

THE ORIGIN OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

Sharing

1. It's difficult to explain why bad things happen to good people. Do you know of a bad thing that has happened to a good person? What was your reaction? Explain: _____
2. Have you experienced the shock of a horrible and unexpected disaster such as a tornado or an earthquake? Share the experience: _____
4. Many people believe that God is capricious and uncaring about what happens to us. What do you believe? Explain why you believe this: _____
5. Have you ever heard someone say, "Why did God do this to me?" How did you answer?

Studying

6. God cares very much about each of us. Discuss the implications of the following verse:
Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the _____ that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of _____ and not of _____, to give you a future and a hope."
7. Why is there so much suffering in our world when God, who loves us, clearly tells us that He desires to give us a future and a hope? Has our world been bad from the beginning?
8. Our world, as originally created by God, was perfect as were the humans He created. Humans, in fact were created in God's image. That's about as good as it could get!
Read Genesis 1:26,27 "Then God said, let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . . So God created man in His own image . . . _____ and _____ He created them."
9. God was satisfied with His creation. There was no pain, suffering, disease or death in God's creation. Every thing was perfect, just as God intended it.
Genesis 1:31 "Then God saw everything that He had made and indeed it was very _____."
10. So, what happened? If God did not bring pain and suffering into the world, who did? Jesus told a story to illustrate what happened to the perfect world He had created. In this story, Jesus identifies the culprit who is responsible for all the evil in the world.
Matthew 13:24,25 "...The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed _____ seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed _____ among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a _____, then the _____ also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow _____ seed in your field? How then does it have _____?"
11. Now Jesus points out the guilty culprit.
Matthew 13:28 "He said to them, an _____ has done this!"
12. Then Jesus explains why He doesn't just zap the enemy out of this world and immediately destroy him!
Matthew 13:28,29 "The servants said to Him, do you want us then to go and gather them up? But He said, no, lest while you gather up the _____ you also uproot the _____ with them."

13. The wheat and the tares represent the good and the wicked people living on this earth. Until the plant is fully grown it is impossible to tell the good from the bad. Therefore, Jesus said, the good and the bad will grow together until the harvest.

14. Read Jesus' explanation of this story in Matthew 13:37-39. You will learn that:

- The field is the world; Jesus Christ was the Sower of the good seed; The good seeds are God's faithful people; The tares are wicked people with allegiance to Satan; The enemy who sowed the tares is the devil; The final harvest will occur when Jesus comes!

15. The 'enemy' of Jesus' story was once a loyal angel of God in heaven named Lucifer. At some point, he began to sin in his heart by becoming jealous of Jesus and coveting God's throne.

Ezekiel 28:15,17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your _____; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your _____."

Isaiah 14:12-14 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground . . . For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into _____ I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the _____."

16. Satan began to foment rebellion in heaven among all God's holy angels. He began a whisper campaign against God's government. Maybe you wonder why God didn't immediately simply destroy Satan. If He had, all the angels and created beings on other worlds would have served God out of fear.

God can only be happy when His created beings serve Him out of love. He does not want robots. He wants us to love and trust Him. That's why He created us with the power of choice. We call it will-power.

17. The rebellion continued in heaven until it came to an actual battle for the throne of God.

Revelation 12:7-9 "And war broke out in _____: Michael and His angels _____ with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the _____ dragon, that _____ of old, called the _____ and _____, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his _____ were cast out with him."

18. Satan challenged God's right to His throne. He said that nobody could obey all of God's laws. God didn't create laws just to show the universe that He's the boss! He created His laws to protect the beings that He created. Since He created angels (and humans) He knew what would make them (and us) safe and happy.

19. But, once Satan challenged God, and talked 1/3 of heaven's angels into joining him in his rebellion, God had to let sin run its course—like a bad virus. All of God's creatures were created with the power of choice and Satan and his angels had made a decision against obedience to God.

20. Adam and Eve were created perfect, but with the power of choice. The primary rule that they had to obey concerned one tree in their garden-home. The Bible calls it the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:16,17 " . . . Of every tree of the garden you may freely _____; but of the tree of knowledge of good and _____ you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely _____."

17. We know from Genesis 3:1-7 that Satan cunningly disguised himself as a talking serpent and completely deceived Eve. Making a choice to believe the serpent instead of God, Eve grabbed the fruit offered to her by a talking snake and took a bite.

She then took the fruit to Adam and he also ate it. Through their disobedience, sin entered our world. All the pain and suffering we experience today is the result of their decision to disobey God. From that moment on, Satan claimed this world as his own and we will suffer the effects of sin until Jesus comes and forever ends the problem of sin.

18. Once Satan induced Adam and Eve to sin, his goal was to destroy every single human being on this planet. The extent to which Satan is willing to harm us is illustrated in the book of Job. Some time after Satan rebelled, was banished from heaven and caused man to sin, he attended a council in heaven.

Job 1:7 “And the Lord said to Satan, from where do you come? So Satan answered the Lord and said, from going to and fro on the _____, and from walking back and forth on it.” In this council, Satan received permission to trouble Job to prove that he would not stay true to God if his life was put to a trial.

19. Study the story in Job which illustrates how a man or woman of God is to behave whenever evil befalls us in this life. God permitted Satan to unleash his wrath on Job. He lost his wealth, his ten children died, he was stricken with boils, his wife advised him to curse God and die. Yet, no matter what Satan did to him, Job held fast to his belief in God. He never let go of his faith. This is an example for us.

20. Whenever we see famines, wars, sickness, death and destruction, we can be sure that Satan is present. All evil comes from the enemy who hijacked our planet. The reason we don't see more death and destruction is because God's hand is over us and he limits Satan's power.

21. There is a tendency in our sophisticated world today to laugh at the notion of a devil loose in our world. The notion wasn't funny to Jesus. He didn't laugh—in pitying love he cast the demons out of men and women!

Luke 4:33-35 “Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean _____. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the _____ of God! But Jesus rebuked him, saying, be quiet and come out of him!”

Jesus is able to set us free from Satan just as he set the man free that day, so long ago, in the synagogue. He can set us free from demonic depression and from all the disease and destruction that Satan inflicts on us if we simply turn to Jesus and ask.

22. When we go through a great trial we should never run to the one who is the cause of our great suffering! Never seek advice from Satan's crafty entrapments such as astrologers, palm readers, horoscopes or séances. We will never find answers in those places. We should run to the only One who has the power to bring comfort, healing and restoration. We should *always* run to Jesus because He came to earth to destroy the power of the devil.

1 John 3:8 “. . . For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

23. The good news is that sin will not go on and on forever. There will be an end to it. Jesus death on the cross assures us that Satan will be destroyed and sin will be eradicated forever!

Ezekiel 28:18,19 “Thou hast _____ your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of thy trading; therefore will I brought fire from your midst; it _____ you, and I turned you to _____ upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you: you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever.”

Nahum 1:9 “. . . He will make an utter _____ of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time.”

Hebrews 2:14 “. . . That through death He might _____ him who had the power of death, that is, the _____.”

24. We can thank God that, one day, there WILL be an end to sin, pain and suffering!

Revelation 21:4 “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of _____.”

25. He who caused your broken heart and your suffering is going to pay for the things he did to God's people when he is consumed once and for all and will be as though he never existed.
26. God gives us His word on what He has planned for our future.

Revelation 21:4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write for these words are true and faithful."

Applying this lesson

27. Many people blame God for the bad things that happen to them. But, Jesus' story in Matthew 13 shows that there is an enemy at work among us whose intent is to destroy us.
- God's intentions toward me are for love and peace and hope. This lesson has taught me that all the bad things that happen in my life are the result of our enemy, Satan.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I understand that I am caught in Satan's web of rebellion against God and I will not cooperate with him. I will resist him through Bible study and prayer and an exercise of my will.
28. From my study of Job I understand that bad things will happen to good people but that God is still in control and is turning every bad situation in my life into my salvation.
- Regardless of what happens in my life, it is important that I trust God and continue to obey Him.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I will trust God with every aspect of my life knowing that He loves me and cares for me beyond all my comprehension.
29. From the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, I have learned that I cannot always trust my senses because Satan is a powerful, evil angel who can work signs and miracles (Revelation 6:14) and deceive, if possible, the very elect (Matthew 24:24).
- My only safety against Satan is absolute trust in God and obedience to His commandments.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I realize the possibility that Satan can deceive me and I wish to be so close to God that I will be able to distinguish between God's voice and Satan's voice.
30. The real issue in my life is who will I believe? Who will I trust? Who will I follow? Will I choose God who created me and loves me or will I choose to follow an evil angel who rebelled against God and brought sin into the universe?
- I understand that this is a life and death decision. I can choose eternal life with Jesus or eternal death with Satan. The choice is mine alone.
 - A check mark at left indicates that I choose to accept Jesus' loving invitation to become part of the family of God and to live forever with Him as Christ my King, my Lord and my Savior.