RE:THINK

A tug of war

Why do bad things happen?

Have you ever asked this question and what was your answer?

If God is most powerful, why can't He just stop the bad things from happening?

We are all in a tug of war between 2 powers who really want our loyalty. Maybe you can feel it. One moment you are enjoying something beautiful and great in life, and the next, you are let down, sad or anxious, and wonder why that 'thing' needed to happen.
Better yet, who made that happen? Why didn't God stop it? And why didn't God just create a perfect world with no option for sin, right from the start?

All GREAT questions. But first, let's go back to the beginning.

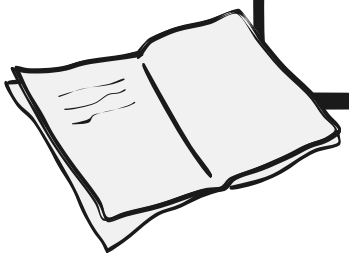
There are many names for God, and in creation, the Hebrew name 'ĕlōhîm (El-o-heem) is used. This is a plural name and it shows very clearly in Genesis 1:26a, as it says, 'Then **GOD** said, "Let **US** make mankind in **OUR** image..'

? What are your thoughts on this plurality of God?
God was in **community** right from the start, and created humans to be a part of it.

? Did God create robots? What makes you answer this way?

? What does free will mean?

I was walking in the snow with 2 friends and I picked some up and ate it. They asked if it tasted nice and I said, 'Yea it tastes a bit like raspberry!' (It didn't taste like raspberry. I was just being silly - but I did say it in a very believable way). One of them said, 'Really?! Can I try?'. I gave her some of my snow and she said, 'Yea it does!'. Of course, then the other friend wanted to try, and she said the same thing! At first, I thought they were just playing along with my joke, but I soon realised they were serious.



This is a great example of the power of suggestion.

? How does it work that they tasted raspberry simply because I **re:**commended it that way, and it wasn't even true?!

Read **Genesis 2:16-17** and fill in the blanks for **both verses**.
'And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are _____ to eat from _____ tree in the garden; but you _____ _____ eat from the tree of the _____ of good and evil, for when you eat from it you _____ _____ _____."'

Read **Genesis 3:1-7** and fill in the blanks for **V1** and **V6**.
'Now the _____ was more _____ than any of the wild animals the Lord God had _____. He said to the woman, "Did God _____ _____, 'You _____ _____ _____ from _____ tree in the garden'?"'

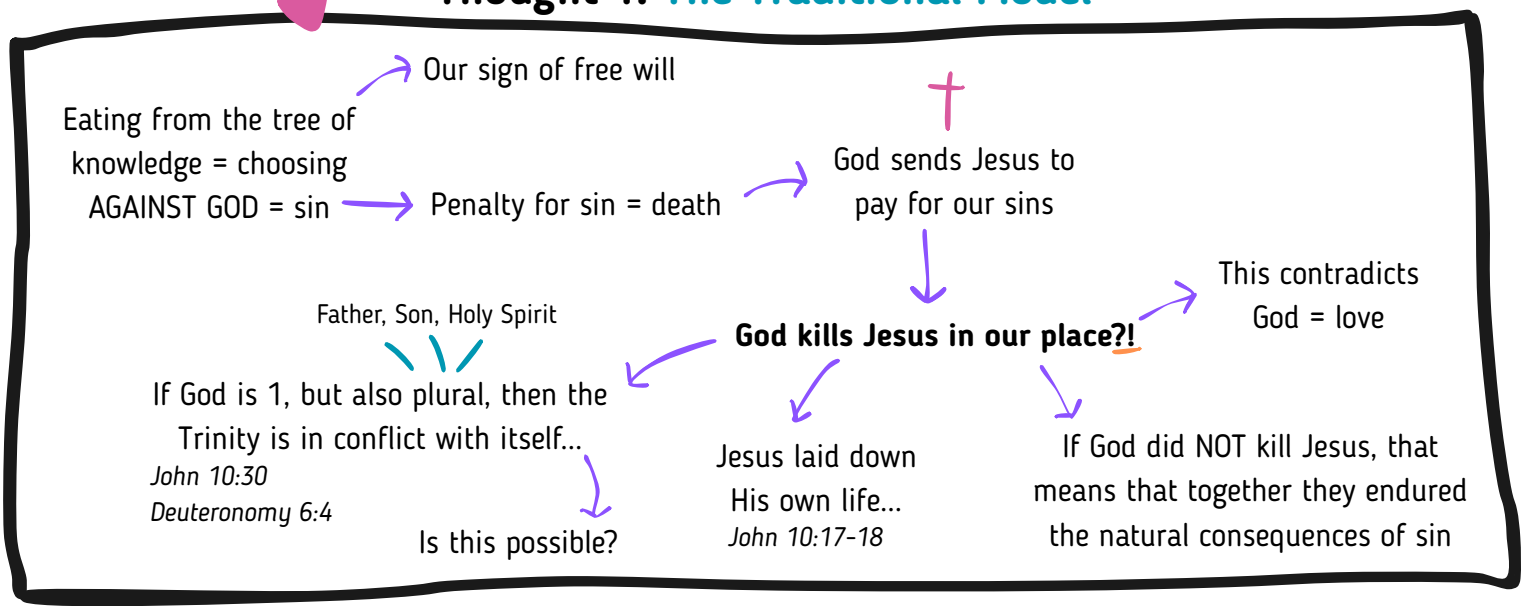
'When the woman _____ that the fruit of the tree _____ _____ for food and pleasing to the eye, and also _____ for _____ _____, she took some and _____ it. She also _____ some to her husband, who was _____ her, and he _____ it.'

? Why do you think God made 1 tree that they should not eat from?
? What does it show about God, that He gave them ALL the trees, except 1?
? Can you see any differences between what God had told Adam and Eve, and what the serpent said?
? Can you hear a power of suggestion in what you read in these verses? Why / why not?
? Knowing that God did not create robot humans programmed to love Him only and not have a choice, what do you think about this risk God took, especially knowing that it would cost Him His own life?

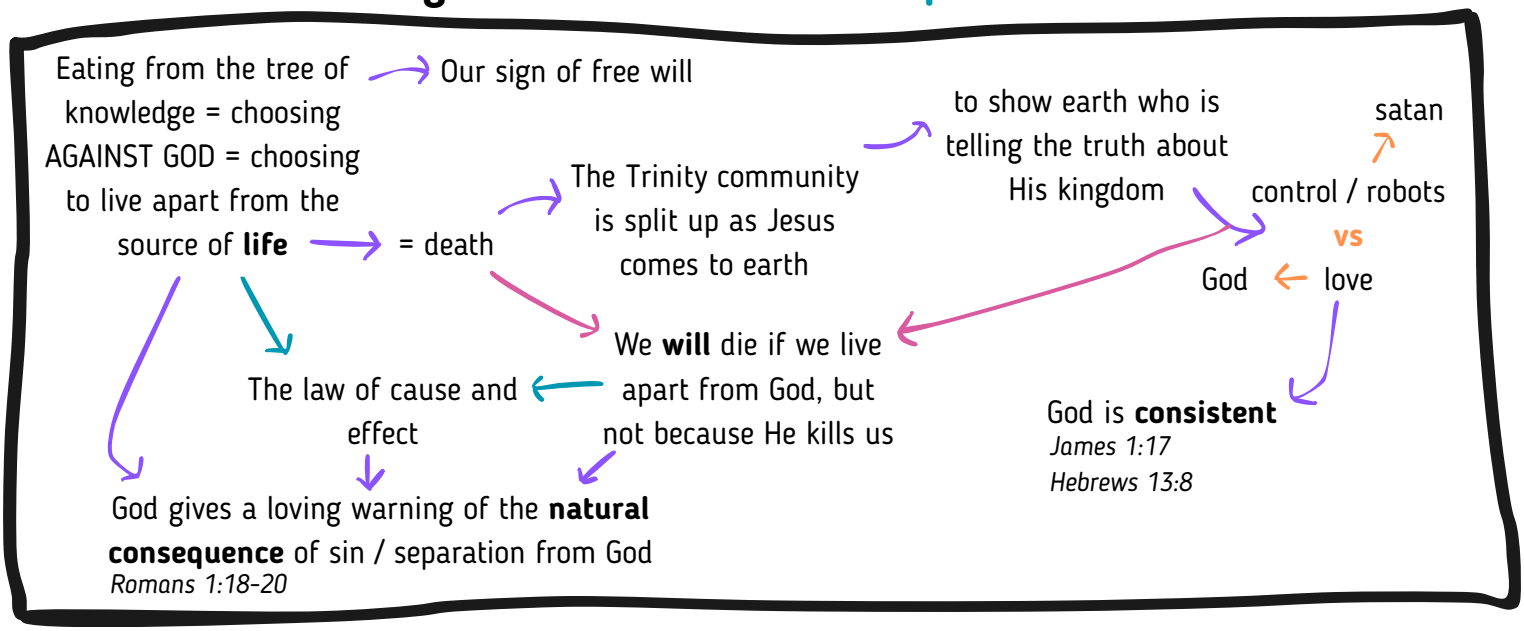
MAPPING IT OUT

Mind maps are a great tool to help organise and process ideas, solve problems and expand thinking. You write all your thoughts and questions down and see where the journey takes you! Below is an example of how to use a mind map to expand 2 different thought processes about what we have just been talking about.

Thought 1: The Traditional Model



Thought 2: The Natural Consequences Model



? What are your thoughts on the 'Natural Consequences Model' way of thinking?

? Has it given you a new understanding? Explain.

Write some questions you have which you can write a mind map about.

_____

_____

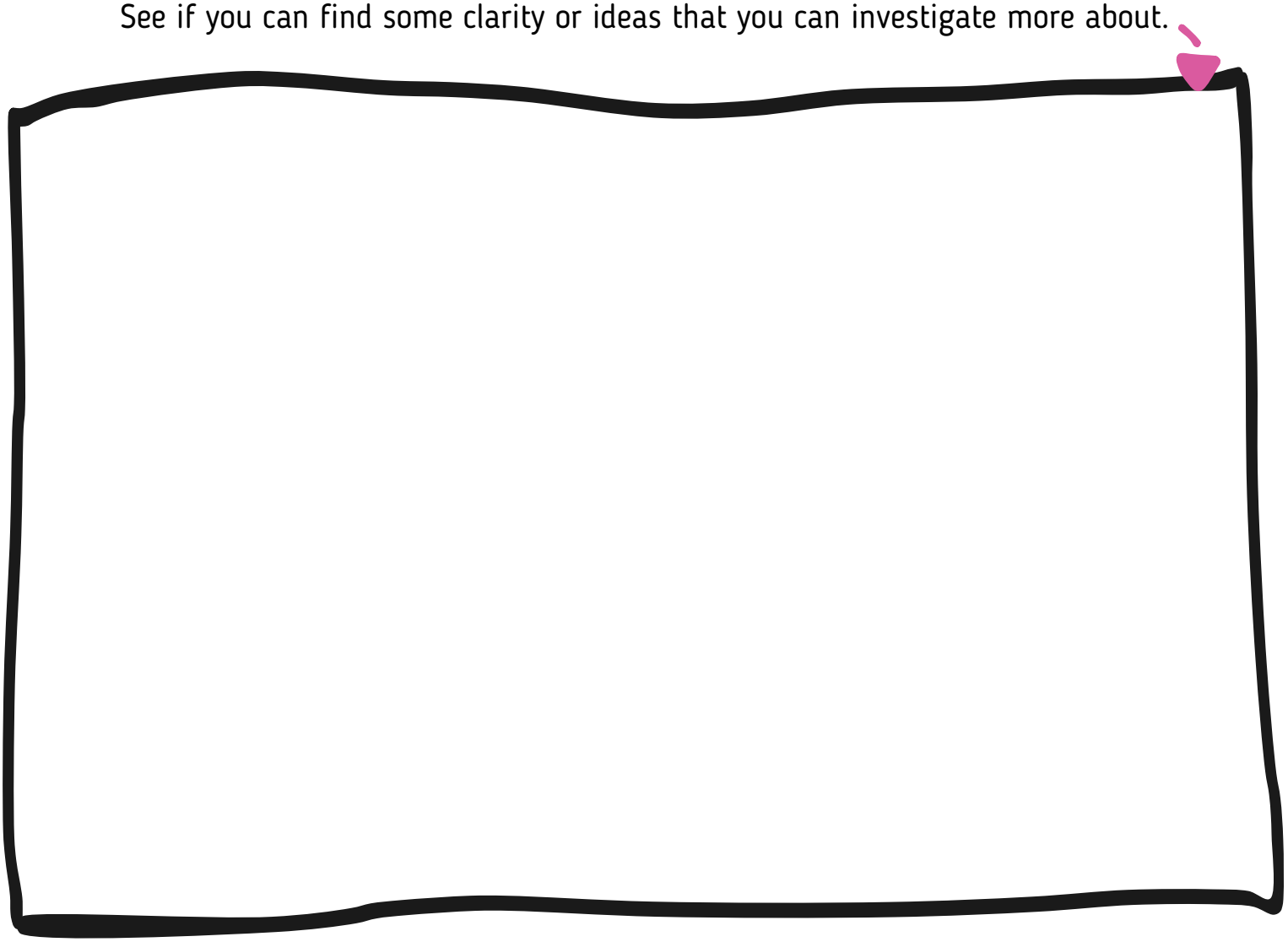
_____

_____

Draw a mind map to hash out some thoughts about the following question, or one you wrote above.

'Why doesn't God stop all the bad things from happening?'

See if you can find some clarity or ideas that you can investigate more about.



- Satan said to Eve that she would not die if she ate from the tree. (Genesis 3:1-5)
  - When she didn't die immediately, that caused her to doubt God.
    - The power of suggestion can be deadly.
      - But the moment that she ate, her eternal life ended and death - the natural consequence of choosing to live apart from God - became a reality.
        - Satan is still working to make us believe his suggestion that God will punish and destroy us if we mess up with God in the slightest. *Zaaaap!*

? How do you think God feels about sin, death and all the bad things that happen in the world?

? What do you think would happen if God answered every single prayer that was prayed?

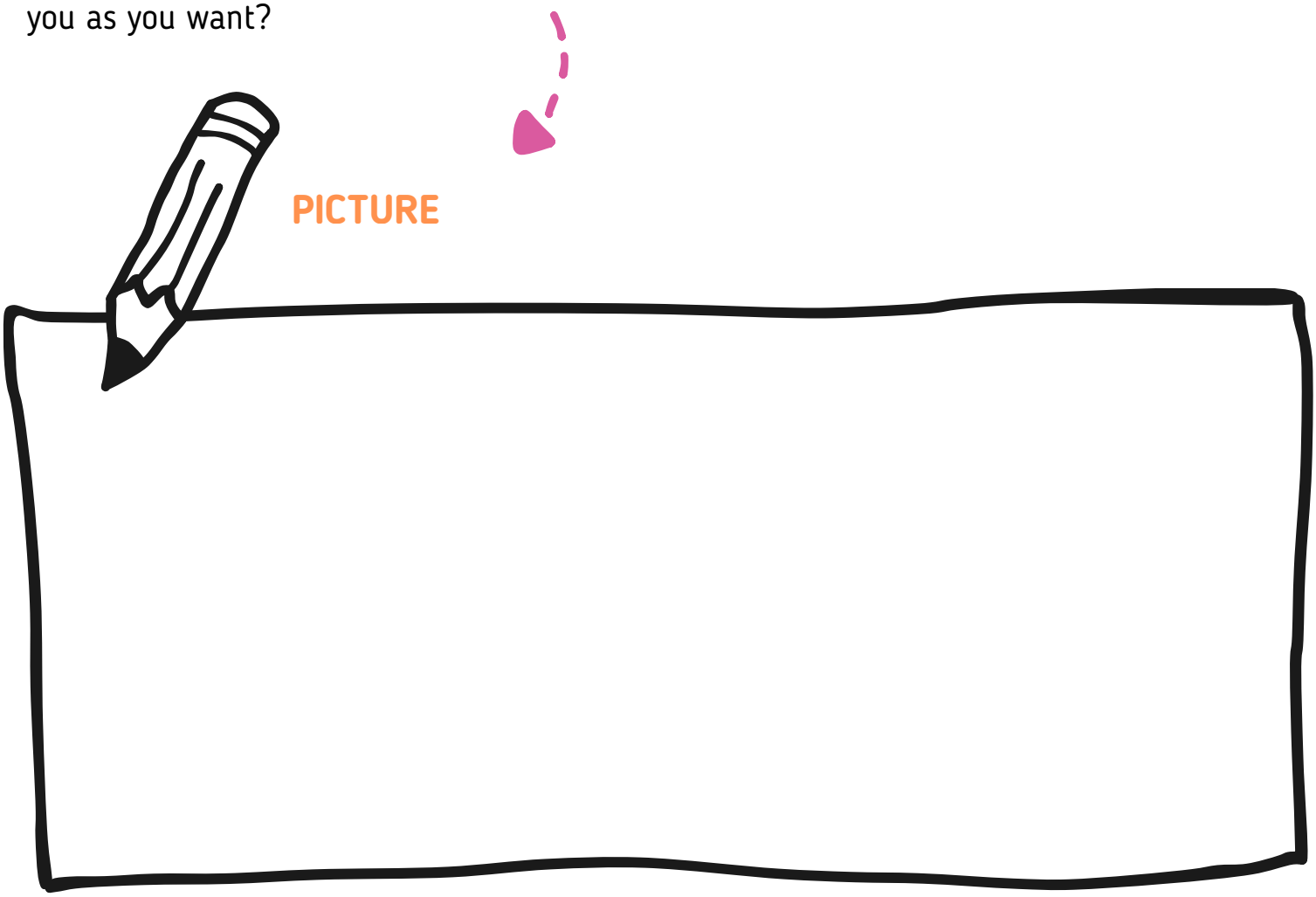
Love **re:**quires freedom.

? Do you feel free in God's love? Why / why not?

? What are your thoughts on the following statement?
*'Creating a world with free will was also a risk for God. He risked **re:**jection, personal suffering and even sacrificing Himself for a creation who was hostile towards Him.'*

We stand in this conflict of wanting God to make everything all right when we snap our fingers and pray our wishes.
But that would mean we wouldn't have free will.

? How will you give God the power in this tug of war we are in, especially when you are going through a tough time and it is easy to blame God for not helping you as you want?

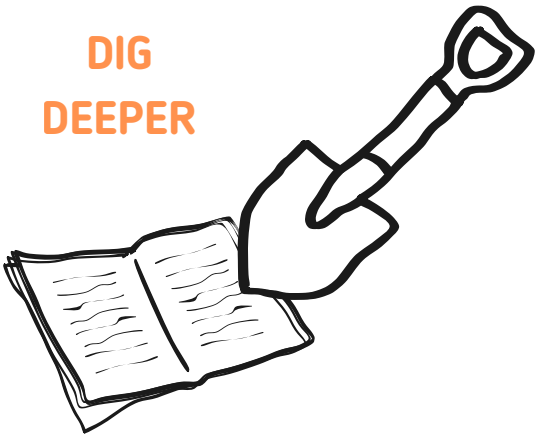


Draw something to represent your thoughts and feelings after this moment together.
Or, if you are not thrilled about drawing, go back through today's gathering and use a colour or symbol, underline or circle the words that stood out to you.
Is there a theme in what you noticed?

SONG

Fighting For Me - *Riley Clemmons*

DIG DEEPER



Extra verses to extend the exploration!

- 1 John 4:7-21
- 1 Peter 5:6-11
- Romans 1:18-32

QUOTE

True love requires the potential for evil, not its actuality.

- Tihomir Lazić

PONDER

- Knowing how sneaky satan can be and how he uses the power of suggestion, is there anything you want to **re:**analyse about what you think about God?
- How might **re:**thinking where good and bad come from change your **re:**lationship with God?

WORD

Summarise this time together in 1 word or sentence.
*What is something you want to **re:**member?*

Use this word now in a short prayer between you and God.

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