

# — Lesson 12 —

## WHY DOES GOD LET BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

### *Opening Prayer*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

#### **LEADER**

*Jesus, you wept at the death of your friend Lazarus. You do not delight in any tragedy, and you understand the pain and suffering of every human heart. So often suffering seems unmerited, unfair, unjust, and even like a punishment from you. Remind us of your cross and the way that you have transformed suffering so that it is always a way to be united to you and help us to be always, however painful, open to hope. When we cannot understand or bear suffering, draw us to yourself so that we can weep with you, witness your healing, and rise up in hope. In your name we pray. Amen.*

..... *Fr. Mike's Thought Train* .....

**—BIG QUESTION—**

**Why does God let bad things happen?**

**—SHORT ANSWER—**

**In order for free will to exist.**

## **THE BREAKDOWN**

➔ **Tragedy occurs.**

- \* *The response to tragedy (with the intent to comfort) is often, “This is a part of God’s plan.”*
- \* *But this is not true.*

➔ **God is in control: yes and no.**

- \* *Yes: God is intimately involved, omnipotent, and could be in control, but ...*
- \* *No: God voluntarily gave up elements of power when he created anything outside himself (such as the laws of physics, gravity, life in general).*

➔ **God does not control you.**

➔ **God wills that we retain our freedom and that the world follows the laws and order he established.**

- \* *God’s being intimately involved in the universe (“not one sparrow...”) is not contrary with his also not controlling or planning tragedy.*
- \* *There is God’s perfect will, which seeks the good in all things.*
  - ✦ *God’s essence is goodness, truth, and beauty—any of these are part of God’s desired plan.*
- \* *There is God’s permissive will, which allows but does not desire suffering or tragedies (God is not a tyrant).*

- \* *Why doesn't God stop free will to spare tragedy?*
  - ✚ *Because freedom is a greater good. The greater good is not prevention of tragedy but our free will.*
  - ✚ *He can bring about good and redeem things that are not part of his perfect will.*
    - *The biggest example is that Jesus' death won our salvation.*
- \* *God does not will or plan evil, but when it happens, it nonetheless does not thwart his plan.*
- \* *God can make brokenness whole; he can bring the dead back to life.*
- \* *The bottom line—the main point—is hope.*

## WRITE IT OUT

### 1. What is wrong with saying that suffering is “part of God’s plan”?

- a. Nothing.
- b. Saying that suffering is “part of God’s plan” can make it seem like God inflicts suffering on purpose to achieve something.
- c. Saying that suffering is “part of God’s plan” is correct, but God’s plan is secret, hidden, and shouldn’t be spoken about.
- d. None of the above

### Discussion Starter

Has anyone ever said this to you in the midst of something difficult? How did it sit with you?

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### 2. In short, why does God allow suffering?

- a. To control us
- b. To punish us
- c. Because he made a deal with Satan
- d. For the sake of human free will

### Discussion Starter

Does Fr. Mike’s answer to this question make sense to you? How are suffering and freedom connected?

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**3. What is the difference between God's perfect will and God's permissive will?**

- a. They are exactly the same.
- b. God's perfect will refers to what God wants for every creature in each moment: the good, beautiful, and true. His permissive will allows for bad things to happen so that the ultimate aim of our salvation can be attained.
- c. God's permissive will refers to what God wants for every creature in each moment: the good, beautiful, and true.
- d. God's perfect will allows bad things to happen so that the ultimate aim of our salvation can be attained.

**Discussion Starter**

Is there some version of this in you? Do you have a "perfect" and "permissive" will?

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**TALK IT OUT**

- 4. What is a key example of God bringing good and redemption from something that is not a part of his perfect will?
- 5. How have you personally experienced God's ability to bring good and redemption out of suffering?

*Hands On* .....

Make something beautiful, artistic, or useful out of something that has been discarded.

*Food for Thought* .....

Take some time to journal about how the things you have suffered through have been or can be redeemed in your life.

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

## *Closing Prayer*

### **READER (ROMANS 8:31-35)**

*What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

### **LEADER**

*Our Faith transforms the experience of suffering by bringing every discomfort, disappointment, and disaster into union with the cross of Jesus. We consider St. Paul's boast and confidence in the face of great difficulty and ask God to transform our experience of suffering. We ask for the perspective of St. Paul in our daily trials both great and small. We pause and reflect, asking for the Holy Spirit to work within our hearts in this moment.*

*(Pause for reflection)*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*