

Episode 387: Why God Allows Hard Times: and How to Trust Him in Them

00:00 Understanding Suffering and Trusting God

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

In teaching and in life, we deal with a lot of hard things and sometimes this is difficult. What is God doing? Does he care? Why is this happening? So many questions. Today we're going to dive into why do bad things happen and how can we trust God in them? Well, welcome back to the Teach 4 the Heart podcast where we tackle teaching challenges from a biblical perspective. This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation.

Today, Sarah Humes is joining us, one of our Teach 4 the Heart team members and Teach 4 the Heart Plus mentors. Sarah, thanks so much for talking about this important topic with us today.

Sarah Humes (00:34)

Hi Linda, I'm so excited to be here.

Linda Kardamis (00:38)

So today we're diving into a little bit of a heavy topic because we want to talk about hard things. And in particular, Sarah and I were talking offline and she mentioned a few things. said, my goodness, we have to talk about this because there is this kind of false teaching out there in Christendom. And sometimes it is explicitly taught, but other times it's just kind of internally absorbed without maybe even us realizing that we think it. And it's this idea that

bad things shouldn't really happen to good people, right? In other words, if we're following God and we're doing the right thing, God shouldn't really let bad things happen or hard things happen. Like, really, really shouldn't be like that. But this is a dangerous belief, and we're gonna get into some of the nuance about it here in a minute. But I think it's really important for us to recognize that that's actually not what Scripture says. Scripture says that we should expect suffering.

that we're going to go through suffering. And it's important that we understand that because if we don't, then when suffering comes, not only do we have to deal with the suffering, but we are unprepared for it. And we have so many questions and we can get really extra discouraged. And if we have the wrong view of it, can really go very, very downhill fast. So what has been your experience with kind of these different ways of viewing hard things and suffering?

Sarah Humes (02:04)

Yeah, I think, you know, to be honest, in my personal life, there has not been very many easy seasons. And so it would be very, very easy to ask myself, does God even love me? you know, not to say that there haven't been days where I've asked myself that, but then almost as instantly, I go back to what I know is true and that truth is found in scripture.

~ And so I'm very thankful that I have a very solid base of knowledge and of you know hiding God's Word in my heart and believing it and in the times where it's hard to believe it just just asking God Lord, will you please help me believe it? You know what I mean? And ~ but what really just breaks my heart is when people hit hard times

and just seeing them crumble. And I just want to just lead them to the word and say, you don't have to crumble right now. This is what the Lord said would happen. And it doesn't mean that he doesn't love you. It doesn't mean that you're bad. It doesn't mean that, you know, this is just part of living in a fallen world, but there is hope in Christ.

and the things that you're going through, they can be used for his glory if you root yourself in his truth. And I just, there are times when I want to scream that from the actual mountaintops because I truly believe that those things that we go through can both be used for God's glory and for the encouragement and edification of his people.

Linda Kardamis (03:55)

Yes. my goodness, Sarah, you just had dropped so many truth bombs in there. We're going to kind of try to go through them systematically because this is so important to understand because when we truly grasp and believe this, it does not make the suffering easy, but it gives us like grounding and it helps us trust and be able to persevere through it. And that can be like a night and day difference.

Sarah Humes (03:58)

Thank

No.

Linda Kardamis (04:19)

when you're going through something hard. And by the way, as you're listening to this episode, I hope you have a range of hard in mind, right? We can think of really hard things like a cancer diagnosis or losing someone very close to you, but this is also applicable for daily hard things. A kid with a chicken pox, a difficult parent. It applies all across the gamut of not too hard, but not what you were hoping for all the way to really deep griefs. So we're gonna kind of dive into this.

04:48 The Biblical Framework: Creation, Fall, and Redemption

in four parts because as I was preparing for this, I was reminded there's a really helpful framework whenever you're trying to think through what is a biblical view of something is to think through what does creation, the fall, Jesus' death on the cross, and then our future in heaven, how do those four

acts of God's story apply to this situation? So we're gonna try and take them one at a time. So the first one is creation.

And I think it's very important to recognize when God made the world, there was no suffering. There was no hard times. There were no tears. God's original good design for our world was all good. And I think that's important to recognize because when we feel like it shouldn't be this way, that's actually true. God didn't design it this way. He designed it good initially. Sarah, do you have any thoughts on this piece of it?

Sarah Humes (05:36)

Yeah.

Yeah, I love thinking about that, that he didn't intend for us to have these miserable days. Like, what a beautiful thought. It's just like a warm hug.

Linda Kardamis (05:57)

Yeah, so that was his original design. Now he knew it wouldn't turn out that way, but that is the life that God intended for us. as well, spoiler, as we get to the end, we'll see it's the life he has for us eventually. But in between them, that and now, the fall happened, right? So Adam and Eve ate the fruit. They chose sin and rebellion against God. And as a result, both sin entered the world and the curse of sin. And that has brought

pain and suffering and death and it has just marred everything. Nothing is exactly the good design God had anymore, right? Now marriage is hard, now relationships are hard, now teaching is hard, now kids are hard, like now everything is hard. Now our bodies were down and get sick and we die and all of that is from the fall. And that is also incredibly important to recognize, right?

all of the brokenness is because of our rebellion against God. Now, not necessarily my personal fault, right? That is also a wrong teaching, that if you do everything right, everything will be good. And if you're doing something wrong, it's because of your own, you did something to deserve it. That is not biblical either. The Bible teaches that sin entered through the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, so all have sinned.

but also that there is just brokenness, right? Things are hard, things are broken because of the general curse of the fall. And so that's where we exist. We exist in a world under the fall.

Sarah Humes (07:31)

Yeah, and you know, I think that sometimes we can get in our heads about a lot of those teachings too. Like we can, we can wonder, okay, did I do something to cause this to happen? Or, you know, I think about Job in the book of Job when his friends are trying to give him, you know,

encouragement initially and they are just, they're not helping, you know? And so I think that's important to remember when we have friends that are hurting too, to really consider ~ what we say,

you know, because they're like, well, obviously you did something to, you know, not that we're going up and saying, well, you must have made God mad and this is why that's happened.

I don't think any of us would say that, but sometimes we don't always support our friends who are going through hard times in the best way either. And I think there's important lessons there. I mean, the suffering exists because of sin and is cursed, yes. But sometimes just like Job's friends, we learn from them. Because of that truth, we just need to be there. We just need to sit with them.

Linda Kardamis (08:50)

Yeah.

Sarah Humes (08:54)

the verses that we're gonna share, are powerful in the right time. I think that's one of the things before we share these things that we're gonna share, they're important for us to internalize for our own lives and we can share them at the right time. You know what I mean? I think that that's something really important that I wanna share ahead of this.

Linda Kardamis (09:09)

Yeah.

Right, right. man, there's so much we could unpack there about how to support someone that's going through that thing hard, because there's so much there too. So thank you for sharing that. But yeah, just in this piece here, recognizing, yes, suffering exists because of sin and its curse. That doesn't mean that, yeah, that was the error of Job's friends too, right? Like they thought, you must have done something wrong to cause this, and there was this all back and forth. And then God eventually shows up and basically says, I will do what I believe is right.

Sarah Humes (09:19)

Yes.

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (09:44)

And you know, it's just, Job is a very fascinating book to study. don't have time to go into it too much here. Um, but yes, that's why we have these, all these tough, tough things. And that's why when we feel upset, like it is actually right to feel upset that these things are happening because they shouldn't be. They shouldn't, this is wrong. God does not, God did not want this to happen. You know I mean? Like God, this is broken. It is not right. It's, you know, death is not natural. It is the curse of sin. Like all of this, it doesn't feel right because it's not right.

09:58 The Role of Christ in Our Suffering

Sarah Humes (09:58)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (10:14)

But we get to the cross and this is so, so important. And Sarah, you already mentioned some of it. know, Christ, in a brief summary, Christ entered our world and suffered for us. So he literally entered our suffering and suffered some of the worst things we could imagine. He also told his followers very clearly and told us clearly, we should expect to suffer too. So he tells us, expect this. This is you share in my sufferings. I suffered, you're gonna suffer.

And then he tells us, I am with you in the good and the bad, and I'm going to use your difficulties. I will redeem them for good, and I will use them to purify you and make you more like me. And there is just so much to unpack there. We're only going to have time to unpack some of it. Sarah, what are some of your favorite verses or truths? Like I said, so much to unpack here.

Sarah Humes (11:07)

Yeah, you know, I think the first thing is that the fact that just because we are going through something hard doesn't mean that we stop being effective. And I think like, I want to read this verse from Hebrews because I think that one of the things that sometimes we get stuck in

Linda Kardamis (11:26)

Mmm.

Sarah Humes (11:36)

is this mindset that life is hard. so, and I have this tendency and I have a feeling that a lot of other people do. We sort of go within ourselves when life is hard. But there's this verse in Hebrews that says, don't forget to do good and share with those that are in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. And I recently with within the last

year and a half have, well, I still in some ways am going through some pretty significant health issues. And one of the things that I really believe has helped me to get better and whether it's just, it just makes my heart feel better is I, I took a step of faith and I started serving in our church's nursery again. And it has brought me so much joy. Like

There are times where I'm like, Lord, I'm gonna need you to give me every bit of strength to have the strength, physical strength to get through this morning. But I know that it's my calling to serve with children and being there and stepping out and doing good to his people. There's nothing like that using the gifts that God has given us even in the midst of pain. And then like just also keeping

you know, in 1 Peter 4:19 it says, therefore that those who suffer according to God's will and trust their souls to a faithful creator while doing good. Like we don't stop doing good just because we're in a hard time. And I think that's part of what gets us through it and gets us through it. Well, like, cause it would be really easy to just suffer and you know, sit on the couch and mope all day, but part of

representing Christ well in our suffering is serving Him. Like I think that gets us out of that self pity mode.

Linda Kardamis (13:43)

Yeah, well, Sarah, there's so much in there. That's such good advice. And I know hard earned advice from all that you've had to go through to be able to say that. but that there's so much there, just that fact of like, God is working in you through this, right? You're learning through this. And I think you're so right to about when we get really self focused, because we're going through something hard that normally like sometimes you need a little bit of time to process.

Sarah Humes (14:09)

Yes.

Linda Kardamis (14:12)

But staying there too long, that is not helpful. When we are just so focused on our problems, it makes it worse. And so getting our eyes off of that and serving others in the midst of that, that is very powerful. Thank you for sharing that.

Sarah Humes (15:27)

Yeah, you know, and I think the beautiful thing that as teachers, I think we just are surrounded by these beautiful little people who need us. And I know that that can be exhausting day to day, but if we can reset our minds to look at it as a blessing.

I mean, what a joy, you know, and James 1, 2 through 5, it says, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and steadfastness has its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. You know, I love looking at that, knowing that my trials, your trials.

The things we go through that are so hard make us more like Jesus.

I mean, Ephesians tells us to be imitators of God and our suffering lets us do that. It's such an honor. I'm trying really hard not to cry.

Linda Kardamis (16:28)

Yeah. No, that's

okay. I mean, I think it's true and none of us. Yeah, sometimes when I'm praying, like, oh God, it's like, don't want to invite suffering. Obviously, like none of us are like excited to go through something. But when we think about it, we're like, no, that is when we grow. We really grow through that. I think of Romans 8, 28 and 29. Because I think sometimes Romans 28 is an interesting verse.

Sarah Humes (16:48)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (16:56)

It's often removed from its context because it says, we know all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. And I think sometimes we just pull that out and we take it to think, it's going to work out the way I want. And it's like, no, no, no, he promises to work it together for good. But the next verse kind of explains and goes for those whom he for knew he predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. So in other words,

Sarah Humes (17:12)

Right.

Linda Kardamis (17:26)

God is working in us to make us more like Jesus. And sometimes we can see the good and different things that come from our suffering, but a lot of the times it's simply, know God better. I grew in patience, I grew in perseverance, or I was able to help somebody else. Those things, I think God is often working in our hearts through that. And that is hard fought growth, but it is precious too.

Sarah Humes (17:52)

Yes.

It really is, you know, and I think that that's where just, if I could just encourage the people who are listening right now to make sure that you know the Word of God and you know, there's a reason that the Bible tells us to hide God's Word in our heart. You know, first of all, it is so that we're not sinning against Him. But I think about how it talks about it's a lamp into our feet and a light into our path, you know.

When do we need that? It's when times are dark, you know? there's like, there's so many times where things look so bleak, but because I know the word of God, because I know that Philippians chapter two talks about what Christ is like, I know that, you know, when...

I end up in the hospital for the umpteenth time. One of my first thoughts is, okay, who am I here to serve? Because Christ came to serve. Like, that's become my prayer because like, am I tired of being there? So tired. You know, what was it? A couple of weeks ago, I had like seven doctor's appointments we were talking about and I was so tired of it. But then I was like, okay, Lord, who do I need to talk to today?

What is my prayer? And this one day I knew that I was there to speak to this lady in the waiting room and she was so delighted that I took time to talk to her. And I know that was a God appointed thing. So if we know the word and we put it into practice when we're going through these things, that's when he changes us and makes like, just, that's when suffering really does become an honor. And

It's not made any easier, but it is, it does bring you closer to the Lord.

Linda Kardamis (19:57)

Yeah. my goodness, Sarah. Thank you so much for sharing that. And it reminds me of just one other scripture and then we'll move into our fourth point. 2 Corinthians 4, 17 and 18 talks about it says, for this light momentary affliction. And I'll just pause because I think it's interesting it calls it light. Because often they're talking about like persecution, like Christians being put to death. they don't, you know, it doesn't seem like, but that's such a great perspective. There's a light momentary affliction.

Sarah Humes (20:12)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (20:23)

is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal. And that brings up to us to act four of God's story. So just backing up real quick, act one creation. God created a world with no suffering. Act two, the fall. Suffering exists because of sin and its curse.

20:48 Hope for the Future: The Promise of Glory

Act three, the cross, Christ enters our world, suffers for us, invites us to share in his suffering, is with us and for us, and this is the now. That's where we live right now, if you are in Christ, if you trust him. But there's a future, right? In the future, in glory, one day, God will make everything right. He will bring us back to the garden and it'll be even better because we will know of his goodness and all he has done. And there will be nothing hard, no more pain, no more suffering, no more sickness.

No more hard conversations, no more any of it. It will just be exactly how God originally intended it. And I think that's so important for us to keep in mind because that is the future. It's just not quite time for it yet. And that can be such a helpful perspective.

Sarah Humes (21:36)

Absolutely. You know, I remember when I was younger, I would hear people talk about the second coming of Christ and I would be so scared. I would be like, that can happen. That's terrifying. What, what? And now that it's, you know, almost been, I don't know how many years my, almost my adult life has been just one, one hard thing after another. hear that song come Jesus come and I'm like,

Linda Kardamis (21:46)

Yeah.

Sarah Humes (22:06)

I'm not scared anymore. You know, it just, actually just got goosebumps just thinking about it. I used to be, it just used to terrify me. And now I'm like, no, I understand so much more of, of being closer to

the Lord. And of course I don't understand at all. It's all so big, but you know, you desire that future that he promises us so much more. Once you've had.

a taste of the suffering because you know now that glory that's coming.

Linda Kardamis (22:39)

Yeah, it's so beautiful. So I hope as you guys are listening, whether you are, you know, really know a lot about the word or whether you're just have a lot to learn, that kind of thinking through it in these four areas was helpful. And I hope that you'll dig into scripture as Sarah was encouraging you and really study what does the Bible have to say? Because it has so much more to say than we were able to share just in this episode. But as we wrap up, I had just a few takeaways and then Sarah, I'd be interested in what you would add.

Number one takeaway I had was we should expect to deal with hard things. It shouldn't surprise or shock us when something difficult happens or something hard happens. Number two, we can trust God in them and we need to. Like he knows what he's doing. He's at work in us. And number three, this is a topic we don't have time to go into right now, but it is actually part of that is it is actually good and right to lament.

Sarah Humes (23:10)

Yeah.

Linda Kardamis (23:31)

So we didn't really get a chance to talk about that here, we talked about it briefly where we said it is actually right to feel like, hey, this shouldn't be happening because of the fall. And God gives us this grace of lament. It's found all throughout the Psalms and in other scriptures where we can actually pour out those confusions and hurt feelings to him. So if you're not familiar with what I'm saying, I encourage you to check out episode 343 where we kind of talk more about what that is and what it looks like, because I think that's an important piece too.

Anything else stand out to you, Sarah, that you want to leave people with?

Sarah Humes (24:04)

I think the last thing that I want to just encourage people is just to go to the Lord when you're hurting, know, very much like along the ideas of lament. But he's waiting for you. He knows what you're feeling and he can handle your big issues and your small ones too. Like everything from your day-to-day issues in the classroom to those huge things that just break our heart. He's waiting for you.

Linda Kardamis (24:33)

What a beautiful invitation. Well, thank you, Sarah, so much for talking with us. Thank you guys for being here and listening. If you kind of want to dive into some of these truths more deeply, we do have a program called Hope Renewed where we dive into these truths and really explore them together. So

you can check that out at teach4theheart.com / hope renewed. We'd love to kind of ~ walk through that with you over there.

Well, this episode has been brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. All views and opinions are our own and don't necessarily affect those of the Herzog Foundation. I look forward to speaking with you again soon. In the meantime, teach you remember God is at work in you and through you, and He's using you to make a difference. Keep your eyes on Him and teach for the heart.