

When God Doesn't Make Sense

Book Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: When God Doesn't Make Sense

Can you think of a time in your life when you prayed and hoped for something to happen (or *not* happen), and God did not answer your prayers as you wished He would? What happened to your faith as a result? Did you separate from the vine?

How do our expectations set us up for disappointment? Does this mean that we should expect nothing from God? Why or why not?

What is the difference between putting our trust in God and having firm expectations of what He will do?

Chapter 2: The Betrayal Barrier

Have there been any times in your life when you thought you knew the right answer to a problem, but in retrospect you realize God's answer was better?

How would you respond to someone who says that becoming a Christian means that bad things should never happen to us?

What do you think of Dr. Dobson's statement that "our faith almost guarantees us some form of abuse from the world" (page 38)? Can you think of any examples of this?

What does it mean to remain joyful in the midst of suffering? Does it mean to paste on a smile and pretend nothing is wrong?

Chapter 3: God Makes Sense Even When He Doesn't Make Sense

Describe some examples of how we put God in a box, assume that His power has limitations, or otherwise diminish His capacity when we are faced with a crisis. Can you think of some more appropriate responses?

How are we tempted to become too reliant on—or arrogant about—human logic, technology, and knowledge?

Do you think that fully relying on God is more challenging for modern Christians than for ancient ones? Why or why not?

How hard is it for you to live with "Things You Don't Understand" . . . and may *never* understand? Are you at peace about that, or is it difficult for you? Do you sometimes think that God owes you an explanation?

Chapter 4: Acceptance or Despair

What are some ways that we can prepare ourselves for a crisis so that our faith doesn't waver under fire?

Review the stories of Police Chief Vernon on pages 77-82 and the Conway family on pages 83-89. Are there any aspects of these stories that particularly touch your heart? What lessons about faith can you take away from them?

Have you ever been in trouble personally because of your faith? If so, how did you get through the experience?

Chapter 5: “He Will Deliver Us, But If Not . . .”

Do you honestly believe that God hears the prayers of His people? Why or why not?

Have you ever witnessed a dramatic answer to prayer—in your own life or someone else’s? If so, explain.

Why is it good that God does not answer all our prayers the way we think He should?

James and Shirley Dobson have placed the Lord at the center of their marriage and look to God for strength and provision. Can you say the same for your family? Why or why not?

Chapter 6: Questions and Answers

Review the questions in this chapter. Do any of them speak to a challenging situation in your life? Are any of Dr. Dobson’s responses particularly helpful to you?

What assurance do we have that God will always do what is best for us?

If you feel yourself growing distant from God, is He moving away, or are you? What are some things you can do to stop the drift?

Do you believe in miracles? Explain your response.

Chapter 7: The Adversity Principle

On page 146, scientist Stephen Hawking is quoted as saying, “When one’s expectations are reduced to zero, one really does appreciate everything one has.” What do you think about that statement? Do you agree? What would your life be like if you reduced your expectations to zero?

Explain how adversity can build character in a person. Can you think of any examples from your life where adversity made you—or someone you know—stronger?

Conversely, can you think of examples where an easy, carefree existence led to weakness of character?

Chapter 8: Faith Must Be Tough

In what ways are the demands of the Christian life at odds with the individualism and self-fulfillment that drives our culture?

Do you think that the theology taught in churches has shifted from encouraging self-discipline to endorsing self-indulgence? Explain your response.

What was the apostle Paul's secret of contentment? How can you practice this attitude in your own life?

Chapter 9: The Wages of Sin

Discuss how sin works like a cancer in our lives and our society.

Sometimes bad things happen as a direct result of sin. Why is this plain truth so hard for our modern culture to accept?

What is Satan's role in the trouble we face? What promises has God made to us concerning Satan?

Chapter 10: More Questions and Answers

Review the questions in this chapter. Do any of them speak to a challenging situation in your life? Are any of Dr. Dobson's responses particularly helpful to you?

Discuss the role of intercessory prayer. Why is it important for us to pray for others?

How would you describe the difference between taking pleasure in our human accomplishments and being arrogant about them?

What do you think about the unseen spirit world described in this chapter? Was this a new idea for you? Have you ever experienced its effects in your life?

Chapter 11: Beyond the Betrayal Barrier

What does the Lord want from us most of all? What is the reward for those who have this quality?

Imagine your own personal "Heroes' Hall of Fame." Who is in it? Why?

The next time you are going through a crisis, do you think it might be helpful to remind yourself that the things of this world are temporary?

Has reading this book changed your thinking at all about the nature of God and the relationship you can have with Him? If so, in what way(s)?