

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

4-DAY DEVOTIONAL INVESTIGATION

NAME _____

DATE _____

CASE SUMMARY

We live in a good world broken by sin. Not every tragedy has a simple explanation - and we should be careful not to pretend that it does.

DAY 1

ORIGIN

This isn't how it started.

DAY 2

GROANING

Creation is broken.

DAY 3

WHY?

When you don't get the why.

DAY 4

TRUTH

Don't turn suffering into a scoreboard.

HOW TO USE THIS FILE

READ SLOWLY. / MARK WHAT STANDS OUT. / ASK REAL QUESTIONS.

FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE. / APPLY WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS.

The goal is not to finish pages. The goal is to understand what Scripture actually says about suffering - and let truth shape the way you respond.

FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE

DAY 1 - THIS ISN'T HOW IT STARTED

READ: Genesis 1:31 + Romans 5:12 (NLT)

CASE NOTE

GOD CREATED SOMETHING GOOD.

Sin broke something good.

THINK ABOUT IT

Go back to the beginning. God looked at what He created and called it “very good.” Then Genesis 3 happens. Humanity rebels against God, and sin enters the story. Romans 5:12 says that through sin, death entered the world.

The Bible doesn't say God created cancer, death, hatred, violence, betrayal, and suffering and called those things good. **God created something good. Sin broke something good.**

LOOK AROUND

There is still incredible beauty because this world was created by a good God. There is also incredible brokenness because this world isn't the way it was created to be.

Brokenness isn't evidence that God created a bad world. It's evidence that we're living in a broken one.

INVESTIGATE

Write three things you see in the world that still reflect the goodness of God's creation:

CLUE LIST

What is one thing that makes you think, “This isn't how it's supposed to be”?

MY RESPONSE

APPLICATION

When you see something painful or unfair this week, how can remembering that God created the world good keep you from assuming the brokenness is what He originally intended?

FIELD CHALLENGE

Notice one beautiful thing and one broken thing today. Let both remind you of the biblical story: God made it good. Sin broke it.

PRAY IT

God, help me see the world the way You do. Thank You for the goodness that still surrounds me. Help me understand that the brokenness I see isn't how You originally created things to be. Amen.

DAY 2 - CREATION IS GROANING

READ: Romans 8:18-25 (NLT)

CASE NOTE

CREATION IS GROANING.

Our world experiences death and decay.

THINK ABOUT IT

Paul describes creation with a strange word: groaning. You groan when something hurts, when something isn't right, when you know something is wrong. Paul says creation is doing that.

Sometimes suffering isn't caused by somebody intentionally hurting somebody else. Bodies get sick. Storms happen. Accidents happen. People die.

MAKE THE DISTINCTION

Sometimes people hurt people. And sometimes we live in a world where things are broken. That doesn't make suffering hurt less. But it keeps us from blaming God for every terrible thing that happens - or assuming every tragedy was specifically sent by Him.

RUN THE TEST

Circle the best category for each situation.

Someone is abused.

HUMAN CHOICE

/

BROKEN CREATION

Someone gets cancer.

HUMAN CHOICE

/

BROKEN CREATION

Someone deliberately betrays a friend.

HUMAN CHOICE

/

BROKEN CREATION

A tornado destroys someone's home.

HUMAN CHOICE

/

BROKEN CREATION

Why is it important to understand that suffering doesn't always happen for the same reason?

MY RESPONSE

DAY 2 - CREATION IS GROANING

READ: Romans 8:18-25 (NLT) • CONTINUED

LOOK AGAIN

Knowing the world is broken should make us more careful with the explanations we give people who are hurting. Scripture gives us categories for suffering, but it does not give us the specific reason behind every painful event.

DON'T FORCE
AN ANSWER.

APPLICATION

Think of one hard situation you know about right now. Are you tempted to blame someone, blame God, or force an explanation? What would it look like to respond with truth and compassion instead?

FIELD CHALLENGE

The next time you hear someone say, "Everything happens for a reason," don't immediately repeat it.

ASK INSTEAD:

"Does Scripture actually tell me why this specific thing happened?"

WHY THIS MATTERS

You can believe God is good without pretending you know why every bad thing happened. Biblical confidence and humility belong together.

PRAY IT

God, give me wisdom when I see suffering. Keep me from giving easy answers to painful questions. Help me speak truth with humility and compassion. Amen.

HUMILITY MATTERS

DAY 3 - WHEN YOU DON'T GET THE WHY

READ: Job 1:13-22 (NLT)

CASE NOTE

“I DON'T KNOW WHY”

can be a faithful answer.

READ IT

Job's life falls apart unbelievably fast. He loses his wealth and livelihood. His children die. Later, his health collapses. Then his friends show up with explanations.

They are convinced there must be a simple reason for Job's suffering: “Job, you must have done something to deserve this.” There's one problem. They're wrong.

THINK ABOUT IT

We love explanations because explanations make us feel in control. But sometimes we're trying to answer a question God hasn't answered. Job's friends made things worse by pretending they understood something they didn't.

KEY TRUTH

Sometimes one of the most truthful sentences a Christian can say is: “I don't know why this happened.” That's not weak faith. That's refusing to pretend God told us something He didn't.

INVESTIGATE

Have you ever heard someone give an explanation for suffering that actually made the situation worse?

MY NOTES

Why can “I don't know” sometimes be a more faithful answer?

MY RESPONSE

DAY 3 - WHEN YOU DON'T GET THE WHY

READ: Job 1:13-22 (NLT) • CONTINUED

APPLICATION

When you don't understand why something painful happened, what is the difference between honestly bringing that question to God and inventing an answer just to make yourself feel better?



FIELD CHALLENGE

Think about one painful thing you've never understood. Instead of trying to solve it today, pray:

"God, I don't understand why this happened. But I'm bringing the question to You."

WHAT FAITH CAN SOUND LIKE

Faith doesn't require pretending everything makes sense.

Sometimes faith sounds like:

"God, I don't understand this - but I'm still talking to You."

PRAY IT

God, I want answers when life doesn't make sense. Give me the humility to admit when I don't know. Keep me from pretending I understand everything You're doing. Help me trust You even with questions I cannot answer. Amen.

KEEP TALKING TO GOD

DAY 4 - DON'T TURN SUFFERING

INTO A SCOREBOARD • READ: Luke 13:1-5 (NLT)

CASE NOTE

SUFFERING IS NOT A SCOREBOARD.

Pain does not tell you how God feels about someone.

READ IT

People tell Jesus about a horrific tragedy: Pilate had killed Galileans while they were offering sacrifices. Then Jesus brings up another tragedy - a tower in Siloam collapsed and killed eighteen people.

Jesus asks: Were those people worse sinners than everyone else? His answer: No. Jesus refuses to let people look at someone else's tragedy and conclude: "They must have deserved it."

THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus doesn't give them an explanation for why those specific tragedies happened. Instead, He turns their attention toward themselves. Life is fragile. Sin is serious. So don't spend your life trying to determine who deserved what. Turn toward God yourself. That's repentance.

Luke 13 destroys one dangerous answer: "Something terrible happened to them, so they must have been worse than me." No.

APPLICATION

When someone around you is suffering, what would it look like to respond with compassion instead of trying to decide what they did wrong or why God allowed it?

MY RESPONSE

Write one sentence you could say to a hurting friend that is truthful, compassionate, and doesn't pretend you know why.

WRITE IT DOWN

DAY 4 - KEY SCRIPTURE

PUT THE CASE TOGETHER • NLT

TRANSLATION NOTE

These quotations use the NLT. If you're reading another Bible translation, the wording may differ slightly while communicating the same truth.

EXHIBIT A GENESIS 1:31 (NLT)

“Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was _____! ...”

What does this tell you about the world God originally created?

EXHIBIT B ROMANS 8:20-22 (NLT)

“Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's _____. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from _____ and _____. For we know that all creation has been _____ as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

What does this tell you about the world we live in now?

CASE DEBRIEF

God created the world good. Sin has deeply broken what God made. Human choices can cause real suffering. Creation itself experiences death and decay. Not every tragedy has a specific explanation revealed to us, and suffering does not prove someone deserved it.

When we don't know why, we don't have to make something up. We can tell the truth, bring our questions to God, and trust what Scripture actually gives us.

PRAY IT

God, thank You that I don't have to have an explanation for everything. Give me wisdom to understand Your Word, humility when I don't know, and compassion for people who are hurting. Amen.

CASE FILE REVIEWED