

Does Jesus Care?

Life can suddenly become harsh, causing us to question whether the Lord cares about us. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study in search of the Lord's Way. In times of pain does Jesus care about me? Stay with us for an encouraging answer.

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and thanks for tuning in today! You might want to call a friend and tell him about the program. We're here searching God's Word for the Lord's Way. We have no doubts the Bible will give us the truth, so we keep on looking to it for the answers. Our goal is to please God because we love Him and want to be close to Him. We also want to be a part of your life each week.

Longing to be close to God is a natural part of life, especially when you are hurting. The sons of Korah in Psalm 42 describe the heartache of longing for God. "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while *they* say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

When tough times comes, many people feel God is distant. They wonder if the Lord is watching and if He cares. They long for God's help and comfort. Does Jesus care when our hearts are broken with grief, when the bills pile up, when the children are hungry, or when we can't seem to get well? Does God hear our prayers?

Nothing, however, escapes the notice of God. Luke 12:6 says that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from God's knowledge. God is not only about to see what happens outwardly, but He can also see the troubles inside your heart. He knows all about you, because He created you. There has never been a single moment in your life when God has not wanted to be close to you and bless you.

We gladly offer the information on this program free. Our friends in churches of Christ support us and want to serve you. If you're looking for a church home or if you'd like a printed copy, a CD or tape of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or by e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call us toll-free. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at searchtv.org.

Ken Helterbrand will lead the Edmond church in song, and then we'll read from Mark 4:35-39.

Frightening, life-threatening storms happened suddenly on the sea of Galilee. In this storm Jesus is asleep, with “his head on a cushion.” The disciples cry out “Master, don’t you care that we are perishing?” We all ask questions like this, and we need an answer. We see the world’s agonies and wonder if God is paying attention. We need help from Someone bigger than we are and need his help now.

Jesus didn’t answer their question. Instead He rebuked the storm and made the water calm. Then Jesus asked the disciples, “How is it that you have no faith?” In so many cases of life, the question is not whether God cares but whether we believe.

Of course Jesus cares. Mark, chapter five, describes how the Lord Jesus delivered Legion, a demon-possessed man who lived like a beast (5:1–20). Later in the chapter Jesus healed a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years (5:25–34) and raised the daughter of Jairus (5:21–24, 35–43).

Someone objects, “But why does God not stop every problem. Why is it the Lord seems asleep and uncaring?” Here is the assumption, that if God doesn’t stop all our problems, He doesn’t care about us. We want God to keep us free from any struggles or difficulties. It’s tempting to question God’s love when we face challenges or disappointments. We think if God loves us, He will protect us from any and every problem.

But is a painless world, free from any problem at all, really the best for us? It may be convenient and comfortable, but is it best for our character, for our growth as individuals. Doesn’t the person who has no problems and has everything his way often get spoiled and think the world revolves around him?

Don’t challenges shape us into people of character? The Bible says in James 1:2-4, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” We may see our trials and struggles the wrong way. We may not realize God permits them, because He sees a greater good with them than without them. Struggles help us become the strong people God desires. So let’s rejoice in our trials, because God uses them to mold us into His people.

James 1:12 says, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.” It doesn’t say “Blessed is the man who has no troubles”

but “blessed is a man who perseveres under trial.” He’s the man who won’t quit on God when things get rough. Because he loves God even in tough times, God will reward him with the crown of life.

The Lord demonstrates He cares. You might ask, “How?” First, He shows He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our sins. He Himself endured the punishment that was rightfully our own. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

God loved His Son Jesus, but He did not stop the crucifixion. Jesus prayed with tears in the Garden to let this cup pass, but God sacrificed His Son because He loved you and me, just as He loved His Son. Atoning for sin was more important to Jesus than freedom from suffering. Have you considered how greatly our Father suffered in sacrificing His Son? No one has grieved more over human evil than God. No one has suffered more than Jesus, who bore the cross for our sins. He showed unmistakably how much He loved us. This loving God asks us to trust Him when we and our loved ones cry out for help.

1 Peter 2:21-23 says, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.” This is what the disciples in the boat needed to do and we need to do: entrust our souls to God! 1 Peter 5:7 urges to cast “all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

God inspired Paul to write the book of Romans at a time when the Roman Christians began facing great persecution. Paul asked in Romans 8:35, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’”

Paul answers the question in verses 37-39, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Their problems did not separate them from the love of God, and your problems won’t separate you.

God did not stop the apostles from being beaten, Stephen from stoning, or James from the sword. God did not keep Paul from imprisonment. Yet not one of these men ever doubted God's love. They knew God would never put more on them than they could bear. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."

Temptations and tests suddenly come our way from this imperfect and sinful world. These tests don't single us out but are common to man. Just as Israel was tempted by idolatry and immorality, so we get tested by the all the temptations of our day. God is not hiding when the trials come. He is faithful! You can trust Him! Nothing you encounter today, tomorrow, or at any time will ever be bigger than what God and you together can handle. He doesn't remove all problems, but God does give us the strength and the ability to bear those challenges. When that problem gets so big we can't handle it, God makes a way of escape so that we'll never get overcome by it.

God sometimes uses the physical struggles we face to keep us from doing ourselves spiritual harm. God gave to the apostle Paul some tremendous, miraculous revelations to help him in his ministry. But God did not want Paul to exalt himself, so He gave him "a thorn in the flesh" to torment him and keep him from exalting himself (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul prayed three times for the Lord to take away his "thorn in the flesh"; but God refused and said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

Paul had to understand this thorn was not going away. Was he bitter? No. He learned something valuable: God's power is perfected in weakness. Paul said, "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." (12:9-10) Struggles remind us of our need for God and how God can powerfully work in our lives.

God's grace is indeed sufficient. Suffering may torment your body, but it can't take away your soul. Suffering may open up for you an opportunity to see the great power of God to help you sustain yourself even in times of great weakness. Jesus does indeed care. Just as Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of

Lazarus, so He weeps with us. The Lord knows when we hurt and provides comfort.

Some continues to ask, “Why the Lord doesn’t stop all evil now?” But if the Lord stopped all evil, wouldn’t that evil also include you? If we ask God to stop all evil, we need to consider the evil things we do. Your sin hurts, it hurts God, it hurts you, and it hurts others. The Lord loves you enough to show you a better way and asks you to change your life by repenting.

Repentance is not punishment but healing. The Lord knows there is a better person inside you, wanting to come out. He knows your repentance will not only bless your life but bless all the people you touch. When you come to Christ and stop sinning, you bless people you formerly hurt. He graciously gives us time to repent. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Jesus loved you and gave you the righteous example to follow. He showed us how to forgive and how to be forgiven. He gave us his Word to guide our lives. He could say: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)

Times of crisis call for the best in people. Bravery, heroism, love, self-sacrifice—all flourish in times of crisis. Yet people who exhibit such traits are cherished and honored as having gone “above and beyond the call of duty.” Was this not the very point Christ was making when He said: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13)?

The most important question is not “why did this happen to me?” but rather “what shall I do now?” Some reject God and abandon Him when sorrow comes their way. Some turn inward in self-pity. Others exercise their faith and find God has not forgotten them. They entrust their souls to Him and find His promise is true: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Not everything that happens to us is good; but let’s not assume the only way God can care for us is to prevent our troubles. God also shows His care by taking the hardest things in our lives and turning them for good, to bless us and to bless others. God has power to prevent, yes; and we have no idea all the harm from

which He has protected us. But God also has power to take things at their worst and make good out of them. He can also do that for you.

Instead of blaming God for pain, look to Him for strength. Struggles remind us God never intended this world to be our home. We are pilgrims, and our lives here are brief. Paul said in Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” We too must learn to see with the eye of faith and trust. The last chapter of our lives has not yet been written. When Jesus comes again, He will bless and comfort His own.

Jesus cares about you. He wants to be your friend. He cares about your physical welfare, about your finances, about your family, and about your future. More than anything, Jesus cares about your soul. The Lord Jesus knows all about you, the good and the bad. He even knows the number of hairs upon your head. In spite of it all, He loves you and cares greatly about every detail of your life.

Sometimes we concentrate so much on our longing for God to act that we forget God is longing for a relationship with us. The Lord deeply desires that we draw close to Him. When we forget Him or get caught up in sin, He yearns for His people to come back. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for sinful people, yearning to have a relationship with them.

Do you have a close, loving relationship with God? Does the Lord see you as someone who is devoted to Him? In your quiet moments as you look into your heart, do you see yourself as a friend to God? If you have not given yourself to the Lord, today is the right day to come to Him. Come to the Lord in faith, trusting in Him and in His Word. Confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In repentance, make Jesus your Lord; let Him rule your life.

Having done these things, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. In baptism the Lord will cleanse you from sin (Acts 22:16), cause you to be born again (John 3:5), and give you newness of life (Romans 6:4). In baptism the Lord will also add you to His church (Acts 2:47).

When you become a Christian you'll find the strength and grace to deal with all of life's struggles. God cares enough to give us the strength to bear what He does not take away. Trust Him.

We hope you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy, a CD, or a tape of this message, mail your request to In Search

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Please attend worship at one of the churches of Christ in your area. We'll be glad to help you find one nearby. They love guests, and you'll be glad you visited. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.