

Week 3—Why does God allow pain and suffering?

Questions? Text them to: 757-298-7733

“That our own civilization...will pass away like all its predecessors is surely probable. Even if it should not, what then? The race is doomed. Every race that comes into being in any part of the universe is doomed; for the universe, they tell us, is running down, and will sometime be a uniform infinity of

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homogeneous matter at a low temperature. All stories will come to nothing: all life will turn out in the end to have been a transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter. If you ask me to believe that this is the work of a benevolent and omnipotent spirit,

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I reply that all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Either there is no spirit behind the universe, or else a spirit indifferent to good and evil, or else an evil spirit.”

—C.S. Lewis
***The Problem of Pain*, p. 3**

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“If God is God, he’s not good. If God is good, he’s not God. You can’t have it both ways, especially after the Indian Ocean catastrophe.”

**— *Disaster Ignites Debate:
Was God in the Tsunami?***

New York Observer

Jan. 10, 2005

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“If a good and powerful God exists, he would not allow pointless evil, but because there is much unjustifiable, pointless evil in the world, the traditional good and powerful God could not exist. Some other god or no god may exist, but not the traditional God.”

—J.L. Mackie

The Miracle of Theism

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¹A Song of Ascents. Of David. O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

**²But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother; like a
weaned child is my soul within me. ³O
Israel, hope in the Lord from this time
forth and forevermore.**

Psalms 131:1-3

¹¹"Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water? ¹²While yet in flower and not cut down, they wither before any other plant. ¹³Such are the paths of all who forget God; the hope of the godless shall perish.

Job 8:11-13

¹Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: ²"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁴"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?"

⁶On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

⁸"Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, ⁹when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band,

**¹⁰and prescribed limits for it and set bars
and doors, ¹¹and said, 'Thus far shall you
come, and no farther, and here shall your
proud waves be stayed'?**

Job 38:1-11

“Tucked away in the assertion that the world is filled with pointless evil is a hidden premise, namely, that if evil appears pointless to me, then it must be pointless. This reasoning is, of course, fallacious. Just because you can’t see or imagine a good reason why God might allow something to happen doesn’t mean there can’t be one.

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Again we see lurking within supposedly hard-nosed skepticism an enormous faith in one's own cognitive faculties. If our minds can't plumb the depths of the universe for good answers to suffering, well, then, there can't be any! This is blind faith of a high order."

—Tim Keller

The Reason for God, p. 23

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⁴So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Genesis 45:4-5, 8a

Genesis 37-50—The Joseph Story

“Outlines the hidden call of God.”

—Walter Brueggemann

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“My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of ‘just’ and ‘unjust?’ ...What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?...Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own.

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But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world really was unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies.”

—C.S. Lewis

***Mere Christianity*, p. 31**

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“‘Why?’ is not a bad question. It’s just not always a helpful question.”

—*Dick Woodward*

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Why does God allow pain and suffering?

We can't know "why," but we can know "what." What God does in the midst of our pain and suffering, and what God ultimately will do about our pain and suffering.

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**What God does in the midst of our pain
and suffering—Exodus 3:7-8**

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⁷Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,

⁸and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Exodus 3:7-8

What God does in the midst of our pain and suffering—Exodus 3:7-8

- Sees**
- Hears**
- Knows**
- Is with**
- Refines us**

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“If you believe in Jesus and you rest in him, then suffering will relate to your character like fire relates to gold. Think of four things that we want. Do you want to know who you are, your strengths and weaknesses? Do you want to be a compassionate person who skillfully helps people who are hurting?”

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Do you want to have such a profound trust in God that you are fortified against the disappointments of life? Do you want simply to be wise about how life goes? Those are four crucial things to have—but none of them are readily achievable without suffering.

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There is no way to really empathize and sympathize with other suffering people unless you have suffered yourself. There is no way to really learn how to trust in God until you are drowning.”

—Tim Keller

Walking with God through Pain and Suffering

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¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12-13

**What God ultimately will do about our
pain and suffering—John 2:1-12**

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John chapter 1—“The next day...”

- **John 1:29**
- **John 1:35**
- **John 1:43**

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Counting the Days in John 1-2

- Day 1—John 1:19-28**
- Day 2—John 1:29-34**
- Day 3—John 1:35-42**
- Day 4—John 1:43-51**
- Day 7—John 2:1-12**

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What God ultimately will do about our pain and suffering—John 2:1-12

- **Recreation**

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¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

⁴He 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."

⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

⁶And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

Revelation 21:1-6

What God ultimately will do about our pain and suffering—John 2:1-12

- **Recreation**
- **Resurrection**

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⁴¹Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

⁴²So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

John 19:41-42

Why, “...Grunt and sweat under a weary life? But that the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns, puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others we know not of.”

Hamlet, 3.1.85-90

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Even religions that believe in a heavenly paradise consider it a consolation for the losses and pain of this life and all the joys that might have been. The Biblical view of things is resurrection—not a future that is just a consolation for the life we never had but a restoration of the life you always wanted.”

—Tim Keller

The Reason for God

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What about Me?

- **Believe**
- **Wait**

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Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.
—*Job 13:15a (KJV)*

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Why does God allow pain and suffering?

We can't know "why," but we can know "what." What God does in the midst of our pain and suffering—God sees, hears, knows, is with, and refines. And, John 2:1-12 proclaims what God ultimately will do about our pain and suffering—recreation through Jesus and resurrection with Jesus for all who believe in and wait on Jesus.

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