

# “GOD IS DISTANT AND DISINTERESTED IN WHAT HAPPENS”

## Prayer Requests

### Focus

Deism is the view that God created the world but then removed himself from its operation, like a clockmaker who creates the clock but then lets it run on its own. In other words, deists believe God is not directly involved in this world, but deists aren't the only ones who think this way. Because of the suffering that exists, many people—and at times this even applies to us—think that God is distant and disinterested. They think he doesn't really care about the evil that exists. So, does God care? The goal of this lesson is to show not only that God does care for this world but that he is deeply interested in each one of us.

### Activity

- You work for a magazine and you just found out that you are going to get to interview God. Your chief editor gives you these questions to ask. Write down a few thoughts as to what you think his answers will be.

*If you are love, why does evil exist?*

*Why don't you answer the prayers of those who suffer?*

*What is the purpose of evil? Are you responsible for it?*

*It seems like people just get away with evil; do they? Do you care?*

We stand under the unfathomable, sovereign will of God. One man has this particular trouble, another man has that; the one suffers today, the other tomorrow; the one suffers much, the other little; the one suffers natural, usual evils, the other suffers for the name of Christ. Hidden from our eyes is the reason why God imposes such suffering at all, why he dispenses them so differently. This alone is sure, that all things must work together for good, i.e. for sanctification and salvation, to those who love God.

(Prof. A. Pieper, *Our Great Heritage*, Vol II, p. 162)

## Providential Points

- 1) Take one minute and underline the portion of the following passages that demonstrate how God is interested with what happens in the world.

*Isaiah 43:2* When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

*Isaiah 49:15* “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”

*Psalms 147:4* He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

*Luke 12:7* Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

*1 Peter 5:7* Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

- 2) The fact that God cares for his creation is called his providence. There are three facets of God's providence.

*Psalms 145:15*—“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.”

\_\_\_\_\_: God's daily \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ of his creation

*Acts 17:28*—“For in him we live and move and have our being.”

*Colossians 1:17*—“In [Jesus] all things hold together.”

\_\_\_\_\_: God enables creation to \_\_\_\_\_. If God were to stop blessing, \_\_\_\_\_ could exist.

*Jeremiah 10:23*—“LORD, I know that people's lives are not their own; it is not for them to direct their steps.”

\_\_\_\_\_: God \_\_\_\_\_ the affairs of creation to \_\_\_\_\_ his will.

What are the implications of this final passage for the plans you make for your life?

- 3) As you read the following passages, identify why it may **seem to some** that Jesus is not interested in the world.

*Romans 8:19-23 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*

*2 Peter 3:9—“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

*Matthew 24:3-14 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup> You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>7</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are the beginning of birth pains. <sup>9</sup> “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. <sup>10</sup> At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup> and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. <sup>12</sup> Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup> but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

- In what ways **do** these passages demonstrate that Jesus is interested in what happens in the world?

4) Read the passages below.

*John 3:16—“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.”*

*Isaiah 53:5,6,10—“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.”*

*Ephesians 1:22—“God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.”*

- What is the greatest evidence that God is not distant or disinterested?
- How do these truths impact how you view the world?

### Discussion

- 1) Some say, “If only God would appear and show us that he is in control, then we’d recognize that he cares!” Use the Bible to demonstrate that this doesn’t work the way we would think.
- 2) As we have seen, God does care about what happens in the world. But, we might say, he does “wear masks.” He often works through the people or institutions he places in our lives. He places these entities in our lives precisely because he does care. Below are examples. Explain at least two blessings God gives us through each of these as he governs this world.
  - Home (e.g., parents, caregivers)
  - Government
  - Church
  - Fellow Christians

- 3) A coworker says, “God seems like he’s a million miles away right now—he doesn’t care about what I’m going through!” Read the passages below to help you formulate an answer.

*Matthew 6:25-34* <sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? <sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

*John 14:1,2* “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

*Romans 5:3-5* Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

*Philippians 1:6* being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

*Hebrews 4:15* For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

*Revelation 21:4* He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, we praise and glorify you for all you have done and continue to do for us. When we fail to recall how you constantly provide for us and protect us, remind us of your total love and concern. When we worry, assure us that you have everything under control. Help us live each moment of each day with the firm conviction that you are covering us with the shadow of your wings and holding us up with your strong arm. Hear us for the sake of Jesus, your Son, our Savior. Amen.