



“God Is Distant and Disinterested in What Happens”

Prayer

Introductory Activity

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:

Interview Time! You work for a magazine and you just found out that you are going to get to interview God. You are allowed to ask five questions. As a group, ask God what your readers want to know about the presence of evil and suffering in this world. Then brainstorm what you think his answers will be. When you are done, exchange questions with another group. Pick out their best question and answer it. To help you as you brainstorm your questions and answers, you might look at this passage bank: Genesis 20:6; 50:20; Exodus 14:19-20; Psalm 5:4-6; Matthew 10:29; Acts 17:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:6.



Providential Points

1. Take one minute to think of one or two passages or truths from the Bible that demonstrate how God is interested with what happens in the world. After one minute, share your thoughts with your group.

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

Psalm 145:15—"The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time."

- _____ :

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

Colossians 1:17—"In [Jesus] all things hold together."

- _____ :

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

- _____ :

Think about it! 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 8:18-25

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

- In what ways do these passages demonstrate that Jesus is interested in what happens in the world? Take one minute to develop a list of one to three things, then share with your group.

4. Jesus is the greatest evidence that God is not distant nor disinterested!

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.”

- How do these truths impact how you view the world?

Group Discussion

- How might a skeptic respond to the following arguments that God cares for the world?

“God sends rain and gives sunlight and makes crops grow so we can eat.”

“People care about each other and reflect God’s love.”

“God gives life to everything—childbirth and in nature.”

- Some say, “If only God would appear and show us that he is in control, then we’d recognize that he cares!” Remember, he did that in Jesus and most people rejected him. As we have seen, God does care about what happens in the world, but 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

- God carefully created Adam and Eve. He knit us together in our mother’s wombs. God promised a Savior and carefully governed all of world history to bring Jesus

into this world to die for our sins. God promised never again to destroy the world with a flood but instead promised that seasons and day and night will never cease. Does this sound like a God who is not interested in our lives? No! 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 to help you formulate an answer. (Matthew 6:25-34; John 14:1,2; Romans 5:3-5; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 4:15; Revelation 21:4)

Closing Activity

Dealer’s Choice. Write a simple poem or create an original stanza to a familiar hymn tune about God’s interest and care for this world.