

WHY DO

**BAD**

THINGS HAPPEN TO

**GOOD**

**Christian**

PEOPLE

‘Why do bad things happen to good people?’ This is a phrase many people use and not just unbelievers, but believers too. So we’re going to explore reasons why and why believers should not find it a surprise when they are faced with circumstances that are unpleasant.

Suffering came into this world in the beginning because of sin. It is a continual reminder of man’s sinful condition (Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 5:12). Pain, trouble, and sorrow became an everyday part of man’s existence, because of his disobedience. Since sin is in this world, suffering is a part of life. We cannot, in this earthly life, expect to see the complete eradication of disease or the end of suffering. We are all subject to it regardless of status or nationality.

Many people suffer unnecessarily because they abuse their bodies, or do not take proper care of them. If we indulge in smoking, drinking, taking drugs, and uncontrolled living, we are making excessive demands on our bodies. Consequently, our bodies, and even our minds, may break down under these stresses. It is sin to abuse our bodies (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:18-20).

There is much suffering, however, that comes upon the human race over which we have no control, and it comes unbidden to the rich and poor alike. No one, no matter how good a person they are, can be assured that they will be exempted. Job, the great example of suffering, was commended of God as a perfect and upright man. Consider the misery he suffered, losing his health, wealth, and family, and even his wife turned against him! God was glorified through his suffering, and He would like to be through ours.

**LET’S READ JOB, CHAPTER 1**

All Christians suffer. Either you have, you are, or you will — “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” ([Acts 14:22](#)). In this life, we will have tribulation (trials), but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world and we can too, through Him.

This reality is a stark reminder that we have not reached the new heaven and new earth. The New Jerusalem of no tears and no pain, of no mourning and no death, hasn't arrived yet ([Revelation 21:1, 4](#)).

But just because we experience suffering as we await the redemption of our bodies, it doesn't mean that our suffering is random or without purpose. And neither does it mean that Scripture doesn't tell us how to think about our suffering now.

Let's explore some important biblical truths about suffering every Christian should understand:

## **SUFFERING HAS MANY FACES**

Suffering has many faces. The Bible doesn't whitewash our experience of suffering by saying that it's all of one stripe. Rather, it recognizes the multifaceted ways that suffering can come upon us. The apostle Paul wrote, “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

In these two verses, Paul lists several types of suffering — mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Each of these are different ways that we can suffer, and when suffering comes, often several of these types of suffering are involved.

## SUFFERING HAPPENS IN COMMUNITY

Christians still suffer as we wait for Jesus to return, but none of our suffering is random or without purpose. The church is not meant to be a loosely bound association of functional Lone Rangers. Paul confronts that type of thinking when he writes, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

The church is meant to be a refuge for those suffering. When a member is hurting, the church applies the bandages; when a member is down, the church encourages; when a member is in need, the church comes alongside to help.

## SUFFERING EQUIPS US FOR MINISTRY

Firsthand experience in suffering is essential in equipping us for ministry. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:4 that God “comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

But how? And what is the link between experiencing suffering and equipping for ministry? David Powlison answers this way:

When you’ve passed through your own fiery trials, and found God to be true to what he says, you have real help to offer. You have firsthand experience of both his sustaining grace and his purposeful design. He has kept you through pain; he has reshaped you more into his image. . . . What you are experiencing from God, you can give away in

increasing measure to others. You are learning both the tenderness and the clarity necessary to help sanctify another person's deepest distress. (Suffering and the Sovereignty of God, 166).

## **SUFFERING IS A BATTLEGROUND**

Wherever there is suffering, there is a battle — a battle for your soul. The book of Job shows us there can be two ways to respond to suffering: one that curses God because of suffering and one that praises God, even in the midst of suffering (Job 2:9–10).

## **SUFFERING PREPARES US FOR MORE GLORY**

God says a lot about suffering in Scripture so that you know where to look when the pain comes to you. One of the counterintuitive truths about suffering is that it prepares Christians for more glory. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:17–18, “This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

These verses are like sandpaper on our modern sentiments about suffering. We naturally try to avoid suffering at all costs. But God brings suffering in our lives for the sake of our eternal joy — yes, even glory.

## **DO WE SUFFER BECAUSE OF OUR PARENTS SINS?**

A person is not necessarily sick, blind, maimed, deaf, deformed, barren, etc., because he or his parents have sinned. At one time the disciples asked Jesus after meeting a blind man: “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? (John 9:2). Jesus replied, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (v.3). Later, Jesus healed the man.

## **SUFFERING FROM OTHERS**

God does not intend to punish, but would rather like to refine us through this type of suffering. Actually, we can gain spiritual enrichment through such experiences. Suffering brings out the “real” or inner person and reveals our character. Many have found that by accepting difficulties and troubles their hearts have become softened. The humility this brings opens our mind to our dependency on God and His purpose for us. Then we can understand that, through suffering and difficulties, He intends to draw us closer to Him. Joseph was sold as a slave by his own brothers. Rather than being bitter about this, he let God work in him. He filled a great place in God’s plan. Later he told his repentant brothers, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). He was blessed in his submission.

## **SUFFERING REVEALS WHO WE ARE**

The suffering we experience tends to make us think about ourselves. We may feel alone in our problems and think no one understands. The burdens we have may seem greater than what others have to bear. It is easy to indulge in self-pity and become bitter, but the example of Joseph shows us how God can bless us as we submit to Him.

Rather than despairing, we can allow our suffering to be turned to the glory of God. Once we are resigned to our lot and can humbly say, “Lord, Thy will be done,” God can speak to us. There are many instances where people have thanked God for taking them through the valley of suffering because it has caused them to stop and think. They then realize there is more to life than to fulfill their own desires, pleasures, and pursuits. Many testify that they have found the Lord through suffering. Then, when they must face death, they can joyfully say with Paul, “Death is swallowed up in victory. The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54, 56-57).

## **OUR CHOICE OF SUFFERING**

Suffering will be the eternal lot of all those who reject Jesus (John 12:48). However, those who are willing to suffer for Jesus in this life will enjoy the rewards of eternity with no suffering at all (Revelation 21:4). By humbling ourselves to accept God’s way for us and repenting of our sins, our robes can be washed white in the blood of the Lamb. Those who are redeemed in this way can obtain the heavenly reward (Revelation 7:13-14).

## **SUFFERING TEACHES US**

Suffering would teach us to be more sympathetic to others. We may make little effort to visit or pray for the afflicted, until we have experienced suffering ourselves. “That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:4).

## JESUS UNDERSTANDS OUR SUFFERING

Jesus, who once lived on this earth in a body like ours, understands us and our sufferings well. He can sympathize with us beyond the capacity of any human being. He knows our pain and our troubled heart. When Jesus witnessed the grief of His friends at the death of Lazarus, He was so touched in His heart that He groaned within Himself and wept (John 11:33-35). He gave Himself to suffering for the eternal salvation of humanity. If He, being the perfect Son of God, accepted this, then we should be willing to also endure affliction. True followers of God willingly accept adversity since they are servants of Him, who is their example. A vision of Jesus, His love, and His sacrifice, causes them to consider, “Why should we be spared suffering?”

## CONCLUSION

Even though we may have to suffer extensively, we can find a rest in accepting what God has allowed to us. God is the Master Planner-with every trial He has promised to provide for our keeping. When the apostle Paul was able to accept his difficulty or handicap, he was able to be a happy and useful person. He prayed three times, asking God to remove the thorn from his flesh, but God answered, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Similarly, as we completely surrender to God and accept our suffering, God’s strength sustains us. When we accept God’s plan for us in suffering, it brings forth an expression of thankfulness that blesses our hearts and witnesses to those around us.



## QUESTIONS

1. When did suffering enter into the world? -
2. What are some ways we can abuse our bodies? –
3. Why is abusing our bodies a sin? -
4. Why shouldn't Christians assume suffering ends once they accept the Gift of Salvation? -
5. Is our suffering random or without purpose? –
6. How is suffering a community thing? -
7. Why is suffering essential in equipping us for ministry? –
8. How does God receive glory through our suffering? –
9. Name a way we can suffer from others? –
10. Do we suffer because of our parents sins? –
11. How does Jesus understand our suffering? –
12. Should we choose to suffer now or suffer eternally? Why? –