

questioning God

Alone With God

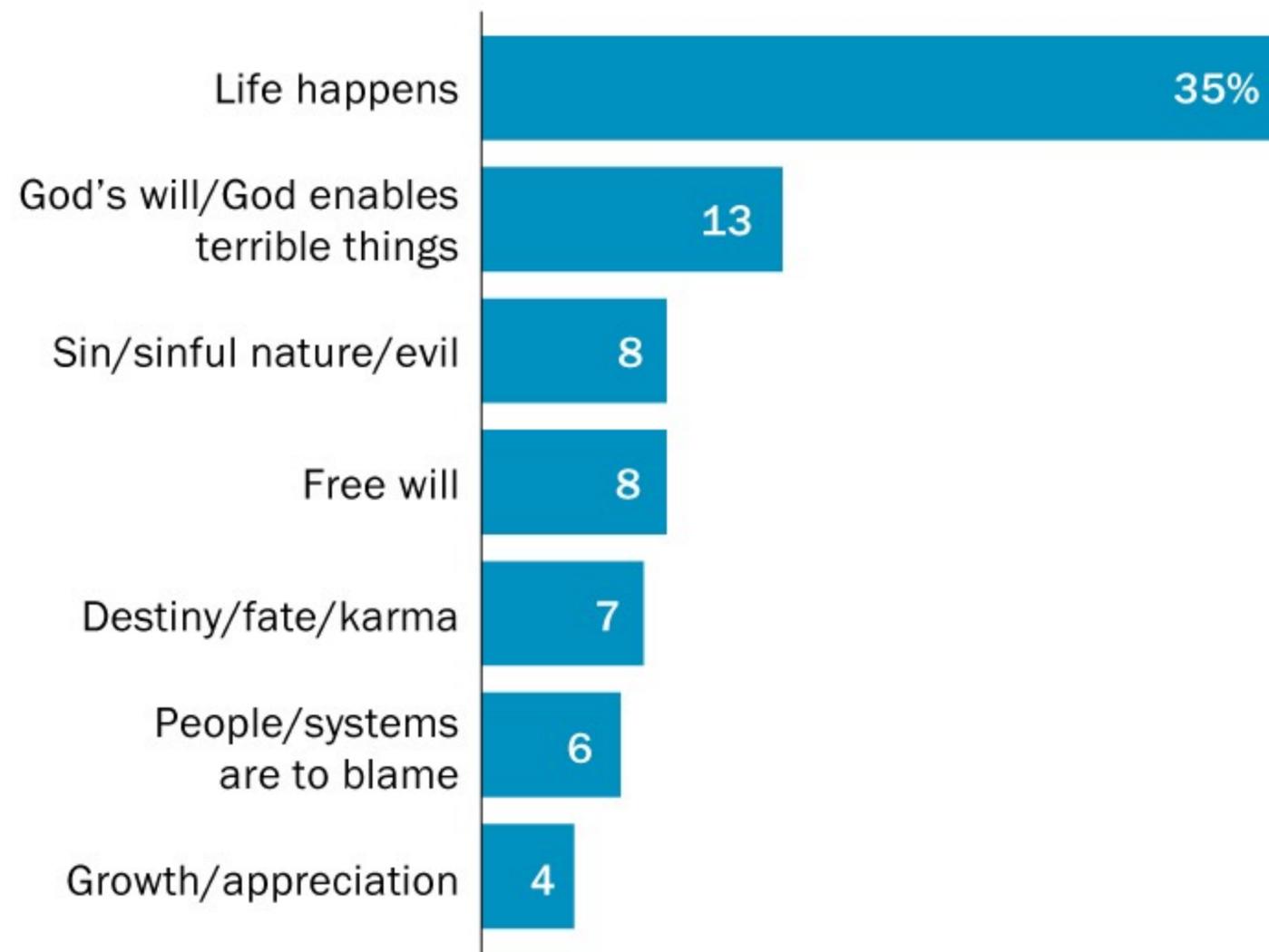
In their own words, how Americans explain why bad things happen,
Pew Research, 2021

global pandemic that has killed millions and disrupted lives and livelihoods around the world. A changing climate that has been linked with powerful hurricanes and raging wildfires. And countless individuals coping with other struggles big and small, personal and societal. These events have brought renewed relevance to an age-old question: **Why is there so much suffering and evil in the world?** This question can be particularly **confounding** for those who believe in a good and all-powerful God, as is often described in the Abrahamic religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For centuries, philosophers and theologians have grappled with this “problem of evil.

In their own words, how Americans explain why bad things happen, Pew Research, 2021

Many Americans say terrible experiences are just an inevitable part of life

% of U.S. adults who say terrible things happen to people through no apparent fault of their own because ...



In their own words, how Americans explain why bad things happen, Pew Research, 2021

“I believe it’s a lesson for things they have done wrong or to teach them what not to do in the future. I believe everything happens for a reason.” Spiritual but not religious respondent, age 18-49

“The universe is a big place, and scary and terrible things happen all the time.” Neo-pagan, age 18-49

“There are consequences to every choice we make. When bad things happen, they can be tied to a choice that was made.” Evangelical Protestant, age 50+

“There is no intentionality or personal force directing to whom terrible things happen. That’s just superstition at best, paranoia at worst. We live in a chaotic world and bad things collectively happen to us non-judiciously, just as good things do.” Buddhist, age 18-49

“The old saying goes, ‘as we sow, we shall also reap.’ That being said, we all are sinners and we all fall short. We are made to pay for our parents’ and great grandparents’ sins, etc.” Member of a historically Black Protestant church, age 50+

“Because God is angry at the way we are treating each other.” Mainline Protestant, age 50+

If we ask the wrong question, we will **ALWAYS** get the wrong answer

Frustration is **unspoken** expectations

Why do bad things happen to good people?



If God is all powerful and all loving/all good and there is **suffering** on earth, then either God is **not** all powerful or **not** all loving/all good

Neil deGrasse Tyson, astrophysicist

How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you **do not listen!** “Violence is everywhere!” I cry, but **you do not come to save.** Habakkuk 1:2

The prophet initiated this conversation based on his distress about God’s **“inaction”** in the world. He wanted to see God do something **more**, particularly in the area of justice for evildoers. The book of Habakkuk pictures a **frustrated** prophet, much like Jonah, though Habakkuk channeled his frustration into prayers and eventually praise to God, rather than trying to run from the Lord as Jonah did.

By the goodness of God we mean nowadays almost exclusively his **lovingness** ... By Love, in this context, most of us mean kindness—the desire to see others than the self happy; not happy in this way or in that, but **just happy**. What would really satisfy us would be a God who said of anything we happened to like doing, "What does it matter so long as they are **contented**?" We want, in fact, not so much a Father in heaven as a **grandfather** in heaven—a **senile benevolence** who, as they say, "liked to see young people enjoying themselves" and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, "a good time was had by all." **CS Lewis**

“We could bear nearly any pain or disappointment if we thought there was a **reason** behind it, a **purpose**, to it.” **Rabbi Harold Kushner**

The theological problem of trying to explain why evil and suffering exist in the world is referred to as **theodicy**. The central quandary is this: “Why do terrible things happen in a world governed by an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good God?” How can God simultaneously possess all three of these qualities and yet allow **bad things** to happen to **good people**, and with such frequency and such savage intensity? As the Nobel laureate physicist Steven Weinberg commented, “If there is a God that has special plans for humans, then He has taken very great pains to **hide** His concern for us.” **Ralph Lewis MD**

Theodicy is a branch of philosophy dealing with the issue of **evil** in light of the existence of God. If God is just and holy and good, then how do evil and misery exist?

A **theodicy** needs to be in place **before** the suffering

First Lie

There are no good people

If we **claim** we have no sin, we are only **fooling** ourselves and not living in the truth. [1 John 1:8](#)

Not a single person on earth is always **good** and never sins. [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#)

But no, **all** have turned away; **all** have become corrupt.

No one does good, not a single one! [Psalms 53:3b](#)

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “**Only** God is truly good.” [Luke 18:19](#)

Second Lie

“Allow”

In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both **the evil and the good**, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. [Matthew 5:45](#)

But Job replied, “You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only **good things** from the hand of God and never anything **bad**?” So in all this, Job said nothing wrong. [Job 2:10](#)

Dear friends, don't be surprised at the **fiery trials** you are going through, as if something **strange** were happening to you. [1 Peter 4:12](#)

Second Lie

This, too, I carefully explored: Even though the actions of godly and wise people are **in God's hands**, no one knows whether God will show them favour. The same **destiny** ultimately **awaits everyone**, whether righteous or wicked, **good or bad**, ceremonially clean or unclean, religious or irreligious. Good people receive the **same treatment** as sinners, and people who make promises to God are treated like people who don't. [Ecclesiastes 9:1-2](#)

Second Lie

It seems so **wrong** that everyone **under the sun** suffers the **same fate**. Already twisted by evil, people choose their own mad course, for they have no hope. There is nothing ahead but **death** anyway. There is hope only for the living. As they say, “It’s better to be a live dog than a dead lion!” **Vs 3-4**

Second Lie

“**Under** the sun” 19x

Under the Sun

God created the world **perfect** (three harmonies)

Humanity **chose (is choosing)** to live outside of those harmonies

Sin **entered** the world and **infected** and **affected** our reality

God **continues** to move in and out of our reality in order to bring about our **redemption**

God uses the **consequences** of sin (suffering)

In suffering we have a **choice**, suffering **reveals** our character

"If a thing is **free to be good** it is also **free to be bad**. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love, or goodness or joy worth having." **CS Lewis**

"**Everything** can be taken from a man but **one thing**: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's **attitude** in any given set of circumstances, to **choose** one's own way." **Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning**

Origin of “Bad Things”

What **I** have chosen

What **others** have chosen

What **sin** has chosen

Why do bad things happen to good people?

“We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being **attended to**. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a **deaf world**.... No doubt pain as God's megaphone is a **terrible** instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only **opportunity** the bad man can have for amendment. it removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of the rebel soul.” **C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain**

The Process of Pain

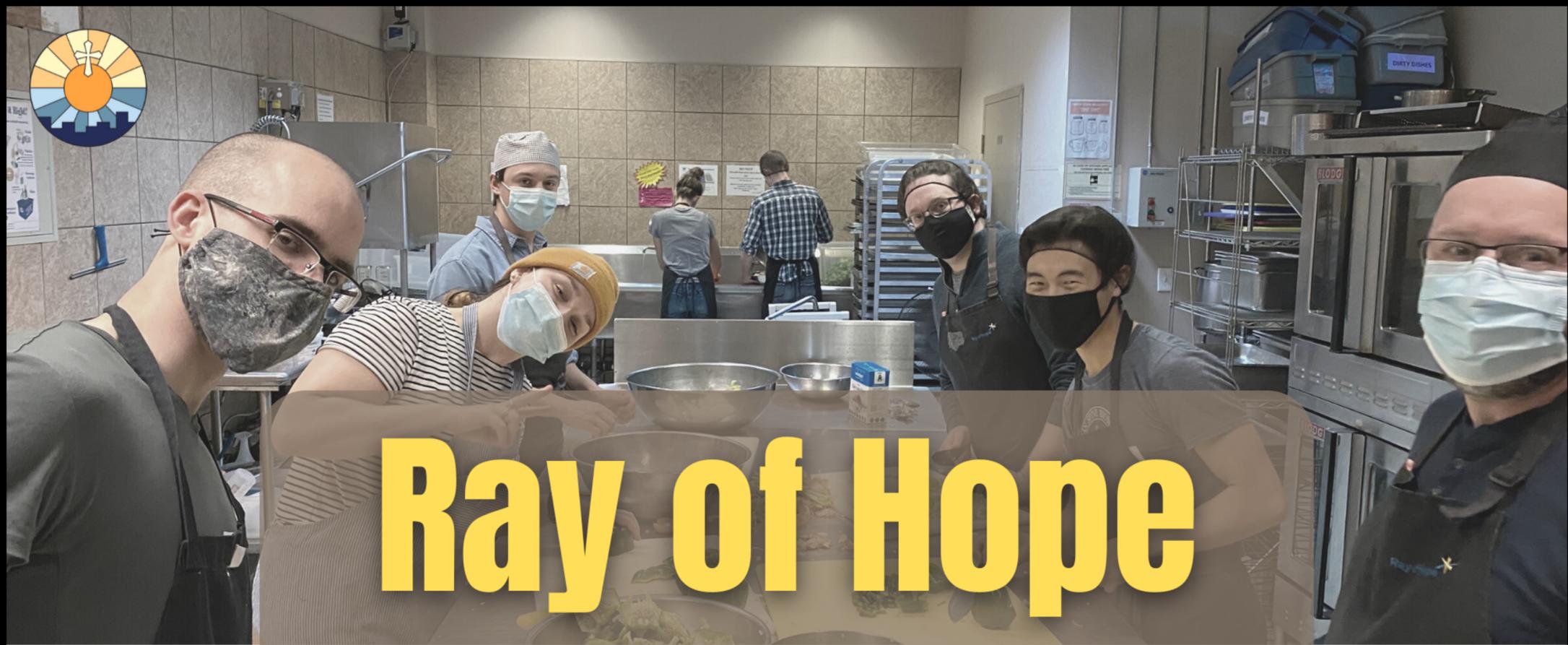
Bad things **reminds** us of sin

Bad things presents a **choice**

God uses bad things to **refocus** us

Bad things is the reminder of **heaven**

Though the Lord gave you **adversity** for food
and **suffering** for drink,
he will still be with you to **teach** you.
You will see your teacher with your own eyes.
Your own ears will hear him.
Right behind you a voice will say,
“This is the way you should go,”
whether to the right or to the left.
Then you will **destroy** all your silver idols
and your precious gold images.
You will throw them out like filthy rags,
saying to them, “Good riddance!” **Isaiah 30:20-22**



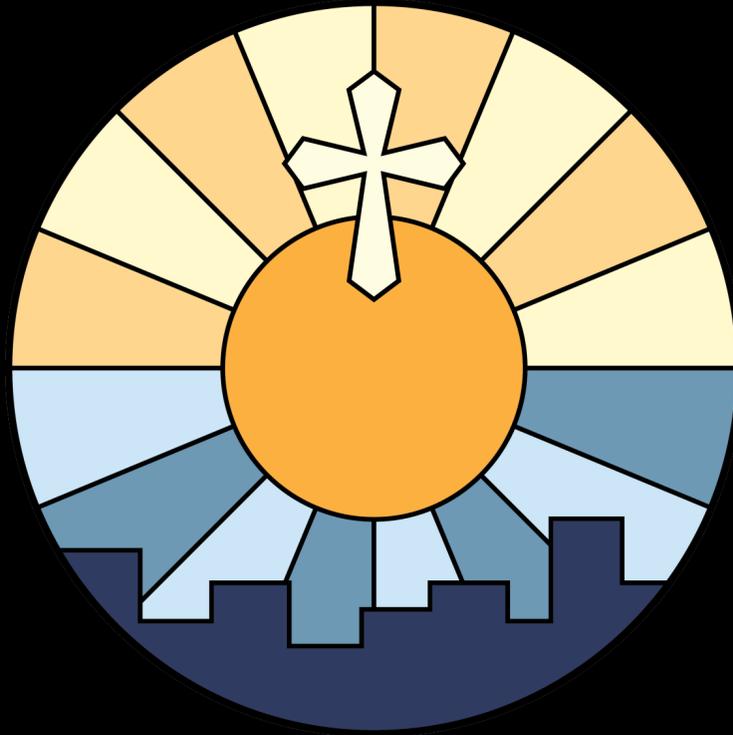
Ray of Hope

Thursday March 16th



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