

F.A.Q's: Frequently Asked Questions

Lesson 3—Why Do Bad Things Happen?

OVERVIEW

Bible Passages: Genesis 3:8-9, 15-17; 3:6-7

Key Verse: Romans 8:28—“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.”

Other Key Verses: Proverbs 3:5-6, John 9:1-3, James 1:2-4, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Consider difficult times you have experienced and how God moved in and through them.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.
- Look for opportunities to connect with your students outside of the wall of the church—i.e., a phone call, a postcard, etc.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week they are absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.”

Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

SAY: Today we’re continuing a five week unit called F.A.Q.s—Frequently Asked Questions but first let’s talk about your week.

- *Go around the room and let everyone share one highlight and one low point from their week. (If you have a large class, just take a few volunteers.)*

Topic: Why do Bad Things Happen?

- *Why do you think bad things happen?*

Throughout the world and in every religion there are only three ways of answering this question.¹ Which do you think is the Christian way?

- (1) *The Pantheistic Answer*—This view denies the existence of good and evil because god is all and all is god. This is like the man to whom a Christian was witnessing who said, “I believe in god—He’s the tree beside me. He’s the grass beneath my feet. He’s that dog over there.” (Note: There is a lot of pantheism in the New Age movement: “I am god; you are god; etc.) Is this the Christian view? Why not?
- (2) *The view of Philosophical Naturalism*—This supposes that everything that happens is a random event. This is the philosophy that undergirds the evolution theory. And since everything is random, there is no such thing as good and evil. Is this the Christian view? Why not?
- (3) *Theism*—The belief that God is in control of events and that the universe is under His command. Yes, this is the Christian view.

SAY: Today we’re going to take a look at *Christian Theism* and find a Biblical answer to the question, “Why do bad things happen?”

BIBLE LESSON

Topic: From where did evil come?

- *Did God create evil?* (Go around the room and let everyone answer before proceeding to the next questions.)
- *If you answered no, then from where did the devil come? From where did sin come?* (According to Isaiah 14 and elsewhere in the Bible, the devil, who is *NOT* God’s equal but who was an angel, decided that he wanted to be God. He rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. He then, in the form of a serpent, tempted Adam and Eve, who also chose to rebel against God by eating fruit from a tree that God had forbidden.)
- *If you answer yes, that God made evil, then doesn’t this make Him evil?*

SAY: God did *NOT* create evil but He did create the potential for evil.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17

For example: *Why did God put the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden? Why did He create a tree just to tell Adam and Eve not to eat from it?*

SAY: God created people with a freedom of choice. Man would not be truly free to choose to love and follow God unless there also existed the opportunity to not choose Him.

Consider the following quote:

“God is neither a cosmic rapist who forces his love on people, nor a cosmic puppeteer who forces people to love him. Instead, God, the personification of love, grants us the freedom of choice. Without such freedom, we would be little more than programmed robots.”²

- *What did Adam and Eve choose to do?*

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Genesis 3:6-7

- *By the way, what fruit did Adam and Eve eat to sin against God? (The Bible doesn't say what kind of fruit it was. Many people assume it was an apple because this is the way pictures have portrayed it. For all we know, it could have been a banana! This is an example of believing something is in the Bible just because someone told you about it. That's one reason we're doing this F.A.Q.s series—to help you to know what you believe and why, not just because someone tells you about it but because of what the Bible says.)*

SAY: Hold the thought of what Adam and Eve did while I ask you a few questions:

- *What would you say to someone who asks you, “If God is perfect, then why didn't He create a perfect world?” (The answer is: He did create a perfect world.)*
- *Who remembers what God said continually during creation? (“It is good.”)*

SAY: Everything He had created was good. But after the serpent tempted Eve and both Adam and Eve sinned, sin entered in and the world was no longer “good.” If they had never sinned, there would be no “bad” things to face. All “bad” things find their root in the evil of sin.

KEY VERSE

Choose volunteers to turn to and hold their places at:

Romans 8:28, Proverbs 3:5-6, John 9:1-3, James 1:2-4, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

Reasons why bad things happen

SAY: There are four basic reasons why bad things happen:

(1) We disobey God (like Adam and Eve)

a. High School Example:

● *How many of you have a curfew? What would happen if came home two hours late? You would get in trouble, perhaps get grounded, perhaps get yelled at, etc. This “trouble” would be the result of your own bad choices.*

b. Junior High Example:

● *What would happen if you snuck out of your house to go do something that your parents had told you not to do? What would happen when they caught you? You would get in trouble, perhaps get grounded, perhaps get yelled at, etc. This “trouble” would be the result of your own bad choices.*

(2) Someone else disobeys God

Example: A family is driving home from church when they are hit by a drunk driver. Even though they didn't do anything wrong, they will experience hurt and suffering because of the other driver's sin.

(3) We live in a fallen world—As the result of Adam and Eve's sin this world changed: Animals who had lived peacefully together before, now hunted and ate one another; the ground that beforehand produced food easily, now had to be worked to produce food; etc. Because of sin's effects we live in a messed-up world.

Example: A drought hits an area of the country and crops can't survive. (A verse to think about: Matt. 5:45—“He [God] causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”)

(4) Sometimes God allows bad things to happen but you can trust that God will always turn any “bad” that comes to your life to your good *if* you are a Christian who loves Him and is walking with Him.

- *Can anyone think of a story in the Bible where God allowed someone to endure hard times?* [Consider Job. God gave Satan permission to put Job through tough times (Job 1:6-12). He lost everything, including his children and was afflicted in his body. He lost everything except his wife who told him to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). But through it all Job did not sin though he did question God as to why it was happening. In the end God blessed his faithfulness and restored to him twice what he had previously had (Job 42:10-17).]

Choose a volunteer to read: Romans 8:28

SAY: Notice that this promise of turning bad to good isn't for everyone. This promise is given to “those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose”—To those who are saved and are walking with the Lord.

Here are some ways that God turns “bad” to good:

(1) Hard times can teach a person to totally rely on God.

Choose a volunteer to read: **Proverbs 3:5-6**

SAY: Many times you learn the kind of trust that doesn't “lean on its own understanding” when you face situations that have no answers—Like Job you can't figure out what's going on or why; you just have to cling to God and trust Him to guide your steps.

(2) Hard times gives a person the opportunity to glorify God through the situation.

Choose a volunteer to read: **John 9:1-3**

SAY: The blind man wasn't blind because he or his parents had sinned but out of his circumstances came the opportunity that “the works of God might be displayed in him” and that God might be glorified. In everything you do and face, let God be glorified. Let the works of God be displayed in you and your situations.

(3) Hard times provide an opportunity for a person's faith to be strengthened.

Choose a volunteer to read: **James 1:2-4**

SAY: Because of how God uses “bad” situations, you can “count it all joy” or “consider it as pure joy” when you face them.

(4) Hard times allow you to help others who will experience similar sufferings.

Choose a volunteer to read: **2 Corinthians 1:3-4.**

SAY: Only someone who had been through an experience can truly say that they understand what someone is feeling who is facing the same situation. The tough times you face equip you to meet the needs of others throughout the course of your life.

For example: Let's say someone was abused as a child, which is a “bad” situation that came about because of someone else's sin. God didn't cause this situation but as this child comes to know and love Him, God can use him to minister to others facing similar circumstances.

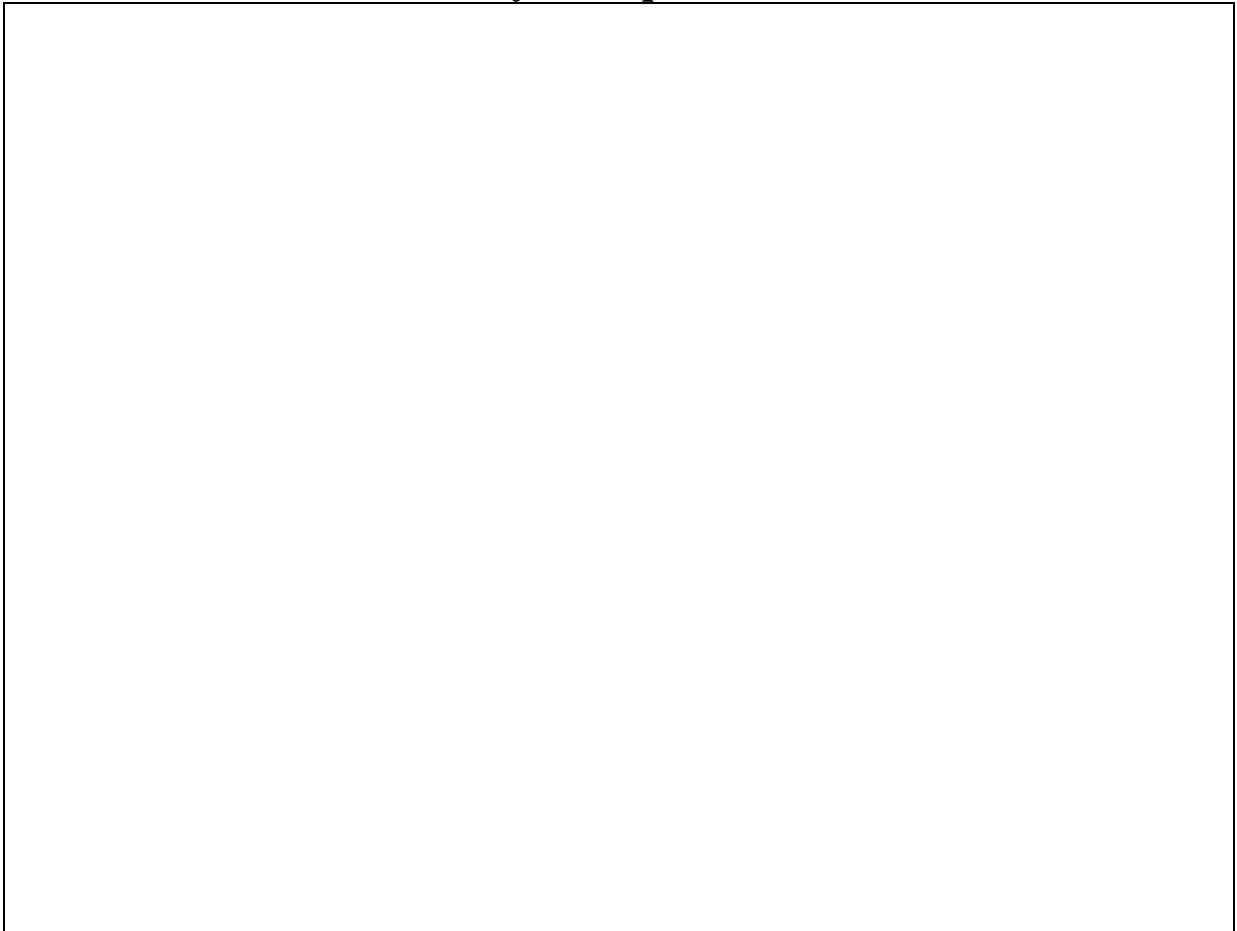
WRAP IT UP

Prayer Time

Pray specifically today that your students will always trust and live for God regardless of what situations they are facing and thank God for being able to turn any bad to the good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests



¹ Hank Hanegraaff, "The Bible Answer Book" (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 170.

² Ibid., 171.