

6 Ways God Uses Tragedy for Your Good

Over a hundred tornadoes ripped through 10 states Easter weekend causing massive damage and over 30 deaths. An invisible virus has knocked the world to its knees making millions sick and killing thousands.

The global economy staggers under the weight of closed businesses, lost jobs and lost revenue. Medical teams are stretched to the limit as they struggle to contain a deadly pandemic. Many are wondering why a loving God allows such tragedy.

But Jesus never promised trouble-free living. In fact, He predicted the opposite—"In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b).

As Christians, we like to think we are exempt and get a free pass. That is neither realistic nor biblical. Saints and sinners alike have been victims of COVID-19. Psalm 34:19 gives us this reality check, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

Let's explore six reasons God allows tragedy when, in His sovereignty, He could prevent it:

- 1. To manifest His glory:** In Lazarus' case, Jesus explained, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4). The only reason Jesus let him die was so He could resurrect him and glorify God. When Jesus healed the man who was born blind, His disciples asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned ... But it happened so that the work of God

might be displayed in him” (John 9:2-3). Problems do not always indicate sin. Sometimes they indicate that you’re doing well, and the enemy is targeting you. When tragedy strikes, Satan tries to convince us that our mishaps are a result of our misdeeds. Tragedy is often just an opportunity for God to intervene. Every miracle in the Bible first started as a problem. Impossibilities with men are opportunities for God and He can bring good out of any bad situation.

2. **To change our direction:** Sadly, it often takes drastic measures for God to get some people’s attention. God may allow a small tragedy to prevent a bigger one—the loss of one’s soul. Jesus taught that it’s far better to enter heaven handicapped than to go to hell healthy (Matt. 18:8–9). If certain events hadn’t happened to some people, they might have never gotten saved. They would have died young due to their lifestyle and ended up lost eternally. God used tragedy to dramatically change Saul’s direction. He was going to Damascus to imprison Christians when Jesus appeared to him in a blinding light. Saul was blind for three days until Ananias prayed for him. Then he received his sight and the Holy Spirit, plus his heart and name were changed (Acts 9:1-22). He became the mighty apostle Paul who wrote nearly half of the New Testament. Some people are so stubborn that it takes a tragedy to wake them up spiritually. God won’t make us serve Him, but He has many ways to make us more willing.
3. **To draw us closer to Himself:** Many people treat God like the paramedics—they only call when they have an emergency! God should be our first resource, not our last resort. The good thing about trouble is it forces us to pray. Tragedy will either drive us farther away or closer to God. With the current coronavirus outbreak, people are praying more than ever. Hopefully, it will result in another great spiritual awakening.
4. **To prepare us for ministry:** “Adversity is God’s

university.” It’s the struggle of a butterfly breaking out of a cocoon that develops its wings so it can fly. Jesus warned Peter that Satan wanted to sift him as wheat. Sifting, though unpleasant, is a good process. God sifts us to separate the wheat from the chaff (spiritual from carnal); Satan sifts us to destroy the wheat. Jesus added, “When thou are converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32, KJV). Peter went through some tough things to prepare him to minister to others. Once you’ve been through something yourself, you can relate with compassion to those who are struggling. Every tragedy presents an opportunity for ministry. First we receive it; then we can give it. I preached many funerals and sympathized with people, but until I had to unplug my own mother from life support, I couldn’t fully relate to them. If God brings you through tragedy, use your experience to minister to others.

5. **To bring correction:** All sickness is an indirect result of the original sin (fall of Adam). Some sickness is a direct result of personal sin. Jesus healed an invalid who was bedridden for 38 years, then gave him a stern warning, “Sin no more, lest something worse happens to you” (John 5:14). This implies that his sickness was a direct result of sin. While not true in every case, sin is sometimes the culprit for tragedy. Some people bring tragedy on themselves by violating God’s Word or abusing their bodies. For instance, sexually transmitted diseases, lung cancer and cirrhosis of the liver are often self-inflicted by promiscuity, smoking and alcoholism. Many diseases are caused by unhealthy diets. It is counterproductive to pray for God to heal us if we are contributing to the cause. God doesn’t put affliction on us, but He may temporarily lift His hedge of protection as He did with Job and allow the enemy to attack us. God’s chastening is like surgery—short-term pain in exchange for long-term gain (Heb. 12:5-11). If He allows tragedy for this purpose, it is never to

destroy us but to restore us back to right relationship with Him.

6. **A fallen world system:** This world does not function like God created it to. When Adam fell, creation was plunged into chaos. God never intended for death, disease, divorce, crime, poverty, injustice, racism, violence or war to invade humanity. Many questions defy answers. Why do Christians die from disease? Why are missionaries martyred? Why are innocent children born with birth defects? What about godly people who are randomly killed in plane crashes, car accidents, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods and fires? Bad things happen to good people every day because we live in a broken world. Jesus explained, "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

Instead of blaming God or becoming bitter, keep believing in Him no matter what. He has a higher perspective, and we can't see the whole picture. Paul wrote, "Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (1 Cor. 13:12, NKJV). One day, all our questions will be answered. Meanwhile, remember everything ultimately serves His purpose. So, when you can't trace His hand, trust His heart. He knows what is best for us even when we don't understand His ways. {eo}

Note: This article contains excerpts from Ben's book God's Strategy for Tragedy. You can read more articles or order his books at .