

Suffering: Why We Shouldn't Try to Avoid It



C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*: “If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness, or power, or both. This is the problem of pain in its simplest form.”

Of the many questions raised by suffering and evil, these four capture most of the heart issues:

1. Does God know? (the issue of His omniscience)
2. Does God care? (the issue of His benevolence and love)
3. Can He do anything about it? (the issue of His omnipotence)
4. If He knows, cares, and can do something about it, why doesn't He? (the issue of His purposes and will)

So much about suffering and evil remains opaque and impenetrable. On the other hand, a lot is knowable.

Here's the elevator speech:

- In this world we all will suffer. Faithful Christians suffer (see 1 Pet. 4:12; John 16:33). The perfection of creation was corrupted by the fall and, with it, human nature. So, because of the fall, we must do our work

while feeling the prick of thorns. Humans are not capable of not sinning in their own strength. As it is, suffering plays a large part in the Christian faith on the road to redemption.

- We are called to suffer. We all must go through hardships (see Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:21; Acts 14:22; 1 John 3:13). Not only have we been given the privilege of trusting Christ, but also of suffering for Him. He said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).
- There is purpose to suffering. We can handle anything if we think it is for a purpose (Rom. 8:20-21; 2 Cor. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; Rom. 5:3-5). “Our light and momentary problems are achieving for us a glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Cor. 4:17).
- There is comfort in suffering—because there is purpose to it (Ps. 119: 67, 71, 75, 92; Heb. 12:7-11). Like David we all can say, “It was good for me to be afflicted. Now I obey your law.” God uses suffering to redirect us back to Himself.

I love suffering. Not while it is happening, of course. But as I look back, most of the progress in my life took place after God “refined” (by fire) something that I could/would never have dealt with on my own.

Some of our greatest heroes discovered and declared this truth: Daniel (Dan. 11:35), Paul (2 Cor. 12:8-10), Peter (1 Pet. 5:10), and James (James 1:2-4).

I love suffering because it produces in me the life of Christ, and I know of no other way to get it. I haven't been able to get it by self-will. I didn't get it through prosperity. It hasn't come to me through learning.

Great Quote:

"He whom God loveth he beateth the hell out of."
—Jamie Buckingham, writer and pastor

Patrick

Morley began teaching a weekly Bible study to a handful of men on Friday mornings in March 1986. This group grew to the 160 men who meet weekly in Winter Park, Fla. Since 2000, Internet technology has enabled thousands of men from around the world to participate each week by viewing or listening to the study. Pat is the author of *The Man in the Mirror*, a landmark best-seller for men drawn from Pat's own search for a deeper relationship with God. For more teachings by Pat, go to , or visit his ministry online at .