation when one of your children looked at you and questioned you are looked at you as if to say, "Daddy make them stop. Do something Daddy. Why daddy?" One instance was when our young toddler toppled over in the nursery and hit his mouth on the rocking chair. He needed stitches in his lip. His little hand kept going up to where the cut was so they had to put him in what they call a papoose. Basically, his arms were strapped down to his side so he couldn't pull the hand up grab his face when the doctor was doing the stitches. So, in pain from the cut, and now papooseed down, he is hurting, scared, and confused. He looked up at me, crying and screaming with a look on his face of Daddy what are they doing? Do something Daddy? Why are you letting them do this to me?" Oh, I knew, but I couldn't adequately explain it to this little one. There was a purpose to his pain and being in a "papoose" but he couldn't understand it at the time. But I his father was present with him.

Our God is not a heartless God. God has a purpose in your pain. Our Heavenly father, God, is present in your pain.

Anyone here with questions about why God is allowing something to go on in your life? You don't understand. You hurt. You need God's peace. You need God's comfort.

During these times I pray that our spiritual roots grow deeper. I pray that we will trust God who is walking with us. And that God will comfort us as we hurt and need peace.