



WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN, AND WHAT IS GOD DOING WHEN THEY DO?

Why do bad things happen? Why do they happen to good people, and why don't they happen more to bad people? Why does God allow them to happen or, worse, does God make them happen or cause them to happen? These are big questions which people have been struggling with and wrestling to answer for pretty much forever. There is a whole branch of theology for this area of thinking called 'Theodicy.' Theodicy is a theological and philosophical attempt to defend God's goodness, justice, and power in a world that contains pain and evil. The word comes from Greek roots meaning "to justify God" (θεός/theos for God and δίκη/dike for justice or judgement). It tries to solve the problem of why an all-good, all-powerful and loving God allows bad things to happen. There are libraries of books on this topic. So, whilst I will have a crack at answering these questions from my perspective, I know that any answer I

will provide will not satisfy everyone, nor will it come close to what others have also already written.

There is a saying, which I can't really repeat here, but which goes along the lines of 'stuff happens,' and the 'stuff' which is being referred to is metaphorically normally associated with the product of defecation. This is the first part of my answer to why bad things happen. Bad stuff happens because it does. The universe is morally neutral. The cosmos exploded into being, stars live and die, there is violence in the essence of the natural order of the world, things die to feed other things. Evolution, which is the machine of our development of our human being, is founded on mutation and "survival of the fittest." Most things alive depend on the death of other things for the nutrients to survive. The natural order is for stuff to happen, and when

that stuff happens to us and we suffer then we name it as bad.

Whilst we, as humans, might like to think ourselves exceptional. The reality is that we are still a part of the natural order. We might think that we are further entitled to be exceptional because of our belief in God and our belief about being created in the image of God and the Genesis stories putting us as higher and having dominion over all of the other things in Creation. We might also think that we should be exceptional and exempt from suffering bad thing because of God's love for us. However, any real reading of the Bible which doesn't note all the bad and hard stuff that happens to people of God, including Jesus who was God as a person, is naively blinkered.

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We are not exempt from hardship and suffering as a result of bad things happening.

Jesus can be quoted as saying, "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" [Matthew 5:45] "In this world you will have trouble," he says, "But take heart! I have overcome the world." [John 16:33] Then there are passages such as, "Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." [Matthew 8:19-22 and Luke 9:57-62] Finally, to make it really clear we have Jesus saying, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." [Matthew 16:24] which follows from Jesus calling people to leave their occupation and family behind to follow him. [Matthew 4:18-22 and Matthew 9:9-13]

Bad stuff is going to happen. Bad people do bad things and good people suffer. Good

people do or don't do things and people suffer. Nature does its thing and there are natural disasters because humans live where nature is happening in extreme ways and bad stuff is said to happen. Cancer and disease are natural aspect of life and cause bad stuff to happen. Such things are horrible and tragic when severe, but natural nonetheless, except in the case of people catching them due to their own sad choices or the bad choices of others. Of course, the reality is also that life is a sexually transmitted fatal condition. That is to say that we will all die, and there is not a lot of control over when that happens naturally or by accident. Bad stuff happens because it does. We might work to eliminate the human element by eradicating evil and bad choices. However, people will experience hardship, suffer and die because of natural things. That is the way of life. It just is.

The big question then is, "What is God doing when bad stuff happens?" My personal belief is that God isn't causing bad stuff to happen. Of course, that is different to God having the power to stop it happening but not using it. My personal belief about that is that God is love, and love is only possible in this

world through the freedom of choice. Love is not love if it is not freely chosen to be given.

Therefore, God cannot love us as humans and control us so that we don't do bad things or make bad choices. God can't make people stop doing bad things or causing bad things to happen. That leaves us nature and the bad stuff that happens because of natural events. Nature is complex. God can't just go around stopping weather, plate tectonics etc so that humans are not impacted. Humans live everywhere on the planet. God can't go around messing with nature everywhere to save us from natural disasters. That wouldn't literally be natural. God doesn't stop bad things, not because God is not loving or good, but because God is self-limiting out of love and to preserve the natural order. God is also not trying to buy our love by giving us good things or saving us so that we love God.

Why do bad things happen-Continued

So, what is God doing then? Why believe in God if God doesn't stop bad stuff? What does it matter that God is good and loving and powerful, if God doesn't act to stop suffering? These are important questions of faith. They become stumbling blocks to many, who lose faith because of them. My answer is that God is at work in all things for good, [Romans 8:28] and I personally believe that God is not just working for good for those who believe, but for all people. God is at work for good to bring good out of the bad stuff. God is loving and compassionate and helps us bear the hardships and suffering in life. God may not stop them but is present and suffering with us. This is part of the whole point of Jesus who lived, loved, felt the sufferings of others and endured the sufferings and hardships of life and death himself. Jesus is God-incarnate and thus God knows what Jesus knows who knows what we know and go through. Jesus is not only the love of God, but also the embodied compassion of God.

Furthermore, as Scripture states, God wills that all people be saved. [1 Timothy

2:3-4] God so loved the world that God sent us Jesus as the Son so that *whoever* believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:16] God is at work for good in all things. God is redeeming us. God is both the good and bad of redeeming all of Creation. I think God is able to work better or more effectively in the lives of those who are open to God's influence.



However, I don't think God just helps people of faith. I think God is more able to work in those of faith because we can 'amen' what is happening, and despite the bad stuff, like the old hymn by Horatio Spafford after a devastating series of personal tragedies, we can have faith and find that "it is well with my soul."

In the end when we centre ourselves in God and come to know God better, we come to greater faith. It

might not seem rational and might seem to be questionable to believe in and faith in God who doesn't stop bad things happening. However, knowing God and experiencing the love of God, in the help and support of God, as well as the compassion and mercy of God is not something to think about, but in the end is something to surrender to in order to be able to amen and find peace in all things. "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world," "...and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." [Matthew 28:20]

*God bless
Jon*

Leading in Services Seminars

11am after morning services

13 September – Thinking About
Preaching

20 September – Praying With the
People – Leading
Intercessory
Prayer

27 September – Leading Liturgy

NEW TIME



THE HILLS

FAIR TRADE

market

10am–2pm

ST PAUL'S CASTLE HILL – 421 OLD NORTHERN RD

gifts - clothing - food - toys - homewares - jewellery



Sat 5th
Sep





St Matthew's Netball Club

St. Matthew's Netball Club:

Serving Our Community Through Sport

Many people may not be aware that St Matthew's has its own netball club, which has been part of our community for more than 50 years.

For many years, the club participated in the Baptist Women's Netball Competition. When that competition concluded approximately 20 years ago, St Matthew's Uniting Church club and Northmead Uniting Church club joined together to continue providing opportunities for local players. As a result, the Gooden Reserve Netball Association (GRNA) was established, with a committee comprising members from both church clubs.

Since its formation, GRNA has been committed to providing a friendly, inclusive, and social competition that is not graded by ability. This allows friends to play together in the same team, regardless of skill level, and fosters a welcoming environment for all participants.

The club offers Fun Net (similar to NetSetGO) for children in Kindergarten and Year 1, where participants learn the basic skills of netball in a fun and supportive setting.

Children from Year 2 onwards, as well as adults, are welcome to participate in our Saturday afternoon competition. This year, we have 145 registered players across 15 teams, ranging from Year 2 through to adult players. Some of our senior teams include parents of our younger players, as well as adults returning to the sport after many years away, attracted by our non-graded and social approach to competition.

Over the years, many children and families have been involved in the club. As a ministry of St Matthew's, the netball club provides a valuable connection with the broader community, welcoming people who may not otherwise have contact with our church.

We warmly invite members of the congregation to come and watch the games at Gooden Reserve, Baulkham Hills, on Saturday afternoons between 12.30 pm and 4.30 pm from April through to the end of August.

If you would like to know more about the club, please speak with **Belinda Schuster** or **Helen Olley**.

For further information, visit:

www.stmatthewsnetballclub.com



1st Saturday of the month

9am-12pm

Upcoming dates

- **5 September**
- **3 October**
- **7 November**

Pre-loved

Household items,

Electrical, Toys & Books

(Fiction, Non-fiction & children's books)

St. Matthew's Lower hall



Thursday 3 September
10am-12pm

Guest Speaker: Joslene Abboud **Fortitude Minds**

Fortitude Minds is a trauma-informed wellbeing and education initiative founded by domestic and family violence survivor and advocate Joslene Abboud. It provides evidence-informed resources that build emotional regulation, resilience and healthy, respectful relationship skills, while supporting recovery from trauma and DFV.

These informal morning gatherings include devotions, morning tea and guest speakers which cover a large range of interesting and informative topics.

***** ALL WELCOME *****

Jesus said,
"Come to me, all
you who are weary
and burdened, and
I will give you rest."

Care and Prayer
All Welcome
11.30am on the first Tuesday
of each month.
February to November



Youth @ St Matts

Term 3. 2026

5.30-7.30PM

FORTNIGHTLY ON FRIDAYS

Upper Primary -

\$10

High School

(includes supper)

WEEK 1

24 Jul

**Commonwealth
Games**

WEEK 3

7 Aug

Board Games

WEEK 5

21 Aug

LEGO MASTERS

WEEK 7

4 Sep

MUSIC NIGHT

WEEK 9

18 Sep

Mini-Golf

**Swing City -
Norwest**

st. matthew's
UNITING CHURCH
BAULKHAM HILLS
growing together

For more information contact Jon Humphries
jon@stmatthewsuniting.net.au 0432940847

*Together we walk.
Together we change lives.*

WALK TO BREAK THE SILENCE. WALK FOR CHANGE.

COMMUNITY WALK TO SUPPORT

RUN AGAINST VIOLENCE

In 2026, the Hills Domestic Violence Prevention Network is walking alongside hundreds of teams across Australia in the **Run Against Violence** challenge – inspired by Kirrily Dear's 1,300km run from Broken Hill to Sydney. Every step helps raise awareness, support **NAPCAN** and stand united against **domestic and family violence**.



IN SUPPORT OF



WALK
TOGETHER



STAND AGAINST
DOMESTIC &
FAMILY VIOLENCE



MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

COMMUNITY WALKS – EVERYONE WELCOME!



SATURDAY
5 SEPTEMBER 2026



SUNDAY
13 SEPTEMBER 2026



4:00PM START
Walk takes less
than 1 hour



PEEL ROAD, CRESTWOOD
Adjacent to the
Guides Hall



APPROX. 3KM
Flat, off road
& family friendly



**YOUNG & OLD
ALL WELCOME**
Bring your family,
friends, school,
workplace or group.



**NO REGISTRATION
NO COST
JUST TURN UP**
No obligations – just
your support.



**TOGETHER,
WE CAN MAKE
A DIFFERENCE**
Let's take a stand
for a safer, kinder
community.



**WEAR PURPLE
OR YOUR
RAV MERCHANDISE**
Show your support
and stand together.

**BE PART
OF THE
CHANGE.
SEE YOU
THERE!**

Want to join our team for
the full 19-day challenge?
Or have questions?

✉ hillsagainstdv@gmail.com
✉ admin@fortitudeminds.com.au

Want to start your own team or
learn more about Run Against Violence?

Visit the Broken Hill to Sydney
Team Challenge website:
🌐 www.runagainstvviolence.com

From the St Matthew's Social Action Missional Ministry Team

'Doing little things can make a big difference'.

Topic: The biggest losers: Part 2- "You win some. You lose more"

Gambling harm remains a major public health issue in Australia, even though the overall gambling participation has declined to 58.8% in 2025, continuing a long-term downward trend in the last 15 years. However, high-risk gambling increased to 19.4% in 2025. Online gambling has increased substantially by more than half (over 56.1%) of people who gamble mainly through digital (online) and internet platforms. Of all gambling activities, sports betting had the largest proportion and fastest growing online gambling (88.5% in 2025) (Suomo et al 2025).

Although online sports and race wagering is one of Australia's fastest-growing gambling sectors, poker machines remain the largest source of gambling losses, accounting for more than half of all gambling expenditure nationally. Australia has exceptionally high access to poker machines, with the exception of Western Australia, where poker machines are banned outside of casinos. In other states and territories, poker machines are widely available in suburban pubs, clubs, and hotels, unlike most comparable countries who follow the same policy as Western Australia. NSW alone has around 52% of Australia's gaming machine profits and 13.3 gaming machines per 1,000 adults, compared with a national average of 8.3 (excluding WA).

Uninterrupted access to online gambling is shifting the socioeconomic outline of gambling harm by increasingly bringing it into family homes. Children are often conditioned to witness their parents gamble on their mobile device or on the pokies in venues. Many children's video games use loot boxes, where players spend real money for random rewards. These systems use gambling-like mechanics to tempt sustained spending and may promote gambling behaviours, among vulnerable young people. Despite these risks, they remain unregulated. Children, including teens, are exposed to gambling websites even though they are not yet 18 years old. In Australia, underage teenagers (12-17) lose an estimated \$18.4 million annually to online gambling or video games. Almost half (46%) of 18- to 19-year-olds engage in gambling, spending roughly \$213 million every year. Even children under 13 are exposed to gambling ads while watching sports on TV, often with their families. There is exposure to multiple ads for gambling in the sporting fields which normalises gambling. Being involved with gambling at an early age is a risk factor for developing problems in later life.

Mobile devices that offer unlimited access to online gambling encourage addictive behaviour, leading to losses and gambling harm at a faster rate than playing pokies in venues. Online gambling is associated with disproportionate rates of high-risk gambling harm. There is evidence to suggest that both loneliness and psychological distress are consequences of ongoing risky behaviour online. Additionally, the risky gambler is compelled to borrow money or sell assets to fund their high-risk gambling. High-risk gambling is associated with lower overall life satisfaction, decreased mental health, high alcohol consumption, and financial stress.

Vulnerable younger adults (ages 18 to 24) show the highest rates of digital and mobile betting engagement. Men tend to be more aggressive with their betting, gambling with larger amounts of money, such as the multiple bets per event, even though chances of winning are slimmer. Vulnerable persons include the unemployed and low income workers who often bet more than they can afford to lose (loss of control). The compulsion to gamble with large sums of money stems from the excitement of a big payout, which is impossible to resist. The promise of winning is enticing. But the thrill of the chase makes it irresistible, despite slim odds.

Online betting appeals to a much broader market. In Australia, AFL, and NRL betting account for a half of online wagering. The networks of influence also include TV channels such as Channel 7 and Channel 9 right down to the local footy club. The gaming lobby is very strong and tackling them appears insurmountable.

Often, younger adults are subject to peer pressure, from so much advertising. Gambling advertising preys on the social culture of mateship. The message from advertising encourages consumers to 'bet with mates.' Another message talks about a 'hard earned thirst,' linking it with VB beer, and suggesting it can also be quenched through gambling. This is a false notion.

Biggest losers: part 2 cont'd

Gambling advertising is all around on TV, mobiles, platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat. There is a lack of commitment by the Government to protect the vulnerable (biggest) losers. Sports clubs get a percentage each time a bet is made, making millions. The New South Wales State Government makes about 6 million dollars a year thereabouts from pokies, which adds to their inaction. The large amounts of money earned by clubs with poker machines, online gambling, horse racing, dog racing and other forms of betting are used to finance sporting clubs.

Higher risk groups that are more vulnerable include younger veteran males who are medically discharged. For some veterans gambling may function as a coping strategy, a source of stimulation or a means of maintaining social connection following discharge. Research has shown that 13.4 % of veteran males report gambling problems, 4.6% experience clinically significant harm and 8.8% are considered at risk.

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) highlight that First Nations Australians experience higher rates of gambling and online wagering, as well as sports betting related harms, than non-Indigenous Australians. Structural inequities resulting from colonization, ongoing socio-economic disadvantage, as well as remote living conditions, and availability of smartphones contribute significantly to heightened vulnerability in this demographic.

Another vulnerable group are persons with intellectual disabilities, who often find it especially difficult to disengage or know when to stop playing pokies. Their understanding of abstract concepts like "losses disguised as wins" is often more difficult. Unfortunately, exposure to pokies is high because they are integrated into local pubs and clubs, which are common places for meals and social outings.

There is no requirement to provide an identity when you play pokies in clubs, pubs and hotels. As a result, this loophole has enabled staggering amounts of money laundering in NSW, alongside broader criminal activity and severe gambling harm. A multi-agency investigation led by NSW Crime Commission found criminals were funneling billions of dollars of illegal cash through poker machines each year. A solution to this problem is to introduce identity cards for poker machines that function similarly to seniors cards or library cards. These would generate statements of deductions from an individual's bank accounts used for gambling. They would also curtail illegal money laundering by providing a digital record and minimising the use of cash.

Chair of the Murphy Inquiry into gambling, the late Peta Murphy MP, concluded:

If the status quo of online gambling regulation, including but not limited to advertising, was to continue, Australians would continue to lose more – more money, more relationships, more love of sport for the game rather than the odds.

(Australian Parliamentary Inquiry, (2023)

Blessings,

Dr Sandra Morell

Social Action Missional Ministry Team (SAMT)

For further reading: -Link to the summary of the Wesley Mission email on gambling reform of 8th July 2026: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/15T4R43zgVYH5xAS4VE99hcyS5xFQjCDh/edit>

If you or anyone you know needs help, contact:

- National Gambling Helpline on 1800858858
- Lifeline 13114
- Headspace on 1800650890

To ask about joining the Social Action Group at St Matthew's

email Alexander on alexander.lawless7@gmail.com

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 27th October 2026 at 7pm in the Lower Church Hall

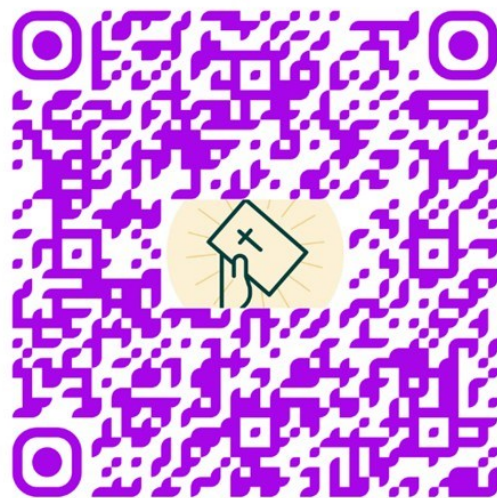
*Thanks everyone who is contributing to our Parramatta Mission donations.
The latest delivery was forty-three beanies and three scarves.
We will collecting Beanies & Scarfs until September 2026.*



**We Would
Love You**



**To Preach or
Lead the liturgy**



Please let Jon know that you have
signed up if you have not led
before
jon@stmatthewsunting.net.au

Silence and stillness in every season

Daily readings with John Main



The stages of our progress in meditation will come about in their own time. God's own time. We in fact only hinder this progression by becoming too self-conscious about our stage of development. This is where a teacher is of immense help for keeping you on a straight course. But basically your teacher has only one instruction to give you and that is: to say your mantra. More than this is simply encouragement and comfort until the mantra is rooted in your consciousness. The path of enlightenment is one we tread for ourselves. Each person wins wisdom for himself. The teacher is there to keep you steadily going forward. The word 'guru' itself, dispeller of darkness, means the one who is steady.

The greatest temptation of all is to complicate ourselves. 'Unless you become like little children...' Meditation simplifies us, simplifies us to the point where we can receive the fullness of truth and the fullness of love. It prepares us and enables us to listen with childlike attention to the Spirit of Jesus within us. As we persevere in meditation, we enter ever more deeply into relationship with this Spirit, with God who is love dwelling in our hearts, enlightening us and vitalising us.

Word into Silence

Calendar of Events for September 2026

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

	1 9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room 11.30am Care & Prayer Community room & church	2 9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall	3 9am-2pm Op Shop 10-12pm Coffee & Discovery <i>Guest speaker: Joslene Abboud</i>	4 5.30-7.30pm Fusion Youth Group MUSIC NIGHT	5 9am-12pm Op Shop 9am-12pm Garage Sale lower hall Garage SALE	6 HAPPY FATHER'S DAY 8am— Worship Includes Communion 9.30am—Worship Includes Communion followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm Worship Includes Communion
7 9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room	8 9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	9 9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon Women's Fellowship	10 9am-2pm Op Shop	11 No scheduled events	12 12pm-5pm Netball Presentation day In Church & hall	13 16th Sunday After Pentecost 8am— Worship 9am—Worship @ the Willow's 9.30am—Worship followed by Morning Tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8 6.45pm Worship Community meal
14 9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church	15 9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	16 9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall 10am-12noon Men's Morning Tea McKels Café Bella Vista 7.30pm Elders meeting	17 9am-2pm Op Shop	18 5.30-7.30pm Fusion Youth Group Mini-Golf Swing city—Norwest	19 No scheduled events	20 17th Sunday After Pentecost 8am— Worship 9.30am—Worship Followed by morning tea KUCA Preschool, Years K-2 & Years 3-8 5pm—Shine Setup from 4pm 6.45pm—Worship
21 9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room and Church	22 9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation Community Room	23 9am-2pm Op Shop	24 9am-2pm Op Shop	25 No scheduled events	26 No scheduled events	27 18th Sunday After Pentecost 8am— Worship Followed by morning tea 9.30am—Worship Followed by morning tea KUCA in Recess for school holidays 6.45pm—Worship
28 9am Sorting & Pricing for Op Shop & Garage Sale lower hall 7.30pm Christian Meditation Community Room	29 9am-2pm Op Shop 9.30-11am Christian Meditation community room	30 9am-2pm Op Shop 10am-12noon In Stitches Upstairs hall	 SEASON OF CREATION			

