

Christian Response to Suffering

Introduction:

Knowing that in the infinite wisdom of God, He is glorifying Himself by the presence of evil and suffering in this creation, how should Christians respond when they encounter the reality evil and suffering in their lives?

1. Cataloging Sources of Suffering.

- A. Natural disasters
- B. Physical disabilities
- C. Spiritual, emotional, psychological, and social dysfunctions in people
- D. Economic dysfunction in people
- E. Government injustice, mismanagement of resources, and oppression
- F. Associations with Godless or untrustworthy people

All these realities lead to grief, pain, and anxiety.

2. Recognizing the historical and world-wide persistence of these problems.

Christians have always been exposed to these difficulties due to living in a world cursed because of sin.

The people of the Church of Jesus Christ, the New Community of God's people, are not exempted from suffering.

Our promises are for the age of Jesus' coming earthly Kingdom and for the eternal age of the new heavens and new earth.

But the New Testament anticipates suffering for Christians:
John 16:33, Philippians 1:29-30, 1 Peter 4:12-13.

3. Reasons why God allows His Children to suffer in this life.

- A. God sends us trials to purify our faith and prove its genuineness, 1 Peter 1:5-7.
- B. God sends us trials to build up the endurance of our faith, James 1:2-4.

C. God sends us trials to instill hope in others, 2 Corinthians 1:3-6

D. God sends us trials to build in us compassion for the sufferings of others.

E. God sends us trials to expose to us the superficiality of the world's charms, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

F. God allows His saints to suffer to focus our hopes on the future life with Jesus, Romans 8:18-23

G. There will be times when it is not profitable to seek a reason "why?".

4. How God Directs Christians to respond to our suffering and the suffering of people around us.

A. Trust in God, Proverbs 3:5-6.

B. Pray, Casting your cares on Him, 1 Peter 5:5

C. Examine your life and accept responsibility for selfish and self-indulgent ways.

D. Do not abandon relationships with other Christians, Hebrews 10:24-25
The Christian life is rarely successful in isolation.

E. Resist feeling sorry for yourself. Resist anger, Psalm 37: 8
These emotions only produce paralysis and bitterness.

F. Beware of prideful resistance to asking for help—

G. Use pain-reducing drugs with care and caution.

H. Responding to others who are suffering:

Weep with those who weep, Romans 12:15

Help the suffering who cannot help themselves.
Parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37.