

Greg Laurie: When You Want to Blame God for Your Troubles

After I became a Christian, I underwent a pretty dramatic change in a short period of time. At the age of 17, I heard the gospel and became a believer. And then I pretty much turned my back on the lifestyle I had been living up to that point.

However, I had some old friends who didn't quite get what I was doing. I was the last guy they expected to become a Christian. I had a friend since elementary school whose name was also Greg, and he was really concerned about me. In fact, he told me he was worried that I would become a Jesus freak, a religious fanatic.

I told him, "Now Greg, listen to me. I'm not going to become a fanatic. You will never see Greg Laurie carrying a Bible or wearing a cross around his neck or saying, 'Praise the Lord!' I'm going to keep this thing in check. Don't worry about me."

Two weeks went by, and I hadn't seen Greg. I had been going to Calvary Chapel and listening to Pastor Chuck Smith and others teach. My life was changing, and my excitement about my new faith was growing. One day I happened to be in Newport Beach, walking around and talking to people about Christ.

Suddenly I looked up, and my friend Greg was walking toward me. I realized that I was wearing a cross someone had given me, and I was carrying a Bible. And before I knew it, I actually said, "Praise the Lord!"

Greg looked at me, and I looked at him. And then we started laughing.

"I know this seems crazy," I said. "You can't believe that I'm a Christian out talking about my faith. But you know, my life

is changing. This is what the Lord has done for me.”

I could see that he was interested, so I said, “Greg, you too could come to Christ. He could change your life.”

Then someone I hadn’t even noticed suddenly stepped in and said, “I have a few questions for you, Christian!”

I don’t remember his questions exactly, but I do remember they were difficult ones. Then my friend turned to me and said, “Yeah, Laurie, what about that?”

I didn’t know what to say. I was embarrassed. Afterward, I went home and committed myself to studying the Scriptures so that wouldn’t happen again.

Questioning Circumstances

If you’re a Christian, sooner or later someone will ask you those questions, or perhaps we might even ask some of those questions ourselves. You might be surprised to know these are not new questions. In fact, many of them date back to the time of Jesus’ ministry, and we see them addressed in a New Testament account of a man who had been blind from birth.

No doubt this man was a fixture at the place where Jesus and His disciples encountered him. So the disciples thought it would be a good opportunity to ask Jesus why this had happened. They said, “Why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” (John 9:2, NLT).

Or, to say it another way, “Why is this man in the condition that he’s in? Why is there suffering? Why are people born with disabilities? Why do we have war? Why is there tragedy?”

Some people will use a tragedy they’ve experienced to justify their rebellion against God. Our human intellect and notions of fairness reject the apparent contradiction between a loving God and a world of pain.

In a classic statement of the problem, either God is all-loving but not all-powerful, and therefore He can't stop suffering. Or, He is all-powerful but is not all-loving, and therefore He won't stop suffering. The general idea is to blame everything on God.

But is it really God's fault?

Blaming God

Was the man in John's gospel blind as a result of his personal sin? No, he was born blind. Then was his blindness a result of sin in general? Yes, it was. And for that matter, all disabilities, all sickness and all the problems we face in the human body leading to our ultimate death are the result of sin.

In the Garden of Eden, God told our first parents, Adam and Eve, that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would die. But they ate it anyway, and death spread through the human race like wildfire. But let's not be too hard on Adam and Eve, because if we had been in that garden, we would have done the same thing.

We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23), so obviously we would have done the same thing Adam and Eve did. The point we must keep in mind is that humans, not God, are responsible for sin.

Why, then, didn't God make us in such a way that we could not sin? It's because He has given us a free will to choose good or evil, to do right or wrong.

Of course, it does seem that it would be better, and certainly safer, if we didn't have this free will and could only choose to do the right thing. In many ways, free will is our greatest blessing and potentially our worst curse in life.

But if God hadn't given us free will, we would have been like preprogrammed robots without a natural response. God wants us

to love Him and follow Him because we choose to do so.

Understanding God

God allowed this problem in the blind's man's life so that He could be glorified through it. God was glorified by the removal of the problem. Jesus healed this man, and He did it in a rather unorthodox manner.

For the first time, this man was able to see friends, family and the glories of God's creation. But more importantly, he saw Jesus Christ, and he found the meaning and purpose of his life.

In the same way, God allows us to go through certain things in life to make us into the people He has called us to be. He can use us as powerful representatives of Himself. He will allow things in our lives for a purpose. And, ultimately, His purpose is to make us more like Jesus Christ. {eo}

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Since then, God has transformed that small group into a church of some 15,000 people. Today, Harvest is one of the largest churches in America, and consistently ranks among the most influential churches in the country.

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