The Question We All Ask

SCRIPTURE

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

"Why, Lord?" It is a question that escapes our lips when life stops making sense. Why did the car break down? Why did the illness return? Why do bad things happen to people who are trying so hard to do the right thing? This is a universal human experience: we often face situations that completely baffle us.

We know we live in a fallen, sinful world where evil occurs naturally. God does not cause the evil, nor is it His ultimate plan that we suffer. However, He does not always shield us from the collateral damage of living on this earth. Why? Because His thoughts and ways are higher than ours.

When a trial hits, our immediate human reaction is to ask God to change our circumstances. We want Him to act like a genie in a bottle, fixing the broken part, healing the sickness, or changing the difficult person. But God is operating on a completely different level. He is not primarily interested in fixing your temporary comfort; He is deeply invested in fixing your eternal character.

As we journey through this week, we must be willing to shift our perspective. Instead of asking, "Why is this happening "to" me?" we must learn to ask, "Lord, what are You trying to do "in" me through this?" Today, ask God to help you respond to the trials of life with faith, allowing Him to work in your heart even when you do not understand your circumstances.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I confess that I often get frustrated when life doesn't go my way. I want to understand everything. Help me to trust that Your ways are higher than mine. Give me the faith to stop asking "Why?" and start saying, "Thy will be done." Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Job 38:1–7
- Romans 11:33–36
- Job 1:6–12
- Revelation 12:7–12
- 1 John 4:16–19

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can we acknowledge unanswered questions without abandoning trust in God?

2. Read Job 38:1–7. How does this passage deepen today's understanding of God's work in our lives?

3. What would it look like for you to bring a difficult question to God honestly and patiently?

The Battle of Two Kingdoms

SCRIPTURE

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." 1 John 4:18 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

There is a fierce, unseen battle raging around us, but more importantly, it is raging within us. It is a clash between two kingdoms that operate on entirely opposite principles. The kingdom of Satan is built entirely upon the foundation of self. It is driven by self-preservation, selfishness, and ultimately, fear. When we are operating under this principle, we view every inconvenience as a threat to our peace, and we react with anger, hoarding, or self-defense.

In stark contrast, the Kingdom of God operates on the principle of self-sacrificing love. This divine love completely casts out fear. When you possess the character of God, your primary motivation is no longer self-preservation. Instead of asking, "How does this affect me?", you begin to view life through the lens of how you can bless and serve others, even when you are hurting.

These two kingdoms cannot peacefully coexist in the human heart. Your thoughts and your feelings are the indicators of which kingdom currently rules your mind. When you are cut off in traffic, when a family member snaps at you, or when your plans are ruined, what is your default reaction? Does fear and self-preservation rise up, or does patient love flow out?

Today, ask the Holy Spirit to evict the principles of Satan's kingdom from your mind. You do not have to live as a slave to your own defensive reactions. Invite the perfect love of God to take the throne of your heart.

PRAYER

Lord, I recognize how easily I default to self-preservation. I get angry when my comfort is threatened. Pour Your perfect, self-sacrificing love into my heart today so that fear and selfishness are cast out completely. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Job 1:6–12
- Revelation 12:7–12
- 1 John 4:16–19
- Isaiah 55:8–9
- Job 38:1–7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the conflict between fear and love shape our response to suffering?

2. Consider Job 1:6–12. What does this passage add to the main lesson of today's devotional?

3. What would it look like for you to respond to another person's distress with love rather than suspicion?

The Ultimate Example of Suffering

SCRIPTURE

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter 2:23 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

If anyone ever had the right to complain about unfair suffering, it was Jesus Christ. He lived a life of absolute perfection, healing the sick, raising the dead, and preaching truth. Yet, He was despised, mocked, and subjected to the most horrific death imaginable. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, bleeding and suffocating, what were His thoughts and feelings? Was He consumed with self-pity? Was He angry at the injustice? No. He looked down and made sure His mother was cared for. He looked at the men driving spikes into His hands and prayed, "Father, forgive them".

Even when people were actively murdering Him, Jesus was completely devoid of self-preservation. No guile, no threats, and no bitterness came out of His mouth because there was absolutely none in His heart. He was entirely filled with the character of Heaven.

How sharply this contrasts with our own lives! We lose our temper over a broken laptop, a delayed flight, or a rude comment. We feel justified in our anger because we were "wronged." But Jesus leaves us an example to follow in His steps. Today, when you face unfairness or irritation, fix your eyes on the cross. Let the selfless love of your Savior silence your complaints.

PRAYER

Jesus, Your reaction to suffering humbles me deeply. I am so quick to defend my rights and lose my temper over trivial things. Give me Your mind today. When I am reviled, help me to love instead of retaliating. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- 1 Peter 2:19–25
- Hebrews 4:15–16
- Isaiah 53:3–5
- Job 1:6–12
- Revelation 12:7–12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Christ's response to suffering teach us about the Father's character?

2. How does 1 Peter 2:19–25 help clarify the spiritual principle in today's reading?

3. What would it look like for you to entrust an injustice to God while pursuing a wise and peaceful response?

Exposing the Hidden Corrosion

SCRIPTURE

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

Sometimes God allows things to break so that we can see what is really inside of us. One time we were on a trip and heading back home when about halfway through our car wouldn't start. I thought for sure it was the starter but unfortunately on our vehicle the starter is under the intake manifold. I worked for several hours in the bitter cold to change the starter only to discover that the true problem was hidden corrosion on a battery cable. From the outside, everything looked fine, but underneath, there was a disconnect that stopped the power from flowing.

Another time I was cleaning out my car and set my laptop bag outside. When I was done I forgot about the bag and accidentally ran over it. My immediate reaction was intense frustration and anger. Why did God allow that to happen? Perhaps God allowed the outward trial to expose the inward corrosion of the heart.

We often think we are doing quite well spiritually until pressure is applied. Trials do not create our character; they reveal it. When a crisis hits and anger, anxiety, or harsh words spill out of us, God is pulling back the curtain on our souls. He is showing us the "corrosion" that is blocking His power in our lives. God is not nearly as interested in fixing your broken car, your broken laptop, or your inconvenient circumstances as He is in fixing "you". Do not waste your trials by just complaining about the inconvenience. When frustration rises, stop and say, "Lord, what corrosion are You exposing in me today?"

PRAYER

Father, search my heart. Use the frustrations of my day to expose the hidden corrosion of pride, anger, and selfishness in my life. Don't just fix my circumstances; fix me. Cleanse me so Your power can flow through me. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- James 1:2–4
- 1 Peter 1:6–7
- 1 Peter 2:19–25
- Hebrews 4:15–16
- Isaiah 53:3–5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can trials expose attitudes we did not previously recognize?

2. Read James 1:2–4. What connection do you see between this passage and today's Scripture?

3. What would it look like for you to ask God to reveal what a present difficulty is showing about your heart?

The Power of Praise in the Storm

SCRIPTURE

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

We have established that trials will come, and that our natural human reaction is to become frustrated. But how do we actually change our reaction in the heat of the moment? We must choose to praise God "before" we feel like it.

When I realized I had run over my laptop, my natural mind wanted to explode with anger. I had spent hundreds of dollars on it, and now it was destroyed. But I realized that if I wanted to reflect the character of God, I had to change my response. So, standing over a crushed computer, I said out loud, "Praise the Lord".

Praise is not a denial of reality; it is a declaration of a higher reality. When we praise God in the middle of a disaster, we are actively rejecting the kingdom of self-preservation and aligning our minds with the kingdom of heaven. We are saying, "God, I don't like this, it hurts, and it's expensive, but I trust that You are still good and You are in control."

This is how we rewire our minds. The brain is moldable, and every time you choose praise over panic, you are allowing the Holy Spirit to imprint the character of Christ onto your mind.

Today, do not wait for the storm to pass before you sing. Praise Him in the rain.

PRAYER

Lord, it is easy to praise You when the sun is shining, but I want to learn to praise You in the storm. The next time something goes wrong, let the first words out of my mouth be words of thanksgiving and trust. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Acts 16:22–34
- Habakkuk 3:17–19
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
- Psalm 139:23–24
- James 1:2–4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between praising God in a trial and pretending pain does not exist?

2. What encouragement or instruction does Acts 16:22–34 offer in light of today's devotional?

3. What would it look like for you to name one genuine reason for gratitude during a difficulty?

The Father's Loving Discipline

SCRIPTURE

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Hebrews 12:6-7 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

The word "chastisement" often carries a negative connotation. We picture an angry deity waiting to strike us with a lightning bolt the moment we step out of line. But the author of Hebrews frames it entirely differently. Chastisement is not the evidence of God's anger; it is the undeniable proof of His parental love.

God is not a genie; He is a Father. A loving parent does not give their child everything they want. A good father will allow his child to experience the natural consequences of their actions, or allow them to face difficult tasks, because he knows it builds character. If God never allowed you to face adversity, He would be treating you like an illegitimate child He didn't care about.

When you are going through a season of intense pressure, the enemy will whisper that God has abandoned you. The exact opposite is true. The heat of the trial proves that the Master Blacksmith is sitting right next to the anvil, carefully refining your faith. He loves you too much to let you remain selfish, angry, and spiritually immature. Embrace the discipline of the Lord today. Do not despise the process. The pain of the current trial is producing a peaceable fruit of righteousness that will last for all eternity.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for loving me enough to correct me. Forgive me for whining when You are trying to train me. I submit to Your loving discipline today. Mold me, shape me, and make me look like Jesus. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Hebrews 12:5–11
- Proverbs 3:11–12
- Revelation 3:19
- Acts 16:22–34
- Habakkuk 3:17–19

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can loving discipline contribute to spiritual growth?

2. How does Hebrews 12:5–11 support or expand the lesson we have considered today?

3. What would it look like for you to receive a needed correction without assuming every hardship is punishment?

Sabbath Summary & Reflection

SCRIPTURE

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble..." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (KJV)

SABBATH REFLECTION

This week, we have tackled the difficult question of why difficulties happen to us. We discovered that God uses the trials of a fallen world to expose the hidden "corrosion" of selfishness in our hearts. We contrasted the self-preserving nature of Satan's kingdom with the self-sacrificing love of Christ on the cross. We learned that praising God in the storm is how we exercise faith in the midst of suffering. We also saw that our trials may prepare us to comfort others and teach us to trust our Heavenly Father's loving discipline.

On this Sabbath, we rest in the truth of 2 Corinthians 1. God comforts us in our trials so that we, in turn, can comfort others.

Reflect: Look back at the frustrations of your week. Did you react with the character of the world, or the character of Christ?

Evaluate: Are you still asking God to just "fix your circumstances," or are you finally allowing Him to fix "you"?

The Invitation: As you enter a new week, the call is to "Trust the Process."

Practical Application: Next week, expect interruptions. Expect people to be difficult. Expect things to break. When they do, immediately pause, take a breath, and silently pray: "Lord, I need Your love right now. Show me what You are trying to teach me.". Be the calmest person in the room, and watch how God uses your peace to minister to others.

PRAYER

Lord of the Sabbath, I rest in Your sovereignty today. I lay down my need to control my life. Thank You for the trials that are burning away my dross. Keep me perfectly in Your peace, and let my life be a living testimony of Your character. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Romans 8:28–39
- 2 Corinthians 4:16–18
- Psalm 46:1–3
- Hebrews 12:5–11
- Proverbs 3:11–12

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do God's love and Christ's example sustain us when suffering remains unexplained?

2. How does Romans 8:28–39 bring together the spiritual lessons of this week?

3. What would it look like for you to offer practical comfort to someone facing hardship?