

WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?

THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

Why does God allow evil in this world?

BIG IDEA

Sometimes life hurts. Evil is real. Suffering is real. There is pain and sorrow in this world, and on some level it touches each and every one of us. So how do we reconcile the “problem of evil” with our understanding that God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good?

SCRIPTURE USED

Isaiah 64:6:

*We are all infected and impure with sin.
When we display our righteous deeds,
they are nothing but filthy rags.
Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall,
and our sins sweep us away like the wind.*

Isaiah 53:3-5: *He was despised and rejected — a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.*

Job 38:4-7:

*“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell me, if you know so much.
Who determined its dimensions
and stretched out the surveying line?
What supports its foundations,
and who laid its cornerstone
as the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?”*

Matthew 15:18-19: *“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”*

Leader’s Notes:

- Treat this lesson with sensitivity! Pray sincerely for your students before this discussion. The “problem of evil” is a stumbling block to faith in Christ for many people and it touches everyone on some level. Be sensitive and very gracious in your discussion times together.
- Consider if you know anyone who might share their testimony (at the beginning or end of your lesson) about suffering or about overcoming evil and trusting God in the midst of it. Or, even, being angry at God and then being broken and realizing He is still in control. Guest speakers and testimonies can be a powerful way to communicate with students.
- Please understand that this lesson is not attempting to specifically inform “What to do if you are in the midst of great suffering” or to be a substitute for professional counseling, if that’s needed. Generally, because each situation is unique, it is our hope that a student would have a mentor, leader or counselor they could go to, pray with and receive encouragement and wisdom from. Instead, the goal here is to equip students so they do not walk away from God when faced with challenging questions and painful situations. Please be clear with your students that it is not that there are no “good answers” to the problem of evil, but that there are not “simple, easy answers.”

For the opener you will need:

- **Opener:** Projection equipment and the DVD, *When the Game Stands Tall*. The clip is from minute 41:00-44:20.
- **Lesson:** Each student needs a writing utensil and the handout found at the end of this lesson. (You can cut apart the light bulbs prior to your lesson time, or leave them together as a single page handout.)
- **Closing:** Read ahead and consider a personal testimony here.

OPENER

EXPLAIN

Together, we are going to discuss a very difficult subject that nobody here is immune to: evil and suffering. Evil is real. Suffering is real. There is pain and sorrow in this world and, on some level, they absolutely touch each