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Why Am I So Miserable If This is the Lord's Will? Study Guide

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Why Am I So
MISERABLE?
If this is the Lord's will
Study guide

By Anne Reynolds

Why am I so miserable? If this is the Lord's will

Study guide

This Bible study will be topical in nature and will cover various portions of Scripture as pertains to the topics that are introduced in each chapter of the book. Some of the chapters cover multiple topics and will be covered in separate sessions. The study questions for each chapter can serve as part of the study you can do at home, or as something you fill out during the study. The schedule will be as follows:

Week 1: Introduction and testimony. The first chapter will be covered this week, which primarily is testimonial in nature. Scriptures that are used in this testimony, in particular, the ones concerning knowing the will of God, will be discussed. Homework for this week: To read the first chapter if not already done so, and read chapter 2 for next week.

Week 2: Sanctification. The second chapter is covered this week. This chapter is the foundation for the rest of the book; it is more teaching in nature, but it is important for the applications that will be made for the rest of the book. Scriptures addressing our sanctification will be covered. Homework: read the section on our flesh in chapter 3, but stop before the section on emotions.

Week 3: Our flesh. As the flesh is what we battle with, (what Satan tries to tempt) this week will be devoted to defining what it is, why we have it, and what can be done about it, as described in God's Word. Homework: read the section in chapter 3 on emotions.

Week 4: Emotions. This section in chapter 3 will be covered this week. Emotions are defined and discussed as to how they interact with our sin nature, and what the Bible teaches us about emotions. Homework: read the sections in chapter three on intellect and desires.

Week 5: Intellect and physical desires. How our flesh affects both our intellect and desires will be discussed this week. Scriptures will be covered that focus on renewing our minds (Romans 12:1-2, for example) and both instructions and examples from Scripture on dealing with our desires will be discussed. Homework: read the introduction and section on trials in chapter 4.

Week 6: Trials. How trials impact our struggle with the flesh is discussed; Scriptures which describe trials and how the person got through them will be covered. Homework: finish reading chapter 4.

Week 7: Temptation and tolerance. How temptations impact our flesh (or how our flesh is tempted) will be discussed, and what the Bible tells us we need to do about it. The dangers of tolerance of sin and lack of accountability are discussed and the important role

that the Bible plays in defining what should and should not be tolerated. Homework: read chapter 5 up to and including the section on loving God.

Week 8: Our flesh and our relationship with God. How our relationship with God was ruined at the very beginning of creation is discussed, as well as how the Fall affects our relationship with Him today is will be covered. Homework: read the rest of chapter 5.

Week 9: Loving God, God's Word, and Experience vs. Scripture. What it means to love God, the role of the Word of God in our relationship with God, and also its importance in our struggle with our flesh is discussed. Using experiences as basis for choices and actions vs. using Scripture as a basis will also be discussed. Homework: Read chapter 6 up to p. 146.

Week 10: Our flesh and our relationships with others, part 1. This week will cover: loving others, false expectations of love, acceptance from others, and manipulation. Passages on loving others (1 Corinthians 13, for example) will be discussed. Homework for next week: read the rest of chapter 6.

Week 11: Our flesh and our relationships with others, part 2. This week will cover: conflict with others, when we get hurt, husbands & wives, singleness, and church. Passages that deal with conflict and forgiveness, as well as marital relationships, singleness, and the church will be discussed. Homework for next week: read chapter 7.

Week 12: Defeating the flesh. This week will be the concluding week to the study, and time will be given for addressing topics from earlier weeks if wanted. We will look at passages on suffering for Christ (1 Peter 4:1-2, for example).

Week 1

Being in the will of God and miserable?

In what two ways is the will of God revealed in Scripture?

- 1.
- 2.

What does the Word of God say that the will of God is? (Give two or three examples)

Is it unclear from Scripture what His will is?

How does God make His will known to us?

What should we do when we are unsure of what decision to make?

How did misery come about while in the will of God?

What was the solution that I found while seeking God's help in my misery?

For further study: search the Scriptures to see what other examples there might be of God's will, either in what He will or has done, or in what we do.

Week 2

Sanctification

What is sanctification?

Compare the two examples given of the process of sanctification. What is the primary difference between the two approaches?

Who accomplishes our sanctification?

What part, if any, do we play in our sanctification? What can we and cannot do?

What can believers and ministers do that support Jesus' work of sanctification?

How is sanctification manifested in a believer's life?

God contrasts for us in His Word those who are spiritual babes vs. those who are mature. What characterizes each?

What is the goal for every Christian?

How is the nature of our relationship with God (Trinity) defined?

What is wrong with being independent?

What indicates whether we are acting in submission to the Lord, or pleasing ourselves or others?

For further study: Do a word search for sanctification in the New Testament; Read Galatians 5.

Week 3

Our flesh

In order to have victory over the flesh, what must we first be able to do?

With this in mind, what then is the flesh?

What does the Bible say about where our desires and lusts that we struggle with come from?

Where can we find attributes of the flesh contrasted with attributes of the Spirit?

What is the only way that we can deal with the flesh?

What three reasons are given for giving up an activity?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is the only means by which we are able to walk in the Spirit?

Why do we end up doing what we don't want to do?

What solution does Jesus offer? What do we need to do?

What three C's does the flesh seek?

Can we "kill off" the flesh bit by bit?

When Jesus set us free from the chains of sin and death (Romans 8:2), what did that do for us? Does it remove the flesh?

Who or what is the only source of satisfaction?

For further study, read through the ten steps given by John MacArthur each day and meditate on them.

Week 4

Emotions

What are emotions?

This definition is important because...

Are emotions bad or evil?

When do our emotions result in sin?

Does obedience to God mean ignoring or denying how we feel? What do we do when emotions conflict with obedience?

How does the flesh seek to cope with emotions?

What happens when fleshly solutions are sought?

What is the only effective way of dealing with our emotions?

What are two key spiritual means of support that God has provided?

Does God want us to ignore, suppress, or deny how we feel? What does God want us to do?

For further study: do a Bible study search of different emotions (fear, sorrow, etc.) and see whether the people choose to depend on God or whether they took matters into their own hands, and what the results were in either case.

Week 5

Intellect and physical desires

Desires

What is the difference between a desire of the flesh and a desire that comes from the Spirit?

Just like emotions, desires _____ to us.

How can the physical desires we experience lead to death?

Our feelings and desires lead us astray when they become the means
_____.

Can our physical desires be put to death?

The flesh cannot be _____; it can only be _____.

Regarding desires, further study can be for you to consider what desires of the flesh you struggle with and compare what I have described regarding our desire for food and see how it applies to what you are experiencing. Meditate upon Romans 8:12-17.

Intellect

Apart from thinking about things that are sinful or lead to sin, how is our flesh (sinful human nature) revealed in our intellect? (How we use our mind?)

Does understanding why we sin keep us from sinning? If not, what does?

Are we not supposed to seek understanding or knowledge at all then?

Biblical knowledge without submission to and dependence upon God for understanding can result in what?

If we cannot battle the flesh with fleshly strength (2 Cor. 10:3), what do we battle it with?

Regarding intellect, further study can be reading and mediating upon Ephesians 6:10-18, or on the proper responses to God's Word.

Week 6

Trials

Compromising with the flesh becomes tempting when _____

_____.

There is no such thing as compromising with the flesh because _____
_____.

The flesh's response to trying circumstances will be _____

_____.

Comfort, control, and convenience are what the flesh will seek on a _____ basis.

What are we in really doing when we seek to have control?

To seek to be in control and not trust God is to _____.

What is the only way to deal with the flesh's demands for control?

While comfort has to do mainly with our _____, our _____ and our _____, inconvenience has to do with _____.

Can comfort, control or convenience be achieved? If so, to what degree?

What is at the root of seeking comfort, control, and convenience?

Can pain really be avoided? What is the only way of dealing with pain that works?

Trials are a testing of our _____. How can we be sure of it?

The genuineness of our faith (whether we truly follow God or not) will be seen in how we respond to ____.

What is the ultimate test of faith?

This is only possible to do _____.

Pain is not the enemy. ____ is the enemy.

Sin _____ and what He provides; pain may serve to _____.

Afflictions or trials are opportunities to be emptied of ____ and filled with ____ life.

For further study: Read James 1:2, 12; 1 Peter 1:7-9; 4:12-14. What do trials produce? What will we receive when we are approved (honored God through them)?

Week 7

Temptation and tolerance

Temptation

How does temptation happen?

What the world offers will appeal to our desires in what three ways?

Temptations to sin are not simply to just have enjoyment; they are an enticement to _____, or to _____ something or someone else other than _____.

How can anything that the world offers appeal to us when we don't want to sin?

What two rationales are behind the temptations we face?

What example from Scripture illustrates how Satan wants us to doubt God's Word and goodness?

Being tempted is not sinning; _____ to temptation is sin.

What is the only way to handle temptation?

Sin is not simply what we say and do; it is what we _____ to see and listen to, and what we choose to _____ about.

In trying to live a godly life, how can we tell if we are trying to do so according to the flesh rather than by the Spirit?

Nowhere in Scripture is there an example or command to fight temptation with _____, _____, or _____. Rather, with _____.

When we yield to temptation (and sin) we will experience:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What does God's Word promise us concerning temptation and sin?

For further study, answer the following questions: What does Scripture warn us to flee from? In what way(s) do you put confidence in, or rely on the flesh? What makes denying the flesh possible?

Tolerance

Tolerance is practiced in the church when _____.

What misunderstanding will lead us into sin?

Love is not what _____ good to them and to us; it is doing what ___ good.

How does tolerance in the church demonstrate a lack of faith?

How can the practice of tolerance be eliminated in the church?

For further study: look up passages that speak of the truth or perfection of God's Word. Consider: Have you seen tolerance being practiced in the church? In what ways?

Week 8

Our flesh and our relationship with God

How did our relationship with God go wrong?

What sin did Adam and Eve have in common with Lucifer?

How was what they did demonstrate that particular sin?

In tempting Eve, what two things did Satan do in seeking to drive wedge between her and God?

What can we do when we are tempted to doubt God's Word and His goodness?

Acting independently from God is the very definition of _____, and it is _____.

Sin, at the beginning of creation ruined our relationship with God (Romans 5:12); how can our relationship with Him be restored?

In short, what are the five keys to a good relationship with God?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Our relationship with God is not defined by an _____ or _____ response, but by a response of _____.

Staying in fellowship with God is a _____. In _____ Him, we _____: _____; when we don't we are _____: _____.

What makes what we do acceptable in God's sight? Is it enough that it is a good work?

What will happen to any work of the flesh at the Judgment seat of Christ?

How does God's definition of success differ from the success that the flesh strives for?

What restores our fellowship with God when it gets broken?

To repent is to:

How is the fruit of the Spirit developed in our lives?

Walking in the Spirit does not happen _____.

What is an indication of spiritual growth and maturity?

Each day we need to recognize that apart from Him, we can do _____.

If we have become desensitized to our sin, what clues will reveal to us a disconnection with God?

What four reasons are given for why we don't go to God?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What does "My God shall supply all your need..." (Phil. 4:19) mean?

If God is not giving us what we want, it is not a _____. It is His _____!

The quality of our relationship with God is indicated in the degree to which we: _____

For further study on this section, look up the passages given for the five keys to a good relationship with God and use them to evaluate your own relationship with God.

Week 9

Loving God, God's Word, Experience vs. Scripture, and Spiritual discernment

Loving God

What is our definition of what loving God is to be solely based on?

To love only certain aspects of His character and not embrace Him entirely for who He is will result in:

How do we know if we love God?

Does this mean that loving God is only what we do in obedience to His Word?

Loving God is the _____ of Christian living.

While it is understandable to love God for what He has done for us, to love Him only for what He does is to _____.

To love God is to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The foundation of a love for God is _____.

Where does a sincere, unconditional love for others come from?

To love God's Word more than God is to _____.

To love people more than God is to _____.

How we respond to God's Word will indicate _____.

For further study, do a word search of the word command or commandment in the New Testament and see how loving God would be seen in our lives.

God's Word

Jesus said, "I am the way, the _____, and the life". (John 14:6) In declaring this, God declares Himself to be the only source of what is _____. Defining truth to be relative is to _____ God as the source of truth.

Truth is redefined so that we don't have to be _____.

How do those who walk according to flesh determine what is true?

What is wrong with determining what truth is?

Acknowledging God's truth means:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

We choose to define what truth is so that we can: _____.

The only way to determine if our insights or if that which is heard from others is true is to: _____.

Why did David delight in God's law?

For further study, meditate on God's laws; how do they keep us from harm? How do they lead us to what is good?

Experience vs. Scripture

How can an "experience from/of God" lead us astray?

How can we determine if an experience is from God?

When experience is used as a standard for truth we will: _____
_____.

Should our experiences be disregarded then?

For further study: search the Scriptures; discover what things the Apostle Paul wished for his readers to experience; see what the Bible says about what we experience when we follow His Word, walk in the Spirit.

Spiritual discernment

God's truth can only be _____ discerned.

_____ should not be mistaken for _____.

How is it that a person hears the Word of God and it does not change them?

If discernment only comes from God, how do we receive it?

What are three reasons that a believer lacks spiritual discernment?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If God's Word is only spiritually discerned, it also means that _____.

For further study, look up the word discernment in its various forms (discern, discerned, etc.) in the New Testament.

Week 10

Our flesh and our relationship with others, pt. 1

The basis for healthy relationships with others is _____.

People can not meet the needs that only _____.

What are some of things that God is, that other people either fail to do or cannot do?

How can those who irritate us cause us to draw closer to God?

If our needs are not being met in God, how does that impact our relationships with others?

Does loving others with God's love guarantee good relationships with others?

For further study, look up in the Bible the various characteristics of God that make our relationship with Him far better than any that we can have with others. (Perfect love, faithfulness, etc.)

Loving others

What do we need to do first before we seek to love others?

Where does the love come from that we need to love others with?

Our source for loving other is _____; it is not _____ or _____.

Does this mean that emotions are not involved?

What do difficulties in relationships usually come from?

What is a common misunderstanding of what loving others is?

What example do we have from God that loving others sometimes requires pain and sacrifice on our part?

From Romans 12: 9-21, we learn that love is demonstrated when we: _____

_____.

What does loving your neighbor as yourself mean?

According to Matthew 5:44, who does loving others include? Who has set the example in doing this?

Loving others biblically only happens if _____.

What has to happen then, before the love of God can flow through us to others?

For further study, find examples in Scripture where love was expressed from one person to another (or a group) other than by God, Jesus, or the Spirit (except through that person who is expressing love).

False expectations of love

What is a false expectation of love?

What is the cause of these false expectations?

When should disappointment be expected?

1. _____
2. _____

What is vital to a correct expectation of love from others?

To correct a false expectation of love, we need to _____
_____.

For further study, look at the example of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) and see how a false expectation of love was expressed.

Acceptance from others

Because of the Fall of man (Genesis 3), where do we look to for acceptance? Who should we be looking to?

What happens when we look to other people for acceptance?

Where and in whom is the only place and source of real acceptance?

To avoid a misperception of rejection by others, what do we need to do?

Pursuing acceptance from others is a _____ exercise.

For further study, look at Romans 5:8 and Ephesians 1:5-7 and answer these questions: What is our acceptance based on? Can we earn it? Do we need to earn it? Will it ever change or go away?

Manipulation

What negative example does Jesus give that we are not supposed to follow?

Manipulation is about power and control because to manipulate is to: _____
_____.

How does being manipulative feed self-righteousness?

What do we do if we know we are being manipulated but cannot freely say no? (Due to circumstance or position)

The secret to dealing with manipulation is not to _____, but to _____
_____.

The only true benefit from doing what manipulators want is from _____

_____.

When should we not do as manipulators want?

We should please _____ rather than men.

For further study, look for examples of meekness in Scripture, as well as when God was obeyed rather than men.

Week 11

Our flesh and our relationship with others, pt. 2

Conflict with others

What are four common causes of conflict with others?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How do we know our expectations are correct? What can we measure them by?

What can we expect from those who don't know God?

What should we see in those who do know God?

What does it mean when a Christian does not behave like they are a child of God?

Unreasonable expectations come from _____.

This means that unreasonable expectations are characteristic of the _____.

Is judging others wrong?

What makes a judgment wrong?

Is there a right way and a wrong way to judge?

What instruction did Jesus give to those who judge in Matthew 7:3-5?

Selfish people disregard _____.

What else are they known for? What is this characteristic of?

What makes assumptions dangerous?

What principle from Scripture can we use to see the error of making assumptions?

What is the overall cause for conflict?

Why can't conflict always be resolved?

What do Luke 17:3b-4 and 1 John 1:9 teach us about forgiveness?

Does this mean that we don't forgive others until they repent?

If forgiveness does not result in reconciliation, what will it accomplish?

What reasons are there that people use for avoiding confrontation of sin?

Are any of them correct or valid? Why?

Conflict resolution is always to be with the purpose of _____.

For further study, find at least one example in the O.T. of where conflict was resolved through forgiveness and repentance.

When we get hurt

What are two possible reactions to getting hurt?

What is the consequence of ignoring and dismissing the hurts we receive (being tough)?

What does this contradict?

What is the consequence of being easily offended (hyper-sensitive)?

What does this behavior reveal?

To not forgive is ____; there is no ____ that justifies ____.

How can our hurts be put in God's hands and left there?

What can we do if old hurts keep resurfacing?

How is this applied?

For further study, search the Scriptures; find, read and study passages on the healing ministry of God towards us; how he loves us, cares for us, heals us.

Husbands & wives

What happened at the time of creation that affects relationships?

What was the woman's curse, and how is that seen today?

Is what women desire as a result of the curse what God created women for?

What happens when women reject the role God created for them?

To live a life devoted to pleasing ourselves, or idolizing or controlling men, is to be _____.

What was the curse on man, and how is that seen today?

If this is the curse, where then are men supposed to find their purpose, identity and validation in?

What happens when men reject the role God created for them?

When both husband and wife accept their God-given purpose and role, they will find their needs met in _____.

What does a good marriage look like?

Marriage is an adventure in _____.

For further study, if you are married, have you found that the ways in which you cope (you need space) conflicts with your husbands? (He needs togetherness) Same applies if you are dating. Discuss how depending on God and expressing God's love to each other will impact the dependence and insistence you have for your own coping mechanism.

Singleness

What do singles have opportunity for in their relationship with God that married people do not?

In what two directions can the freedom that singles enjoy lead to?

What is wrong with “me time”?

Does marriage provide completeness?

Is getting married a solution for loneliness?

If God has promised to supply our need (Philippians 4:19) doesn't that mean that He has somehow failed us if we fail to find a husband/wife?

If God does not leave us or forsake us, then why do we sometimes feel as though He has?

What are some of the consequences of serving the cause of finding a husband?

For both married and single, what is the key to finding contentment?

For further study, study the life of the Apostle Paul and see how singleness enabled him to serve God in the capacity that He did.

Church

What is the ultimate purpose and goal of the church to be?

If whatever we are doing is not _____, it is being done in the _____.

What determines if what we are saying and doing is being done in the Spirit or according to the flesh?

In what three ways should glory to God be given in the activities of a church?

Worship is a _____. It does not just _____.

What happens when doctrine is emphasized over knowing and giving glory to God?

What happens when emotional experience is emphasized over giving glory to God?

How love is manifested in the local church should be with the goal in mind of:

Both a genuine _____ and _____ will be evident in _____ a church _____, and in what it _____.

What is an indicator of whether the pastor and leaders of a church are humble?

What is wrong with a people-centered ministry or worship service?

How are God-centered Christians developed in the local church?

What if a God-centered church cannot be found?

When looking for a church, what criteria should **not** be used? Why?

A _____ cannot meet our deepest needs. Neither can _____.

Who do we need more than people or church?

For further study, look at the recommended things to look for in a church, in the leadership of a church, and in the people of the church and see whether that is in agreement with what the Bible says.

Week 12

Defeating the flesh

What does Hebrews 12: 1-2 tell us we need to do to live a victorious Christian life, and how and why it should be done?

What weighs us down?

To make the choice to serve God will always require _____ or _____.

What does Romans 12:1-2 tell us about self-sacrifice?

What does Peter exhort us to in 1 Peter 4:1-2? Whose example do we follow when we do?

Suffering caused by denying the flesh is necessary, because without it, we cannot _____
_____.

For further study, do a word study on suffer/ suffers/ suffering, and see what is taught in each case and how the people involved responded and what resulted.

Misery's solution

What if we are accepting the suffering in our lives, yet we are still miserable?

Life only becomes hopeless when _____.

What will demanding happiness on our own terms result in?

What is the only thing that results in true, lasting happiness?

What are six things we can do if we find that we are miserable or depressed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

What do all of these have in common?

For further study, do a word search in the Bible on happy / happiness / blessed / blessing and see what is taught concerning them (how it is obtained).