



**WHY DOES
GOD ALLOW
EVIL AND
SUFFERING?**



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Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?

If God is all powerful and all good, why doesn't He stop every war, murder and tragedy? The Bible shows there is a time coming when He will. But why not now—and when will it be?

People have endeavored to come to grips with these troubling questions from the dawn of history. It seems so obvious—if God truly is, as Christians proclaim, all-loving and all-powerful, He could protect everyone from tragedy and grief. But obviously He doesn't.

When you read about school shooters killing innocent children, suicide bombers blowing up hundreds of innocent passersby, violent regimes maiming and murdering their political opponents, or arsonists causing

the tragic deaths of a young family, do you ever ask yourself, “Where is God in all of this?”

Atheists and agnostics often point to this quandary to support their disbelief and skepticism. How can one who believes in a caring God answer these questions?

Perhaps we tend to look at the dilemma from too limited a perspective. “Why evil?” is a fair question, but should we not give God a fair chance to respond? In the Bible He answers these vital questions: Where,



why and how did pain and sorrow originate? Do these difficulties serve any purpose? And who is the *true* author of wickedness?

We urge you to look into God's Word for answers that can offer perspective, comfort and encouragement.

Deeply personal

Suffering is deeply personal, and we experience it in many ways. In times of severe distress, adequate words or explanations seem elusive. We grasp for answers to the urgent questions of the moment: "Why? Why me? Why now? Why this? What's next? Where was God when this happened?"

It's clear that some people bring suffering upon themselves by the choices they make. But it's also obvious that some are unsuspecting victims of others' bad decisions or of seemingly random events. But doesn't it seem that God would at least protect those who sincerely try to live a good life and obey His law?

To truly understand this challenging subject, we need to go to the source—the inspired Word of God, the Holy Bible (2 Timothy 3:16). To explore the biblical answers to all these questions, first let's consider how evil and suffering began.

The first wrong choice

God and the Word (the One who became Jesus Christ) lived for eternity in the past in perfect harmony

(John 1:1, 14). Evil and disharmony began when one of the angels rebelled. "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned" (Ezekiel 28:15-16).

This angel, called Lucifer in Isaiah 14, became the adversary, Satan (Revelation 12:9). His rejection of God was by his own choice; God had made him "perfect" from creation. As Lucifer conducted his assigned responsibilities, he turned hostile to God. Pride led him to turn against and attack his perfect Creator.

But how did Lucifer's sins bring evil and suffering upon humanity? To understand this, we must first understand why God gave humanity freedom of choice.

Freedom of choice

God doesn't want us to become as Satan is, set in his evil ways. But when God created humanity, He still gave us freedom of choice, because He greatly desires children who choose to be like Him. This is His plan and incredible purpose for our lives! (You can find biblical insight into these subjects on the LifeHopeandTruth.com website in the articles "[Free Will: What Is It?](#)" and "[Children of God.](#)")

Without free choice, we would not be human, but more like robots,

programmed to never sin or suffer. However, God made us mortal so the (hopefully) few who eventually reject His plan and embrace evil won't suffer or cause others to suffer forever. (See more about this in the article [“What Is the Punishment of the Wicked?”](#) on our website.)

To prevent all human suffering, God would have to take away man's free will, which would interfere with the development of the godly character necessary to become His children—to become like Him.

Adam and Eve's fateful choice

The Bible indicates that God has allowed Satan to shape the world we live in (2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4). So it is no surprise that this enemy sought to thwart the plan of God as soon as possible in the Garden of Eden.

God had created Adam and Eve and placed them in this beautiful garden. He surrounded them with lush greenery and an abundance of everything they could need or want.

God offered our first parents the tree of life—which represented obedience to God and the path to eternal life as His children. He also commanded them not to partake of the fruit of another tree, which would impart the knowledge of good and evil—meaning they would take upon themselves the responsibility of determining what was right and what was wrong.

They were warned that if they ate of that second tree, it would lead to death.

But Satan, appearing as a serpent, lied to Eve and tempted her to choose to decide for herself what is good and evil (Genesis 3:4-5). Adam followed her lead. Together they chose to reject God's instruction and to go their own way—the way of disobedience, which leads to suffering.

When Adam and Eve chose to ignore God's clear instruction, they directed humanity onto a path of independence and self-determination. They, in effect, told God to mind His own business—a choice mankind in general has continued to make ever since (Proverbs 14:12; Romans 8:7). Every individual human being since has confirmed that choice by giving in to temptation and sin: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Lucifer's rebellion and mankind's choice have not caused God to lose control of or to change His purpose. But those decisions have changed the world. Mankind's choices to reject God's way and to follow Satan's way of sin are the underlying and fundamental cause of confusion, pain and turmoil.

In order to fulfill His purpose to create His character in us and eventually to make us His children, God has allowed humanity to make that



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choice—for now. He has kept His hands off except where necessary to work out His plan. It seems the only way for mankind to see how truly awful evil is, is to see its natural results—pain and suffering for everyone, including the innocent.

But God in His eternal plan can use even evil to produce good! By learning to hate evil, to choose good and to endure suffering, we can grow in godly character (Psalm 34:14-15; James 1:2-4), which is the commitment to choose God’s good way forever.

Christians can follow Jesus Christ’s example of learning through suffering (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Made perfect through sufferings

Why does God allow suffering in the lives of those who are trying to obey Him? Clearly, suffering was brought into the world as a result of sin. This does not mean that people who are suffering are always the cause of their own suffering; often people suffer because of the sins of others. And though suffering is painful and we should do whatever we can to avoid causing it, God can use it to produce good.

As we read in the book of Hebrews, suffering helped Jesus Christ achieve something of value:

“But we see Jesus, who was made a

little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. 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” (Hebrews 2:9-10).

Suffering can have the same impact upon us—it can aid us in becoming more Christlike in our character and in our lives. As we just read, God is in the process of *bringing many sons to glory*; and Christ is the firstborn who showed us the way. Christ was tempted by Satan the devil and never succumbed. He was tried and tested, beaten and crucified, yet He never sinned!

How can good come from adversity?

It’s natural to focus on our immediate pain, anxiety or fear. But on another level something much greater is being accomplished.

Paul wrote of a process of growth that starts with anguish and leads to absolute confidence in God. “And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces *endurance*, and endurance produces *character*, and character produces *hope*, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through

the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5, New Revised Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

The Greek word translated “endurance” in verse 4 means the strength to stand firm in difficult circumstances (Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1988).

We only develop this kind of strength by working through the severe challenges of life. Just as physical endurance is built by exercise, spiritual endurance is established in troubled times.

Hardship establishes and strengthens our resolve. The way we conduct ourselves in the face of hardship reveals who we really are at our core—our values, beliefs and commitment to continue to faithfully follow Jesus even if life seems unbearably difficult.

Endurance and character are not easy to come by. They are forged in difficult times, giving us the strength to remain steadfast and exercise our faithfulness as we suffer. As Proverbs 24:10 states, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”

Paul made the point in Romans 5:5 that as we grow in the qualities of endurance and character, we build a foundation of genuine hope—unshakable confidence in God’s love and the anticipation of His prom-

ises. Hope is a powerful resource that is the result of tested and proven endurance and character. Hope is our sure footing when life seems slippery, based on our certainty that even in the hardest of times, God has not forsaken us (Hebrews 13:5).

In addition to endurance, character and hope, there are other qualities we develop when we experience difficult times, such as:

- Faith—our trust in the love, power and mercy of God to watch over us and care for us at all times.
- Patience—a willingness to wait with confidence for God to take care of us in a difficult situation.
- Empathy—an understanding and compassion for others based on a shared experience.
- Courage—the determination to overcome our fears to continue to follow and trust in God.
- Appreciation—the realization that, even in our most difficult moments, God has given us much to be thankful for and hopeful in.
- Perspective—the ability to see our situation from God’s point of view and the good that can come from our circumstances.

Each of these qualities makes us stronger, more stable and more

mature. Each is an aspect of character that God is looking for in His children. And each grows within us as we encounter and successfully work through difficult times.

The source of comfort

Jesus Christ understands our suffering. He and the Father are compassionate and merciful. God “comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Part of that comfort comes from the sure and merciful promises God gives. The apostle Paul tells us that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

With spiritual eyesight and an eternal perspective, Paul also wrote, “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” (Romans 8:18).

What does the future hold?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all return to the world that God created for Adam and Eve—a world of peace, hope, abundance and plenty *without the serpent*; a world without the suffering, pain and agony brought upon us all by sin?

Thankfully, that is God's intention!

Upon His return, one of Christ's first acts will be the binding of Satan to prevent him from deceiving people (Revelation 20:1-3, 10). This is one of the necessary steps in establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

Read what God ultimately has in store for all of mankind: “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain*, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).

These “former things” have plagued mankind since the Garden of Eden. God does allow suffering. But it was never His intention to promote suffering—our adversary has done that. Adam and Eve *chose* to disobey God, and suffering and death were the consequences.

Cause and effect

Evil is the ultimate cause of all suffering, even the suffering of the inno-



cent. Someday Satan will be banished, and everyone alive at that time will have learned to reject evil and to choose God's way. Then the suffering caused by choosing evil will automatically end.

The cause of all good things is allowing the Spirit and mind of God to guide our lives. We will then keep the letter and spirit of His perfect, beneficial law. When everyone chooses good rather than evil—as God defines them—there will be no more suffering, only righteousness, peace and joy.

As we commit our lives to God and seek to live a life of responsive, humble obedience despite the suffering and sorrow this life can bring, we can look forward to eternal life in a world without it! May God speed that day!

Helpful resources

This is a huge and very important subject, and the Bible says so much more about it. Here are links to additional resources that can help you make sense of the troubles of this

life and find the inspiring hope and encouragement God has in store for you.

- [Free Will: What Is It?](#)
- [Children of God.](#)
- [What Is the Punishment of the Wicked?](#)
- [Does God Hide?](#)
- [The Problem of Evil.](#)
- [How to Deal With Grief.](#)
- [Why Does God Allow War?](#)
- [*Change Your Life!*](#)
- [*The Mystery of the Kingdom.*](#)
- [*Holidays to Holy Days: God's Plan for You.*](#)

If you are suffering, our hearts go out to you as we pray fervently for God's Kingdom to come. Let us know if you have further questions not covered in this booklet or the articles on LifeHopeandTruth.com or if we can help in some way. You can contact our caring personal correspondence ministers using our [Contact form](#) or by emailing info@cogwa.org.

About

LifeHope&Truth

LifeHopeandTruth.com exists to fill a critical void in this world: the lack of understanding about the purpose of life, the lack of realistic hope for a better future and the lack of truth!

Neither religion nor science has satisfactorily addressed these issues, so people today are of divided opinions, confused or, worst of all, don't care anymore. The ancient words of the prophet Isaiah ring so true today: "Truth is fallen in the street." Why? Is it because God was right when He warned that humans are inclined to reject Him and usually choose not to know Him?

We are here for people who are searching for answers, who are ready to prove all things or who are hungry for more than what they've been taught most of their lives about God, the Bible, the meaning of life and how to live. We want to help you truly understand the good news of the gospel and fulfill Jesus Christ's admonition to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

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