

Clay's Corner

Question: "Why does God allow the innocent to suffer?"

Answer: In answering this question, the first thing to consider is whether such a thing as "the innocent" even exists. According to the Bible, "the heart is wicked and deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9), and "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Therefore, no one is innocent in the sense of being sinless. Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, and mankind has been in rebellion ever since. Sin's effects permeate everything, and the suffering we see all around us is a direct result of that sin.

But God did not leave us here to suffer pointlessly. Our loving and merciful God has a perfect plan to use that suffering to accomplish His threefold purpose. First, He uses pain and suffering to draw us to Himself so that we will cling to Him. Jesus said, "In the world you shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Trials and distress are not something unusual in life; they are part of what it means to be human in a fallen world. In Christ we have an anchor that holds fast in all the storms of life, but if we never sail into those storms, how would we know that? It is in times of despair and sorrow that we reach out to Him, and, if we are His children, we always find Him there waiting to comfort and uphold us through it all. In this way, He proves His faithfulness to us and ensures that we will stay close to Him. An added benefit is that as we experience God's comfort through trials, we are then able to comfort others in the same way (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Second, He proves to us that our faith is real through the suffering and pain that are inevitable in this life. How we respond to suffering is determined by the genuineness of our faith. Those with faith truly from God, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), will not be crushed by suffering, but will come through the trial with their faith intact, having been "proven through fire" so that it "might be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). Those are the ones who do not shake their fists at God or question His goodness, but instead "count it all joy" (James 1:2), knowing that trials prove that they are truly the children of God. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, because having been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12).

Finally, God uses suffering to take our eyes off this world and put them on the next. The Bible continually exhorts us to not get caught up in the things of this world, but to look forward to the world to come. This world and all that is in it will pass away, but the kingdom of God is eternal. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and those who would follow Him must not see the things of this life, both good and bad, as the end of the story. Even the sufferings we endure and which seem so terrible "are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Could God prevent all suffering? Of course. But He assures us that "all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). So even suffering is part of the "all things" that God is using to accomplish His good purposes. His plan is perfect, His character is flawless, and those who trust Him will not be disappointed.

- from GotQuestions.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Singing at The Heights

Please join us **TODAY at 3:30 p.m.** for our monthly singing at The Heights of Gonzales nursing home.

Fellowship Meal

Please join us **next Sunday, Jan. 29**, for our 5th-Sunday Fellowship Meal in the annex immediately following morning worship. Anyone who is able is asked to bring a dish to share.

Bridal Shower

You are invited to a bridal shower honoring Megan Mason, bride-elect of Daniel Fisher, **next Sunday, Jan. 29, at 2 p.m.** at the home of Stacia Sweeney. The couple is registered at Bed Bath & Beyond.

Youth & Family Super Bowl Party

Youth and their families are invited to a Super Bowl Party at the Chrismons on **Sunday, Feb. 5, at 5 p.m.** Please bring chips, dip, cookies, or other snacks, desserts and finger foods to share.

Wednesday Evening Meal & Bible Study

Please join us at **5:15 p.m. this Wednesday** for dinner in the annex. This week's entrée is cornbread chicken pot pie. Anyone who is able is asked to bring sides to share, but please do not let that prevent you from joining us. Classes for all ages follow at 6 p.m.

Volunteers Needed: Wednesday Night Meals

Volunteers are needed to prepare the entrée for meals on Wednesday evenings. To help, please sign up in the foyer. **If you signed up to prepare a meal, please send your menu to Victoria by Wednesday the week before your turn.**

Volunteers Needed: Communion Prep

Volunteers are needed to prepare communion in the coming months. This task takes very little time and is a great service to the congregation. Please sign up on the large bulletin board in the foyer.

Sunday Night Small Group

There is a small group that meets in the annex each Sunday evening from 6-7 p.m. The Lord's Supper is available.

Tuesday Morning Men's Prayer Breakfast

All men are invited to the annex each Tuesday morning at **6:20 a.m.** for a time of breakfast, prayer and fellowship.

Ladies Bible Class

Ladies Bible Class continues **this Tuesday, Jan. 24, at 8:30 a.m.** at Jennie Chrismon's house in Shiner. The book for class is *Wives After God: Encouraging Each Other in Faith and Marriage* by Jennifer Smith. Please contact Jennie if you would like more information.

Canyon Lake Ladies Day

You're invited to Ladies Day at Canyon Lake Church on **Saturday, March 4, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.** Lunch is provided. This year's theme is "Making Christ the Lord of Your Life in Every Season of Your Life!" and features speaker Becky Blackmon, author of *The Pearl Seeker* and *The Begging Place*. **RSVPs are due by Saturday, Feb. 25.**

Mark Your Calendars:

Feb. 12

- Youth Sunday: Valentine's Lunch

Feb. 26

- Fellowship Meal
- Singing at The Heights

PRAYER LIST

- **Pauline Alvarez** (health)
- **Lauren Babb** (health)
- **Aaron Banks**
- **John Beiler** (health)
- **Family of Kenneth Chrismon** (Cody's grandfather)
- **Dawn Clarke** (Shirley Kuchynka's daughter)
- **Betty Cox** (Brent Barnick's sister—homebound)
- **Dixie** (Debbie Faires's mother—Alzheimer's)
- **Jake Faires** (Air Force, deployed to Jordan)
- **Paul Faires** (health)
- **Steven Faires, and Lexi**
- **Cruz and Rae'Anna Flores** (family losses)
- **Leon Giesecke** (Jan Moerbe's father—throat cancer)
- **Herbert and Nelle Hahn** (health)
- **Debbie Jalufka**
- **Sandra Jetton** (health)
- **Kevin and Victoria Johnson** (healthy pregnancy/baby)
- **Family of Emory Meier** (Cheryl Pitts's father)
- **Junior and Ada Powell** (Sharron Mason's brother-in-law and sister—health)
- **David Taylor** (Cody Chrismon's uncle—cancer)
- **Adrienne Zingrich** (Susan Barnick's cousin—cancer)

If you have any announcements or prayer requests you wish to have included in the bulletin or to sign up for weekly e-mail updates, please contact Victoria Johnson: 325-518-9205, victoria@gonzaleschurchofchrist.org.

YOUTH ZONE

MONDAY, JAN. 23
JUNIOR HIGH BOYS BASKETBALL
SHINER V. YORKTOWN, 5:30 P.M.
JUNIOR HIGH GIRLS BASKETBALL
SHINER @ YORKTOWN, 5 P.M.
TUESDAY, JAN. 24
HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL
GONZALES VARSITY @ EASTSIDE MEMORIAL, 6:30 P.M.
FRIDAY, JAN. 27
HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL
GONZALES VARSITY V. NAVARRO, 6:30 P.M.



Caden Chrismon—Shiner Jr High Boys Basketball
Jacy Chrismon—Shiner Jr High Girls Basketball

Morgan Mason—Gonzales HS Girls Varsity Basketball
Carly Pustka—Shiner Jr High Girls Basketball