

exploreGod™

THE 7 BIG QUESTIONS

"Why Does God Allow Pain & Suffering?"

Idea: God is at work in your pain and suffering for your good and His glory.

Intro: By far the most frequently asked question that people ask concerning God is why He allows pain and suffering in the world. After all, if God exists, if God is all-powerful, and if God is truly good, then why is their evil in the world? Why does God allow:

- children to die in the womb?
- cancer to ravage the human body?
- economic disasters?
- genocide?
- alcoholism and drug abuse?
- terrorism?
- marital conflict?
- starvation?
- Ebola outbreaks?

The fact that pain and suffering is a reality leads many people to deny the existence of God or at best to disbelieve in His goodness and power. The eighteenth century philosopher David Hume is one who could not believe in an all-powerful and good God because of the reality of pain and suffering in

the world. He is famous for his trilemma about God's goodness, God's power, and evil. He asked, "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?" Hume concluded that there are only three alternatives about God: He is impotent, He is evil, or He is nonexistent.

It is true that everyone who confronts suffering personally or even philosophically is forced to grapple with disturbing questions about God, but the existence of pain and suffering does not negate the existence or goodness of God.

Inquiry: Scripture testifies of the goodness of God.

8 Good and upright is the Lord; - Psalm 25:8a

8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! – Psalm 34:8

*7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
– 1 John 4:7-8*

The Bible declares to us that God is good. Why then does pain and suffering exist?

Hard Truth: Pain and suffering are present in this world solely because mankind sinned against God.

Read Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 8:20-22.

The blame for natural evil (earthquakes, floods, and famines) and moral evil (genocide, terrorism, and injustice) can be laid at the feet of man. All of the evils in the world are traceable to man and not to God. They are not of God's doing or of His inability to prevent them. God declared His creation to be good. Prior to the rebellion of man, there was no concept of

pain and suffering in the universe. However, in man's freedom, he chose to reject the goodness and the rule of God. Thus, bringing a curse upon humanity and the rest of creation.

For those of us who believe the Bible's testimony that God is good, that God is sovereign, and that the presence of evil is man's fault, we still wonder *why* He allows it. It is very much human to ask *why* when the scan comes back malignant. We ask *why* when parents have to bury their child. We ask *why* when your employer downsizes and eliminates your job. We ask *why* when the floodwaters come and destroy everything in their path.

I have great news today! There is coming a day when all the pain and suffering will be over.

4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

– Revelation 21:4

Even though we know and understand that the reason for these evils in the world is attributable only to man, we still wonder *why* God allows them. The Bible reveals two main reasons God allows pain and suffering.

1. God allows pain and suffering for your good.

This statement may sound to you like an oxymoron, but it is not. Our God is in the redemption business. He takes pleasure in redeeming terrible situations, and He knows that there are certain things you and I can never know or understand without the experience of pain and suffering. Job is a perfect example of this. The Bible tells us that Job was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1). This man loved God, and he taught his family to love and cherish God.

One day Satan came into the presence of God along

with the other angels. Lets take a look at this meeting. Read Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6. In a short amount of time, Job lost everything. This righteous and Godly man lost his children, wealth, and his health. He eventually lost his friends as they assumed God was cursing Job because of unconfessed sin. In chapters 3-37 we witness Job's three friends rebuke him over and over again. We also hear Job lamenting his birth, wishing he were dead, clinging on to his righteousness, and basically asking God *why*? Finally, in chapter 38, God answers Job. The Lord takes Job on a journey. There is sort of a back-and-forth that takes place between Job and God that results in Job's repentance and a knowledge of God that he had never known before.

Read Job 42:5, 12, 17.

There were aspects of Himself that God desired to reveal to Job, which he could never know without the experience of pain and suffering in his life. And just like Job, there are certain aspects of God that you will never know apart from the experience of pain and suffering in your life.

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” – C.S. Lewis

Illust: This past Thursday marked 23 years since my dad was killed in a work accident. He was only 35 years old. I was 15 and my sister was only 13 years old. That day forever changed my family and me. In the days and months that followed, all I could ask was *why*? I never blamed or became angry toward God, but I did wonder *why* God allowed it to happen. It made no sense. My dad had experienced an incredible revival during the last year of his life. My last memory of my dad was seeing him setting at the bar that morning reading his Bible before going to work. Why did he

have to die? Why did my mom, my sister, and I have to endure such pain and loss like we did? Why?

As I stand here before you today, 23 years after his death, I can answer that question. God allowed that pain and suffering into my life for my good. Since that day, I have come to know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and I have come to know His goodness in a way that I otherwise could never have known. I can truly say that if my dad had not died in that accident, then I wouldn't be standing here before you.

28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. – Romans 8:28

2. God allows pain and suffering for His glory.

Read Job 1:6-7; 2:1-3, 9-10.

Satan is strutting before God. He is acting like he rules earth. He calls into question God's sovereignty. God basically says, "Alright, you think that you're in charge? I will show you who is in charge."

Through all of Job's pain and suffering, he never cursed God. Job never sinned with his lips. God was glorified, as His power was sufficient to sustain Job in his suffering. God was glorified, as Job grew closer to the Lord in his pain and suffering rather than cursing God as Satan insinuated. Likewise, God is glorified in your pain and suffering as you hold onto your faith in Jesus and His goodness. The great news is that it's not so much that you're holding onto Jesus, it is that He is holding onto you.

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present

nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:37-39

Conclusion: Jesus loves you. If you're experiencing pain and suffering in your life today, I want you to know that Jesus loves you. He is present in your life. The Bible says that He is an ever-present help in times of trouble (Ps 46:1). Know that as you suffer, Jesus suffers along with you, and He is holding on to you. He is working to reconcile all things in your life, even your pain.

Show Does God Care About Suffering video.

<http://www.exploreGod.com/does-god-care-about-suffering-video>

Isaiah 53:3 tells us that our Lord is “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” In your suffering remember that Jesus has been there, He is there, and He will continue to be there.

God allows pain and suffering in your life for your good and His glory. It is a tool of mercy and grace that is used to open your eyes and heart to God. In your pain have you turned to Jesus? Have you experienced His warm embrace and presence in the midst of your suffering? He loves you. Never forget that truth. And because He loves you; Jesus will never let you stay the same. He uses the pain and suffering of this world to open you up to His goodness, love, and truth.

Therefore, rather than shaking your fist at God when you are hurting, lift your hands to Him in total surrender. When you do you will discover a depth in your walk with the Lord that you never knew before.