

(continued from the front)

into years of disappointment. Eventually, she returned to admit her failure: there was no home to be found that had never encountered trouble.

Given this reality, we must ask ourselves: Are we prepared? Is our faith strong enough to withstand the challenges of tragedy, suffering, sickness, death, and loss? Perhaps the answers lie in considering two words: understanding and opportunity.

Understanding—The true ability to cope with the bad things of life comes from understanding why they happen in the first place. The Bible provides at least three answers to this question.

First, suffering is the result of man's free will, which was given to Him by God. Many Christians struggle with trying to get God "off the hook" when it comes to suffering and tragedy. In doing so, they will often misrepresent His nature. But we should have no issue with acknowledging that God created a world in which suffering was possible. He did this by giving mankind the freedom of choice. We were created this way because we were created in His image (Genesis 1:27).

Free moral agency—the ability to choose a particular course of action or to refrain from it—is a divine attribute. God was neither required nor compelled to create the world, to care about those He created, or take on flesh to save it from its own mistakes. But He chose to do these things anyway! As finite and imperfect beings, our freedom of choice inevitably brings with it the possibility to choose wrongly. And when we do, bad things can result. The choice to use tobacco can lead to cancer. The choice to be lazy could lead to poverty. The choice to have multiple sexual partners can lead to chronic or even deadly diseases. Of course, not all suffering stems from human choices, but much of it does.

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Are You Ready for Trouble?



It is true—bad things will happen. In fact, I will assume that bad things have already happened in your life—perhaps even today.

There is a story of a grieving mother who petitioned Buddha to restore the life of her deceased child. Buddha promised to grant her request if she would bring him but a few grains of rice from a home that had never known trouble. With great zeal, she set out to accomplish this task, full of optimism. However, the longer she searched, the more discouraged she became. Days of searching turned

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Elders

Ron Akers
Phil Degelia
Tim Simmons

Deacons

Mike Fox
(Building and Grounds)
Jeff Kiel
(Building and Grounds)
Dean Rosser
(Safety)
Roland Snipes
(Benevolence)
Keith Tolbert
(Education)

Minister

Bryan Winn