

## **Discipleship – Summer 2012 – Week beginning 17<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Home group / study notes: Why do bad things happen to good people?**

*Feel free to use as much or as little as you wish. There may be too much material this week – choose whatever is most appropriate (not necessarily what you are most comfortable with!) Don't rush the discussions in order to 'finish' the study, and make sure you allow time for prayer ministry this week.*

**Read** Luke 13:1-5. What questions do you think Jesus was addressing? We only have his answers. Can you put into your own words the gist of what Jesus is saying?

At the outbreak of the second 'World War' in 1939 a Christian leader at the time (Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones) preached this:

*God permits and allows such things as war to chastise and punish us; to teach us, and to convict us of our sin, and above all to call us to repentance and acceptance of his gracious offer. The vital question for us therefore is not to ask, 'Why does God allow war?'. The question for us to address is, 'Are we learning the lesson and repenting before God for the sin of our own hearts and the entire human race that leads to such results?'*

What do you make of this? How do you think it fits in with Jesus' words in Luke 13? In the light of what we have read so far, think of some different ways of completing 'God is .....

In the light of Romans 3:23 ('All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'), have a think about the opposite question: 'Why do good things happen to bad people?'

**Read** Ps 73:1      Statement about God. 'God is good'. OK?

**Read** Ps 73:2-12      In what ways can you identify with what the writer is feeling? Modern examples?

The dilemma is one which is widely used by agnostics and atheists, and which we do well to address:

"If God is good, he must wish to abolish evil. If God is all-powerful, he must be able to abolish evil. But evil exists, therefore God cannot be both good and all-powerful."

**Read** Ps 73:13-14      Honest doubts. Fine to have them and to acknowledge them; but we also need to face them and ask God to resolve them. Can you help each other with this, without giving mere platitudes?

**Read** Ps 73:15-20      What new perspective enables the writer to resolve his doubts?

**Pray** Ps 73:21-26 slowly. Allow God to show you the bitternesses, the grievances ('It's not fair'), and then to lead you on with sure truths despite what happens in our lifetimes.

**Read** 1 Peter 4:12-16      Jesus says, 'Follow me'. Are you prepared for these consequences when you say, 'Yes'?

CS Lewis writes, in 'Mere Christianity':

*'When I was a child I often had toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something to dull the pain for the night. But I didn't go to my mother until the pain was very bad. The reason I did not go was this: I did not doubt she would give me aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist the next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I knew those dentists. They would fiddle around with all sorts of other teeth which did not ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie.*

*Now our Lord is like the dentists. Dozens of people go to him to be cured of a particular sin or pain. Well, he will do that all right: but he will not stop there. If once you call on him he will give you the whole treatment. That is why he warned people to 'Count the cost' before becoming Christians. 'Make no mistake', he says, 'If you let me in I will make you perfect'.*

Is anyone brave enough to ask for prayer ministry from the others in the group? One way is to come forward, sit in the centre, and be prayed over. You don't need to ask for specific things, though you can; just bask in the blessings as one or two pray, and let God's Holy Spirit minister.