## ACTS OF GOD WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SO MUCH PAIN?

**QUESTIONS FOR YOU** 

## 1: WHY, GOD?

### How to Face Life's Toughest Question

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

 Describe the occasion when you first questioned God's goodness. What happened? How did your friends or family view the incident? How was your view of God affected?

2. Several causes of evil are discussed. Which have been most common in your life? Which do you feel are the most difficult to deal with?

3. In an encounter with a blind man, Jesus showed the disciples they were asking the wrong question. Explain his point. How can this insight help us deal with our suffering?

4. What are some practical ways we can develop an eternal mindset, viewing our experiences in terms of God's eternal purposes?

# 2: NIGHT VISION

## Finding Light When All Seems Dark

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. What personal experience did the opening bicycle story remind you of? What lessons did you learn at the time?

2. The first of three "acts of God" is his protection of us. How can protection seem like persecution? How has this been illustrated in your experience?

3. What is the difference between the other two acts, strengthening and preparation? How does each function? 4. What promises does God offer us for times of suffering? Which seems to you the most powerful, and why?

5. What insights did you gain about time and trust as aids for night vision? Which one means the most to you?

6. Can you think of any time in your life when you needed to experience darkness to help you recognize light?

# 3: SUFFER THE CHILDREN

## Where Is God in a Hurting Home?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. How did your own parents provide models—good or less so—of attentive guidance? Offer examples.

2. As we read Joseph's story, we're aware he is destined for greatness. Why do you think God allows him to get off to such a rocky start?

3. Which of the "red flag" warnings in the narrative of Joseph do you find most significant? Why? Which ones are most prevalent today?

4. What are some reasons that many parents fail to face reality when it comes to the dangers their children confront?

5. What practical steps can you take to be more closely engaged with the lives of your children?

## 4: BLESS THIS MESS

## Help for Troubled Homes

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. Who do you know who endured a dysfunctional childhood? How would you evaluate the way it affected their adult life?

2. What are some factors that contributed to Jacob's mishandling of the rift between Joseph and his brothers?

3. What is the generational problem, or vicious cycle, of sin? How can the cycle be broken? 4. What is the most personally crucial reason to forgive someone else?

 Discuss the prescription for surviving family problems that you found most powerful in this chapter—and how you'll put it into practice.

# **5:** TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

### Where Is God When the Enemy Attacks?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. What is the prevalent temptation in your life? What's your strategy for facing it?

2. What are the key differences between temptation and testing? What does God have to do with each?

3. What factors do you think would have made Joseph's temptation in Potiphar's house particularly difficult?

4. What are the differences between the world, the flesh, and the devil? What special powers do each have when it comes to temptation?

5. What practical application from Joseph's experience—and this chapter's discussion—can you best use in your own life?

## 6: STORM-PROOF

## Weathering Life's Dark Moments

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. In your opinion, why are people drawn "close to the edge" of danger?

2. Reread the factors that made it harder for Joseph to resist temptation. What would be the factors for your life?

3. How can we be certain now that we'll be capable of thinking clearly and biblically in times of temptation? 4. What is involved in "asking Jesus Christ to handle it"? Why would this work?

5. What do you feel is the secret to maintaining a peaceful spirit when your life is being tested?

# 7: HEARTSICK

### Coping with Deep Discouragement

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. When did you suffer most in life? What were the factors that made it so difficult?

2. What realities make discouragement, in Wayne Smith's estimation, the most dangerous temptation of all?

3. What is empathy? What is its place during times of discouragement?

4. What is Paul's "flowchart" for how God uses discouragement? How does each part lead to the following one?

5. What are three key perspective questions we should ask when encountering difficulties? How would you answer them for your current challenges?

## 8: BEARING THE WAIT

Surviving the Long Walk through a Dark Valley

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

 In Admiral Stockdale's story, what two kinds of "optimism" (another word for faith) are discussed? What are the differences?

2. What factors make time a formidable test in itself? For what reasons might God make us wait?

3. How does our response to God's "no" define us spiritually? How has that happened in your life? 4. In what ways is God like a father in the way he responds to our requests?

5. What are you waiting for in life right now? How can you be more intentional about "waiting on the Lord"?

# **9:** BLESSING AND TESTING

### Making the Most of Sunny Seasons

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. If life has its seasons, what season are you living through right now? Why?

2. What factors make it so easy to forget God when times are easy?

3. What classic mistakes do people make as they grow comfortable, distancing them from God? 4. Why are other people such an important part of the experience of staying connected to God?

5. If you're in the midst of a "sunny" time, what practical steps will help you make the most of it this week?

# **10:** WHEN THE BAD GUYS WIN

## Why Won't God Punish the Wicked?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. What makes bitterness such a particularly powerful temptation?

2. How does guilt function as a form of divine discipline?

3. What are the limitations of our perspective, as we look upon God's dealings with others?

4. Which of the three directives for forgiveness do you find most challenging? Why?

5. Think of one person you need to forgive. How will you begin this week to move toward letting go of your grudge? Who can pray with you toward this end?

## **11:** PARDON OUR DUST

## Why Must Aging Be Such a Trial?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

1. What attitudes about aging can be found in your family? What about you?

2. What factors make aging one of life's most difficult obstacles? What are some of its advantages?

3. What are some ways that parents and grandparents can bless their children?

4. What are some ways that believers can avoid bitterness and regret as they age?

5. What can you be doing in life right now to create more satisfaction when you look back later?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

 Describe a "crossroads moment" from your own life. In retrospect, how was God at work? How did he use that moment?

2. As you complete this study, what issues in your own life have been reflected most in these chapters? Why?

3. What part of Joseph's life did you find most relevant to your own experience? Why?

 Explain this statement from the text: "We often turn to Plan B, and discover it fits beautifully into God's Plan A."

5. If you were to make one change in your life based upon this study, what would it be? Any reason you can't make that change?