



Does God Know What Will Happen Before It Happens? (And If So, Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?)



Session Objective

The questions don't get any easier: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, why doesn't God intervene and prevent natural disasters and disease? Or murders and robberies? Or plane crashes and car wrecks? The problem of evil has been around a long time, and this session won't solve it—but we will try to discover the proper responses of God's people to life in an imperfect world.

Faith Statement

Q. 28. What advantage comes from acknowledging God's creation and providence?

A. We learn that we are to be patient in adversity, grateful in the midst of blessing, and to trust our faithful God and Father for the future, assured that no creature shall separate us from God's love, since all creatures are so completely in God's hand that without God's will they cannot even move.

—The Heidelberg Catechism (4.028)



Engage

Open your time together in prayer and lead a conversation based on the following questions:

- Is God in complete control of the world? If so, why do bad things happen in the world?
- Does God know what will happen before it happens?
- Does God control our every move, or does God let us make our own decisions even if God doesn't approve?
- In what ways can you often see God at work in the world? In what ways do you not see God at work in the world?



Explore

Read Psalm 139 and explore the following:

Looking at verses 1–18 . . .

- What is the writer's understanding of God?
- What words would you use to describe God as God is pictured in these verses?

Looking at verses 19–22 . . .

- Do these verses "fit" with the rest of the psalm? Why or why not?
- In verse 19, the writer speaks of people who are "wicked" and "bloodthirsty." Does the writer give any indication of where such people come from, or how they got that way?
- In your view, how do "evil" people get that way?

Read Romans 8:31–39 and explore the following:

- What is your answer to Paul's question: If God is for us, who is against us?
- What does this question mean to you?
- What is the relationship between the situations listed in verse 35 and Christ's love?
- Does Christ's love prevent bad things from happening, or does Christ's love serve another role?
- What powers do the things listed in verses 38–39 have over us, and what powers do they not have?
- What promise does Paul make in this passage?



Express

Use the following questions to help the young people express what they've learned. Also, consider discussing the questions from Engage again to see if anyone has new perspectives after exploring the biblical passages.

- Using what you've learned from Psalm 139 and Romans 8, how would you respond if someone asked you, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"
- In today's conversations, what have you learned about who God is?
- After today's conversations, is your understanding of God clearer or more confused? Why?



Exit

Invite group members to brainstorm a list of people or situations in the world that seem broken and in need of God's healing. Close in prayer, lifting up the people and situations that have been mentioned and thanking God for being present during times of brokenness.