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What is God's providence?



1 PETER 5:6-7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Have you ever put a picture puzzle together? When you spread out all the pieces, it's quite a mess! However, each piece has a special place. When all the pieces are in the right place, you see a beautiful picture!

God has a plan for your life that has many pieces to it. There are many good things that God has planned for you. He also allows hard things to happen in your life. Like a great puzzle, God is putting all of these things together in His special way. This is called God's providence (PROV-uh-dense). Providence means that God always cares for His people and controls all that happens in their lives. The Bible says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).

At times you may not understand the reason something happens to you, but nothing is ever a surprise to God. You can praise God for His providence even when you can't see how the puzzle will turn out. Each day look for ways that God is at work. God always knows and does what is best. Thank Him today for His providence.



THINK ABOUT IT!

Name one of the good or hard things God has allowed in your life.



TALK TO GOD

Thank God for his providence in your life. Ask Him to help you trust Him in all that happens.

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Does God have a purpose for my life?



EPHESIANS 2:8, 10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

“Why am I here?” Many people have asked that question. Is there a reason that God put you on this Earth? The answer is, “Yes!” God does everything for a reason. People keep life going on our planet, but there’s so much more than just living.

In His perfect plan, God made you special. There’s no one else like you, even if you have a twin! Your personality, the way you think about things, what makes you laugh or cry—all make you different from others. God purposely made you this way. You are one-of-a-kind!

God also has a purpose (plan) for what He wants you to become. He wants your life to glorify (honor) Him. In the Bible God says, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). God has good plans for your life. In His providence, He allows only what is best. Even when hard things happen, remember that God has a purpose—a plan—that He is working out for your good and His glory.



THINK ABOUT IT!

Even when hard things , God has a for your life.



TALK TO GOD

Thank God for making you special. Thank Him that He has a good plan for your life. Trust Him to work His plan out.

17

What was God's purpose for Joseph?



GENESIS 41:15-16

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

The Bible tells about a young man named Joseph. He grew up with ten older brothers! Joseph's father loved him most of all. He even gave Joseph a beautiful robe. But Joseph's brothers were jealous.

One day, the brothers were in a field taking care of their father's sheep when they saw Joseph coming. They took his beautiful robe and threw Joseph into a deep hole in the ground. Later, they sold Joseph as a slave. Joseph went through many more hard times. He even had to go to prison in Egypt for something he didn't do.

While Joseph was in prison, the king had a strange dream. God gave Joseph wisdom to understand the dream. The king rewarded Joseph by giving him an important job. God told Joseph to save lots of grain because soon there would be no food to eat. Joseph obeyed and many people were saved from starving.

God had good plans for Joseph's life, even though it was sometimes hard. God's purpose was for Joseph to learn to trust and obey Him. Joseph's hard times prepared him for the important work that God had for him to do. Joseph followed God's plan and his life glorified God.



THINK ABOUT IT!

What are two ways you see God's providence in Joseph's life?



TALK TO GOD

Thank God for making you special. Trust Him to work out His good plan for your life.

18

How did Joseph respond to hard times?



GENESIS 50:19-20

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Imagine being hated by your family. Imagine being sold as a slave. Imagine being put into prison for something you didn’t do. Those hard things happened to Joseph in the Bible.

How did he respond? Did he get angry with God? Did he want to get even with his brothers? No! Even though it was hard, Joseph trusted and obeyed God. He worked hard and did the best that he could. After much suffering, Joseph became an important man in Egypt.

One day his brothers came to buy grain. They didn’t recognize Joseph, but he recognized them. Joseph had the power to punish them. However, instead of punishing them, Joseph forgave his brothers! He said, “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). Joseph took care of his family the rest of his life.

Joseph saw that everything that had happened was part of God’s plan. God had cared for him and worked out His purpose. Although people may have evil plans, God’s good plans can never be ruined. Joseph responded to his hard times with forgiveness and trust in God’s providence. How do you respond to your hard times?



THINK ABOUT IT!

What hard thing in your life do you need to trust God with?



TALK TO GOD

Thank God for taking the bad things in your life and turning them into good. Ask Him to help you forgive others.

19

How should I respond to hard times?



JAMES 1:2, 12

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...¹²Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

“It’s not fair!” “Why do bad things always happen to me?” Have you ever said or thought things like this? We all go through hard times in our lives. Illness or divorce in your family can be hard experiences to go through. Maybe your family has no place to live because your parents don’t have a job. Maybe others make fun of you because you’re a Christian.

It’s tempting to respond to hard times by getting angry with God. You might think, “If God really loved me, He wouldn’t let this bad thing happen.” That’s not true. God always loves and cares for you! He is always working out His plan for your life. God uses hard times to help you trust Him more. In this way, others will see Jesus at work in you, and your life will honor God.

When hard times come, remember that God is sovereign—He is in control! He knows about everything that happens to you, and He allows only what is best. Tell God how you feel. Ask Him to help you trust Him. Ask Him to give you quietness on the inside. Then, patiently wait for God to work things out for your good.



THINK ABOUT IT!

Write a note to God telling how you feel about the things happening in your life right now.



TALK TO GOD

Thank God that He has a purpose for you. Ask Him to help you trust Him to work out His plan.

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Why is there suffering in the world?



ROMANS 5:3-4

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

Why can't things just be good all the time? Why does there have to be suffering? God wants you to grow strong to be like Him. That means He sometimes allows you to suffer.

Suffering means to hurt in your body or your feelings. Some people suffer from sickness and pain. Other people suffer because of sadness, anger or hurt feelings. There was no suffering in the world until the first people, Adam and Eve, sinned. Part of the result of that sin is that suffering would be in the world. Now everyone has times of suffering.

Sometimes God allows suffering to help you grow to be more like Him. Suffering can help you become more patient as you wait for God to work. Suffering can help you learn to have courage as you trust God to take care of you.

God never lets you suffer alone. He is always there to help you. One day God will take away all suffering from His children. Until then, trust Him to be with you. Let Him help you to be calm on the inside even while you are suffering. Let God use suffering in your life to help you grow strong.



THINK ABOUT IT!

What are some reasons people suffer?



TALK TO GOD

Thank God for being good and wise. Thank Him for being with you in your suffering. Ask Him to help you trust Him.



2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

The Bible tells about a man who suffered more than most people. His name was Job. His children were killed in a storm. He lost his house and all that he owned. He also had a painful sickness. Some people said that God was punishing him, but Job knew that God cared. He told God about his problems and how he felt inside.

You need to do what Job did when you are suffering. You might feel angry. Maybe you think God doesn't care. But, God does care. Tell Him about your suffering. Ask God to help you be patient and brave.

One way God comforts His children is through His Word. If you have a Bible, read some verses in the book of Psalms. God's Word says that through patience and comfort of the Bible, we can have hope (Romans 15:4).

As you talk to God and read His Word, He may give you an answer to your problem. However, He may choose to comfort you in a different way. He may just remind you that He loves you and has a plan for your life. Be like Job and trust that God is at work, even in your suffering. Let God comfort you.



THINK ABOUT IT!

God wants to give you when you are

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TALK TO GOD

Thank God for comforting you when you suffer.
Thank Him for His Word that gives you hope.