



Why Does God Allow Suffering?

“If God is all good, and all loving, then why is there so much suffering in the world? I don’t get it! It’s so hard for me to understand this, and to be honest, it’s hard for me to stand for God when I see all of the suffering in this world. Where is God in the midst of suffering?”

Those questions are on the tip of just about everyone’s tongue that has either witnessed suffering or has personally experienced suffering. It is perhaps the most difficult challenge that any believer faces regarding their belief in the God of the Bible. We all need to reconcile our expectations with the reality of living in the world. We don’t like suffering, because it hurts: often physically, sometimes spiritually, and usually, emotionally. The truth is, suffering is a part of living and dying in this broken world with broken people. The good news is that in the midst of all the suffering, there is a God who loves and cares for us. In John 16:33, Jesus says, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Suffering began in the Garden of Eden. In the beginning, God made everything out of nothing, and when He finished, He said that it was “very good” (Genesis 1). Man walked with God and all continued to be very good. Then Satan tempted Eve to sin, and when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their beautiful relationship with God was broken. All was no longer very good. As a matter of fact, God ushered them out of the garden and into a now broken, sinful world with lots of work, pain and suffering (Genesis 3:16-19). When sin entered the world not only did mankind suffer, but even the creation itself suffered from sin (Genesis 3, Romans 8:20-22). This is evident from natural disasters like fires, floods, tsunamis and earthquakes.

Suffering also comes into the world when we make poor decisions. Because God gave all of us free-will, we are able to do good or to harm. God did not create us to be like robots that always do the right thing. Instead, He wanted us to make choices from our hearts and our minds. We, therefore, are given a choice to love Him and to walk with Him, which results in the promised eternal life with Him in Heaven after we die. We can also choose to reject Him and live outside of His will and spend eternity separated from Him. The Holy Spirit draws us to Him, but we still have the choice of believing or not believing. God wants us to love Him, and genuine love can only come when choice is a part of the equation. The majority of the pain and suffering in this world is a result of bad, sometimes wicked, choices made by believers and nonbelievers.

If God is who He says He is, the sovereign and loving God, then we can rightly conclude that God not only allows suffering, but uses it to draw us closer to Him. C.S. Lewis said, “Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience and shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” As much as we do not like pain, it is a part of this world. If we choose to see it as a blessing, it often drives us to God, knowing that He is truly the only One who can help us in our times of greatest need. Our faith can grow leaps and bounds during such times of suffering. Most people are thankful for what they endure because, in the end, they are better off by becoming more loving, trusting, and compassionate, with a much deeper walk with God.

James 1:2-4 *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”*