

Biblical Secrets to Getting the Kind of Joy That Makes No Earthly Sense

Virtually every person who has ever lived on this Earth has asked the question “why” as a connection to the suffering we endure. It doesn’t matter if you are a believer or even an atheist—the question will always rise up in the heart or out loud.

Why this disease? Why that accident? Why this horrific loss? Why that calamity? Why that horrible tragedy?

Whether the subject is one’s own suffering or the suffering of another, possibly even an innocent one, the question always rises: Why?

A believer naturally addresses such questions with God. Why did this happen? Why did You allow this?

Even an atheist will throw out the question. None of us are immune to the desire or need to know why life is like it is.

For the believer, there is the biblically grounded perspective that ultimately answers this perplexing question.

The word “why” refers to first cause. Webster’s Dictionary defines the word “why” as: “the cause, reason or purpose for which ... “

So, the first thing one has to accept if he is seriously wanting the answer to *why* is to realize that he is asking about the first (or root) cause, not derivative causes or effects or consequences.

The question “Why?” is properly asking about the original cause of the suffering. The reason this is so critical is

because the particular suffering that is the object of the question is always an intermediate event in the all-encompassing loving plan of God for you and for all people.

So, let us look at the infinite plan and love of God that will wholly answer the question *why* for every believer, for every suffering he or she endures in this life.

The Answer Is in the Bible

The entire Bible, Old and New Testament, reinforces the purposes of God for all who are called according to His purpose to eternal life with Him. We will not embark on a long and detailed exposition of Scriptures that outline this throughout the Bible; but rather, let us simply look at a few key strategic truths that God has revealed to us in the New Testament.

Ephesians 4:13 gives an outline of God's purpose:

"... until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

God's ultimate purpose for all his people is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ in this life as far as it is divinely enabled by the Holy Spirit:

" ... to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I might make it to the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11).

This simply means that our inner and outer man conforms more and more to the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

This can and should happen willingly in the heart of a believer as he submits to the will of God in his life; which means he or she dies or is crucified to his/her own fleshly desires (Gal. 2:20).

However, every human believer—including the mighty saints of old—could not voluntarily relinquish every such aspect in their life to God without suffering. This does not mean that they are stubborn or hard-hearted.

The human condition is: “We don’t know what we don’t know.” Unfortunately, in this world, it takes suffering to enable us to become aware of, and able to repent of, the hidden things in our fallen human character.

Remember, the only perfect man to ever live learned obedience through the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8).

So, we can accurately say that the divine desired outcome of any suffering is obedience—submission to the will of God in our life.

In fact, it is the case that one who has suffered in the flesh in this life has ceased from sin (1 Pet. 4:1). This is a divine truth that can’t be developed here. It refers fully to mature work of the Spirit in one’s life.

Simply speaking, he or she has relinquished their old sinful attitudes and behavior in some aspect of their character development and maturity with the Lord. The Holy Spirit then moves on to some other deficient aspect of their life in Christ—perhaps through suffering.

What is the outcome of all of this?

To hearken back to the question *why*—the answer to the ultimate question of suffering is:

Suffering is necessary for God’s ultimate goal and purpose in our life—to be conformed to the image of Jesus in this life as far as it is possible by the Holy Spirit—as we submit and die to our own desires and needs.

If we can accept His truth that our conformity to Jesus, to the fruit of the Spirit in our life in this earth, is the most

important purpose of God's plan for us, it becomes easier and, we dare say, even joyful, to know that God is investing so much in us so that we will be so close to Him for all eternity even as Jesus is.

"Let us look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2a).

This is understandable from our own perspective from the things we endure. But what about that beautiful person or that wonderful child over there who has experienced such loss, such tragedy? If I am not affected directly nevertheless, I cast the question, "Why God, them?"

This is where it is important to appreciate the all-encompassing perfect plan of God not only for you, but for all. Each living person has multiple degrees of connection to others in this life. And it's important to note that the preservation of mortal life is not God's highest priority for man.

God in His perfect plan has ordained that sometimes one will suffer for the benefit of another (Rom. 5:7).

It's a hard truth for immature believers to accept. But in these instances, God is working out salvation and conformity to the character of Christ in the life of some of those who are connected to the suffering innocent.

In God's divine purpose, it is necessary that those connections endure suffering cast upon them through the innocent one suffering. Indeed, these connected ones are certainly the object of God's loving purpose for redemption and conformity to His Son.

Joy Comes in the Morning

Most importantly, whether it's us who suffer or another who

suffers, the all-sustaining, compassionate truth is that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom.).

It's time to rejoice. {eoa}

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