

Processing Our Suffering

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George Barna pollster: #1 question about God—Why does God allow tragedy and suffering?

Recent tragedy — Beyond heartbreaking, six days ago a mother took the lives of her four adopted teen-age children, Bo, Meigan, Lia, Kaileigh, and then took her own life, leaving behind three biological adult children, and two grandchildren. Over the years this family has sporadically attended Grace Chapel, but the four children were regular, vital, loved participants in our MSM/HSM. This tragedy has touched our church family.

Response — Grace Chapel is providing pastoral care for surviving adult children, expert Trauma PTSD training for staff, elders, and student volunteers to minister to our hurting children, and future events to equip and heal hurting, suffering, grieving people.

Word of caution — Guard your heart against uninformed conclusions, there is more to this heartbreaking story than you know.

***Today — Processing Our Suffering:
No one escapes going through life without it — deal, process, heal.***

Where did tragedy and suffering come from?

- When Adam and Eve freely chose to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, sin and death entered into our world, the curse and the fall of mankind and all of creation happened... just like God said it would... Genesis 2:17.

**Tragedy and suffering entered mankind's life and all of reality
through our own rebellion and disobedience to God.**

- **Unrealized fact...**the fact that people even recognize good and evil goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden... it is in our very eternal DNA. The fact we love and long for what is good, and ache over that which is wrong and produces suffering is proof of our Creator's existence and our longing to return to what we had before the fall...and most don't even realize that!

**Suffering doesn't disprove God;
it affirms His reality and validates His Word!**

If tragedy and suffering is the result of God giving man free will, the ability to make choices, why did God give man free will?

- Apart from free will, people would have been created as perfectly-programmed robots who wouldn't know the beautiful reward of a genuine, chosen love.
- We wouldn't know love for each other, and we wouldn't know love for God; to know love, God had to give the option of hate — He had to allow choice.
- Listen, **God so values genuine love, He was willing to risk man choosing evil!**

Can't God just wipe out people who choose evil and cause others to suffer?

- To truly ask this question shows how self-righteous we can be, signing our own death warrant.
- **Romans 3:10** – *None* righteous, not one! **Romans 3:23** – *all* have sinned and fallen short.
- **Ephesians 2:3** — our nature, children of wrath; **Colossians 1:21** — before we met Jesus, enemies of God.

**If God wiped out every evil-doer, we'd all be wiped out.
He loves us so much His mercy keeps us alive,
hoping we'll choose to repent and turn to Him.**

Can't God stop more of the evil and suffering?

- We don't how much He restrains already!
- Where does God draw the line to appease men?
- One year anniversary of shooting in Las Vegas where 58 were massacred. What if 25 were killed but not 58, is that ok? What if 100 killed in war but not 1,000 ok? Ask the survivors of the 100 if 100 is acceptable? Rapes, murders, cancer, natural disasters, etc.
- Any one of these tragedies is too much and brings heartache and suffering, but in this fallen world we live in, suffering is going to happen. *We must learn how to process and deal with suffering in a way that brings hope and healing from heaven to touch our hearts.*

Additionally — *we must understand the role of the **Omniscience of God**, the All-Knowingness of God, plays in tragedy and suffering...*

- God in His All-Knowingness will **allow temporary suffering** to produce a **greater eternal good** that in the present **doesn't seem fair or make sense.**
- **Job** — Loss of sons, daughters, wealth, and health — yet it led him to a deeper place in God, and doubly blessed on earth. **God knew the good future outcome, so He allowed the painful present.** *Possibly oldest book in the Bible is about suffering and restoration.*

- **Joseph** — Sold into slavery by jealous brothers, separated from father who loved him, taken to foreign land, falsely accused of rape, thrown into prison, forgotten in prison... until he became the second in command of all of Egypt, rescued his family of 70 from famine, and watched 70 turn into the Nation of Israel. **God knew the good outcome, so He allowed the painful present.**
- **Genesis 50:20**
But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.
- **Romans 8:28**
All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
 - Hardest verse in the Bible to believe
 - *Do you believe that God is able to work THAT out for my good? YES!*

**For suffering to be turned into healing,
you must choose to trust God and hang on to Him!
Just like Job and Joseph!**

- **Jesus** — God lowering Himself from the throne of glory and taking on human flesh, being tempted by Satan, thought crazy by family, betrayed, forsaken and abandoned by friends, falsely accused and given mock trial by religious leaders, whipped, beaten, mocked, and then denied by His friend Peter, crucified by Romans, God the Father laying the sins of humanity on Him, dying between two thieves, buried in a borrowed grave... Jesus experienced it all! Fair? Right? Just? Deserved?
 - Jesus experienced human physical, emotional, spiritual suffering

**God in His omniscience allowed the temporary suffering to produce the greater good,
the greatest good, the salvation of all humanity who would receive Christ's love,
that only came through His suffering and death on the cross!**

Christ's suffering was about salvation AND sympathy

- So important — so intimate and personal
- **Hebrews 4:15**
For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- **Hebrews 2:10**
For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
- **John 11:35**
Jesus wept.
 - Shortest verse displays greatest sympathy; He entered into our pain.

Application — *Jesus feels our pain, He sympathizes with our weaknesses, Jesus suffered more than any one of us, THEREFORE, He offers us a Perfect Solution — Himself! He's perfect for us!*

The solution to suffering isn't a program it's a Person... Jesus!

We started with “why”?

- Let's finish it with... Jesus on the cross —
 - Jesus felt forsaken and asked, *why?* “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?...”
 - ... then — *I don't understand, but I trust* — “Into Your hands, I commit my Spirit.”

Listen... this tragedy, and others to come, don't have to have the final word over those who are suffering, God has the final word, and that Word is Jesus. Run to Him for hope, healing, sympathy, and salvation!

- **Romans 8:18**
For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Discussion Questions

1. How does suffering affirm the reality of God?
2. Why did God give man free will?
3. Where could God draw the line to stop more of the evil and suffering?
4. Have you personally gone through suffering that you have seen turn into good?
5. What is the solution to suffering? How do you access the solution?
6. What you going to say the next time someone says to you, “Why does God allow pain and suffering in the world?”