

"Does Jesus Care?"

Life can suddenly come crashing down, causing us to question whether the Lord cares. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and this is a Bible study In Search of the Lord's Way. Now in times of pain, we ask, does Jesus really care about us? Stay with us for an encouraging answer.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. Please tell your friends about this program. We're here searching God's Word for the Lord's Way. And we have no doubts that 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 we 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 natural, and especially when you're 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 come, many times 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 the loss of a loved one, 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. You remember Luke 12 and verse 6 says that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from God's knowledge. God not only sees what happens outwardly, He also sees the troubles inside your heart. He knows all about you, because He created you. There's never been a single moment in your life when God hasn't wanted to be close to you and bless you.

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

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Mark 4 verses 35 to 39, and we'll see just how much Jesus cares.

Our reading today comes from the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 4, verses 35 to 39. "On that day, when evening came, He said to them, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?' And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Hush, be still.' And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm." That's a story about the life of Jesus. Let's pray together. Oh Father, we're thankful that Your son Jesus and You can be a part of our lives, that You can still the storms that we face. And Father help us to be obedient to Your will in all things. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

Frightening, life-threatening storms happen suddenly on the sea of Galilee. Now in this storm Jesus is asleep, with "his head on a cushion." The disciples cry out "Master, don't you care that we're perishing?" You know we all ask questions like this when we're frightened and we need an answer. We

see the world's agonies and we wonder if God is paying attention. We need help from Someone bigger than we are and we need it now.

Well Jesus didn't answer their question. Instead, He rebuked the storm and He made the water calm. And then Jesus asked His disciples, "Well, how is it that you have no faith?" The real question is not whether Jesus 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 (in chapter 5, verses 1 through 20). Later in the chapter Jesus healed a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and He raised the daughter of Jairus.

Someone objects, "But why doesn't God stop every problem? Why does the Lord seem asleep and uncaring?" Are you assuming that if God doesn't stop all our problems, that He doesn't care about us? Some folks want God to keep us free from any struggles or difficulties. And it's tempting to question God's love when we face challenges or disappointments. We think if God really loves us, then He'll protect us from any and every problem.

But is a painless world, free from any problem, really the best world for us? Oh it may be convenient and it may even be 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 verses 2 to 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 that God permits them, because He sees a greater good with them than without them. Struggles help us to become the strong people that God desires. So let's rejoice in our trials, because God uses them to mold us into His people.

James 1 and verse 12 says, "Blessed is the 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." Now 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 a crown of life.

The Lord demonstrates that He cares in many ways. You might ask, "Well how?" Well first, He shows He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our sins. He Himself endured the punishment, and frankly, that was rightfully ours. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24 says, "That 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."

Now God loved His Son Jesus, but He didn't 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. Jesus also prayed, "Your will be done." You see 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 has. No one has suffered more than Jesus, who bore the cross for our sins. He showed unmistakably how much He loved us. Now this loving God asks us to trust Him when we cry out for help.

1 Peter 2 verses 21 to 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 didn't revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but He kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Now this is what

the disciples in the boat needed to do and what we need to do: and that is to entrust our souls to God! 1 Peter 5 and verse 7 urges us to cast “all our anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

Now 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 and verse 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’re being killed all the daylong; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’”

Now Paul answers this question in verses 37 to 39, he says “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 my friend, your problems won’t separate you from His love either.

God didn’t stop the apostles from being beaten, Stephen from being stoned, or James from the sword. God didn’t keep Paul from imprisonment or remove his thorn in the flesh. Yet not one of these men ever doubted God’s love. They knew God would never put more on them than they could bear.

Now God isn’t hiding when our trials come. He’s faithful! You can trust Him! And nothing that you’ll encounter today, tomorrow, or at any time will ever be bigger than what God and you together can handle. He doesn’t remove all our problems, no, but God does give us the strength to bear those burdens and challenges. When that problem gets so big that we can’t handle it alone, God steps in so we’ll never get overcome by it. Remember the promise of Jesus in Matthew 11:28 to 30, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

God sometimes uses the physical struggles that 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 didn’t want Paul to exalt himself, and so He gave him “that thorn in the flesh” to torment him and keep him from exalting himself (2 Corinthians 12 and verse 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 that 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. And therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, (yeah, I’m weak, it’s) then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12, verses 9 and 10) You see, struggles remind us of our need for God and how God can powerfully work in our lives.

Now 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. And 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 He provides comfort.

Some continue to ask, “Well why doesn’t the Lord just 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 that we do. Your sin hurts, it hurts God, it hurts you, and it hurts other people. The Lord loves you enough to show you a better way and asks you to change your life by repenting.

Now repentance is not some punishment, but it's how we heal. The Lord knows that there's a better person inside of you, wanting to come out. He knows that your repentance will not only bless your life but bless all the people that you touch. And when you come to Christ and you stop that sin, you bless people that you formerly hurt. He graciously gives us time to repent, he's patient. 2 Peter 3 and verse 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."

You see, Jesus loved us enough to give us 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, and He answers our prayers. In 1 John 5 verses 14 to 15 He says, "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask Him anything according to His will He hears us. And we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him."

Times of crisis call for the best in people. Bravery, heroism, love, self-sacrifice—all of these things flourish in times of crisis. And yet people who exhibit such traits are cherished and their 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 verse 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 they find that 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 and verse 28)

Now not everything that happens to us is good, oh no; but let's not assume that the only way that God can care for us is to prevent our troubles. God also shows His care and His power by taking the hardest things in our lives and using them for good, to bless us and to bless others. God has the power to prevent, yes; and we have no idea all the harm from which He has protected us already. But God also has the power to take things at their worst and make good out of them. And He can also do that for you.

So, instead of blaming God for our pains, let's look to Him for strength. Struggles remind us that God never intended this world to be our home. We're pilgrims, and our lives here are brief. Paul said in Romans 8 and verse 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." And so we too must learn to see with the eye of faith and trust. The last chapter of our lives have not yet been written. And when Jesus comes again, He will bless and comfort His own. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful that in Your love You have not only prepared for us a way of life that can lead to better things here, but better things to be with You in the future. Help us to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen!

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

Now 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 to Him. 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 truly devoted to Him? In your quiet moments as you look into your heart, do you see yourself as a friend to God? If you haven't 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; and let Him rule your life.

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

Now when you become a Christian you'll find the strength and the 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. Trust Him.

Well, we hope that you've been blessed by today's study of God's Word. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, "Does Jesus Care," then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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Please worship with one of the churches of Christ in your area. We'll be glad to help you find a loving and Biblically sound congregation nearby. They love guests, and they'll be glad you worshipped with them. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.