

# Something's Wrong

## FACING THE HURT AND CONFUSION

(Links with the introduction in *If God Is Good*, pages 1–5.)

*Again, a quick reminder:* Here and throughout this study guide...

- *if you're following the less intensive overview approach* (typically a four-week course), do all the sections that begin with a single-bullet (•) heading.
- *if you're pursuing the more exploratory approach* (typically eight weeks), complete *both* the single-bullet *and* the double-bullet (••) sections.
- *if you're taking the most intensive approach* (thirteen weeks), complete *everything*—including the triple-bullet (•••) sections.

Review the introduction for more details.

### ● FOCUS IN

Our outlook on God and the world around us will be radically affected by how we answer this question: if God is good...*why all this evil and suffering?*

In our search for answers, all of us bring our own burdens to the journey—burdens that can shake our faith to the core. Meanwhile, to find the right perspectives as we try to make sense of life, we need to let our thinking be shaped by the truth of God's Word.

### ● INTERACT

Think about your own experiences and perspectives regarding evil and suffering as you read the following brief excerpt from Randy Alcorn's *If*

*God Is Good.* (Throughout this study guide, all the excerpts from Randy’s book will be set off with pointers (✂✂), like the quote below. Each time you see that mark, read the excerpt, think about it, and then respond to the question that follows.)

✂ How we answer this book’s central question will radically affect how we see God and the world around us.

We may want to turn away from world suffering and refuse to reflect on the significance of our own pain; we just want it to go away. But despite the superficiality of our culture, we remain God’s image-bearers—thinking and caring people, wired to ask questions and seek answers.

No question looms larger than the central question of this book: If God is good...*why all this evil and suffering?* If God loves us, how can he justify allowing (or sending) the sometimes overwhelming difficulties we face?

Does this great question interest you? If so, I invite you to join me on a journey of discovery. ✂

1. How would you describe your own interests and concerns regarding this topic? Why is that “central question” Randy mentioned an important issue for you personally?

✂ While traveling this long road (researching what Scripture says about evil and suffering), I found something surprising: the journey was not only rewarding, but fascinating, enlightening, and at times downright enjoyable. I know it sounds counterintuitive—shouldn’t it depress someone to meditate on evil and suffering? In fact, I’d already seen enough evil and suffering to feel deeply troubled. What I needed was perspective. Instead of being disheartened, I’m encouraged.

In this process, I’ve taken the most pleasure in focusing on God, exploring his attributes of goodness, love, holiness, justice, patience, grace, and mercy. While my journey

hasn't unearthed easy answers, I'm astonished at how much insight Scripture offers. ✂

2. To what extent do you share with Randy the sense of being "deeply troubled" by the evil and suffering you've seen?

✂ We each bring our own burdens on the journey.

If abuse, rape, desertion, paralysis, debilitating disease, or the loss of a loved one has devastated you, then this issue isn't theoretical, philosophical, or theological. It's deeply personal. Logical arguments won't satisfy you; in fact, they might offend you. You need help with the *emotional* problem of evil, not merely the *logical* problem of evil.

Though I write personally, from the heart, and tell stories of great courage and perspective, I must also present a case from Scripture and appeal to logic. But remember this: you are a whole person, and the path to your heart travels through your mind. Truth matters. To touch us at the heart level—and to keep touching us over days, months, years, and decades—truth must work its way into our *minds*. ✂

3. Randy mentions approaching this topic *emotionally*, as well as *logically* and *scripturally*. For you personally, what part does God's Word play in your understanding of absolute truth?

## ●● EXPLORE FURTHER

(For more exploration, notice the **bold-text** sentences as you page through *IGIG*'s introduction, and read them over. Take time to stop and read the continuing paragraphs that interest you most. Then respond to the questions below.)

4. Glance over the text of the *IGIG* introduction, look for the following quoted scriptures, and highlight or underline

them (or you can simply look them up in your own Bible): Exodus 3:7 and 1 Peter 1:7. Together, what perspective from God do these two verses give us about this topic of evil and suffering?

5. Look also at these two quoted scriptures in the *IGIG* introduction: 2 Timothy 3:16 and Isaiah 55:11. How do they reinforce your need to have true biblical convictions and perspectives on this sometimes confusing and disturbing topic?
6. What do you need to understand more thoroughly in order to trust and accept God's goodness in the face of the world's suffering and evil?
7. As you look over the bold-text statements in *IGIG*'s introduction, which one do you think is most important right now, and why?

### ●●● INVESTIGATE DEEPER

(For more intensive study, first read through all of the *IGIG* introduction. Then answer the questions below.)

8. Randy writes in *IGIG* that he desires for God to “give us the strength to face a world that is not what it once was, or what it one day will be” (page 5). How would you explain those phrases about the world from your own understanding of biblical teaching?

9. Which stories or illustrations in the *IGIG* introduction did you find yourself most drawn to, and why? How were they helpful for you?
10. Look up these scriptures in your own Bible, and record the truths you find regarding this topic of suffering, evil, and God: Judges 10:16 and Revelation 21:4.