

7 WAYS GOD USES SUFFERING FOR OUR GOOD



Introduction:

1. After a terrible car accident, Henry's wife suffered severe injuries—a broken arm, ribs, back, pelvis, leg, and a fractured skull. She spent more than a month in intensive care and endured over a year of recovery. In his anguish, Henry asked, "Why must suffering, sorrow, and death exist?" Yet, through this trial, both he and his wife learned valuable lessons that left a profound impact on many.
2. Few questions weigh more heavily on the human heart than this: "Why do suffering, sorrow, and death exist, even among God's people?" Job wrestled with this question, and every believer who has walked this earth has likely pondered it at some point.
3. This lesson does not seek to explain why God allows suffering. Instead, we will explore the positive effects suffering can have—the ways in which trials shape, refine, and strengthen us.

1. Suffering Keeps This World From Becoming Too Attractive:

It is easy to become attached to this world, especially when life is comfortable and free from hardship. However, the Bible reminds us that this world is not our permanent home—we are merely passing through as pilgrims and sojourners. Suffering serves as a reminder that this life is temporary and that God has prepared something far greater for His people. Without suffering, many would never desire or prepare for the eternal home He has promised.

- a. The Bible Declares That We Are Strangers And Pilgrims: This world is not our permanent home, and God has something far better in store for us (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 13:14; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 5; Philippians 3:20-21).
- b. Without Suffering, Many Would Cling To This Life: If life were free of hardship, people would grow too attached to this temporary world and fail to seek the eternal home God has promised (Colossians 3:1-2; 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:19-21).
- c. Hardships Cause Us To Long For Eternity: As people face struggles, suffering, and the passing of time, the appeal of this world fades, and the desire for something lasting and eternal grows stronger (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Revelation 21:4).

♪ *This world is not my home
I'm just a-passing through
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue*

2. Suffering Can Bring Out Our Best:

Suffering has a way of revealing the goodness in people. In times of hardship, friends, family, and even strangers often step forward with acts of kindness and support. Whether through encouragement, generosity, or simply being present, these moments highlight the compassion and resilience that suffering can bring out in us. This is why the early Christians could rejoice in their trials—they recognized that hardships refined their character and deepened their faith (Romans 5:3-4).

- a. How Henry Witnessed This: During his wife's recovery, Henry saw the kindness of others through constant support from friends, meals prepared for his family, and financial assistance (Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:17-18).
- b. We See This In Times Of Crisis: People often display remarkable generosity and compassion when others suffer, such as when families lose their homes in natural disasters or when individuals endure serious illness and hardship (Luke 10:33-35; Acts 11:28-30; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4).
- c. Why Early Christians Rejoiced In Their Trials: They understood that suffering was not meaningless; rather, it shaped their character and strengthened their faith (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7).

3. Suffering Gives An Occasion To Silence The Enemies Of God:

Suffering provides an opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of our faith. While skeptics may claim that Christians follow God only for blessings, true faith is revealed when believers remain steadfast through trials. Just as Job's endurance silenced Satan's accusations, our patience in suffering can silence those who mock Christ and question our commitment to Him. When we continue to trust in God and show love to others despite hardship, we provide undeniable evidence of the power and truth of our faith (1 Peter 2:15).

- a. The Example Of Job: Satan sought to discredit Job's faith, claiming he only served God because of His blessings. However, Job's steadfastness in suffering proved Satan wrong and silenced his accusations (Job 1:9-11; Job 2:3-10; James 5:11).
- b. God Calls Us To Silence Foolish Men: Some ridicule Christ's teachings and claim that Christians only follow Him for personal gain. Yet, by remaining faithful in trials, we prove that our devotion is genuine (1 Peter 2:15; Titus 2:7-8; Matthew 5:11-12).
- c. Enduring Suffering Demonstrates The Power Of Faith: When we remain faithful and continue doing good even in hardship, the true value of Christianity shines. Our faith sustains us in suffering, and our love for others is a testimony to the world (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Philippians 1:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

4. Suffering Makes Us Appreciative:

Suffering has a way of shifting our perspective. When life is easy, we often take our blessings for granted, failing to recognize the goodness of God in the everyday things we enjoy. However, when we experience hardship, we begin to appreciate what we once overlooked—our health, our relationships, and the kindness of others. Even the apostle Paul, while imprisoned, expressed gratitude for the support of his brethren, showing that suffering can teach us to be truly thankful.

- a. Abundance Can Lead To Complacency: When life is comfortable, it is easy to take our blessings for granted instead of receiving them with gratitude toward God (Deuteronomy 8:10-14; Ecclesiastes 7:14; James 1:17).
- b. Suffering Deepens Our Appreciation: Hardships remind us of the value of good health, faithful friends, and a loving family, making us more grateful for what we often overlook (Psalm 119:67, 71; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 2 Corinthians 12:10).
- c. Paul's Example: Even while in prison, Paul expressed deep gratitude for his brethren and the blessings he still had, demonstrating how suffering can cultivate a thankful heart (Philippians 1:3-8; Colossians 3:15-17; 2 Timothy 1:16-17).

5. Suffering Draws Us Closer To God:

Suffering has a way of stripping away our sense of control and reminding us of our need for God. When life is comfortable, we may feel self-sufficient, relying on our own abilities and resources. But when trials come—when human wisdom and strength are not enough—we are forced to acknowledge our dependence on God. It is in these moments that our faith is tested and refined. Suffering also transforms our prayers, making them more fervent, heartfelt, and persistent. Through hardship, we learn to trust God more deeply and seek Him with greater sincerity.

- a. Suffering Shatters The Illusion Of Self-Sufficiency: When life is going well, we may feel in control, relying on our own strength and abilities. But suffering reminds us of our limitations. When doctors, experts, or even our own efforts fail, we realize just how much we depend on God (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 73:25-26).
- b. Trials Teach Us To Trust In God Completely: In moments of hardship, we come to understand that our strength, our future, and even our very breath are in God's hands. It is in these times that we learn what it truly means to lean on Him (Acts 17:28; Isaiah 41:10; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9).
- c. Suffering Deepens Our Prayer Life: While we may already be people of prayer, suffering teaches us to pray differently. In trials, we pray with greater earnestness, perseverance, and dependence, sometimes with groanings too deep for words. It is through suffering that we learn how to pour out our hearts before God in ways we never have before (Romans 8:26; James 5:13; Philippians 4:6-7).



6. Suffering Refines And Strengthens Our Faith

Suffering is not without purpose—it is a refining process that strengthens and purifies our faith. When life is easy, it is simple to trust in God, but trials reveal the true depth of our devotion. Just as fire purifies gold, hardships strip away self-reliance, pride, and complacency, shaping us into who God desires us to be. Through perseverance in suffering, we develop endurance, patience, and a faith that is not dependent on circumstances but anchored in God’s unchanging promises.

- a. **Trials Reveal the Depth Of Our Faith:** It is easy to trust God when life is going well, but suffering exposes whether our faith is truly rooted in Him or merely in our circumstances. Hardships test our commitment and reveal where we need to grow (1 Peter 1:6-7; Job 23:10; Luke 8:13-15).
- b. **Difficulties Shape Us Into Who God Wants Us To Be:** Just as fire refines gold, suffering refines our character. It burns away selfishness, pride, and complacency, leaving behind a stronger, more faithful servant of God (James 1:2-4; Malachi 3:2-3; Hebrews 12:10-11).
- c. **Suffering Produces Spiritual Maturity:** Challenges teach us endurance, patience, and reliance on God. They develop qualities that could not be learned in ease and comfort, molding us into Christlikeness through perseverance and faith (Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4).

7. Suffering Cultivates Compassion And Empathy:

Suffering has a unique way of opening our hearts to the struggles of others. While we may think we understand pain, true empathy comes from personal experience. When we have endured hardships ourselves, we become better equipped to comfort those who are suffering. Paul taught that the comfort we receive from God enables us to extend that same comfort to others. Instead of making us bitter, trials can mold us into more compassionate and caring servants who genuinely “weep with those who weep” and offer the kind of support that only comes from shared experience.

- a. **Suffering Deepens Our Ability To Comfort Others:** When we endure trials, we gain a deeper understanding of pain, making us better equipped to support those who suffer. Paul emphasized this truth, reminding the Corinthians that the comfort we receive from God allows us to comfort others in their affliction (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Galatians 6:2; Isaiah 40:1-2).
- b. **Personal Experience Creates Genuine Empathy:** It is easy to say we understand someone’s pain, but true empathy comes from having walked a similar path. Experiencing suffering firsthand enables us to relate to others in a way that words alone cannot, allowing us to truly “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15; Hebrews 4:15; Job 2:11-13).
- c. **Trials Transform Us Into More Caring Servants:** Hardship softens our hearts and opens our eyes to the needs of others. It teaches us patience, kindness, and the importance of simply being present for those who are hurting. Rather than making us bitter, suffering can shape us into compassionate, Christlike servants who extend love and comfort to those in need (Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:32; Luke 10:33-35).

Conclusion:

1. Suffering is difficult, but it serves a greater purpose. It reminds us that this world is not our home, strengthens our faith, and draws us closer to God.
2. Hardships refine our character, teaching us endurance, patience, and trust in God. They also deepen our compassion, allowing us to comfort others with the same comfort we have received.
3. If we look at suffering only from a human perspective, it may seem unfair. However, when we see it from God’s point of view, we recognize that He uses trials to shape us and prepare us for eternity.
4. As the prophet Isaiah reminds us, God’s ways are beyond our understanding (Isaiah 55:8-9).
5. No matter what suffering we endure, we can take comfort in knowing that nothing can separate us from God’s love:
“In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).
6. Suffering may test us, but it cannot defeat us when our trust is in God. His love sustains us, and His promises remain true.

Applications:

- 1. Embrace Suffering As A Reminder Of Eternity:** Instead of resenting hardships, recognize that suffering reminds us that this world is not our home. Use trials to refocus your heart on eternal things and strengthen your desire for heaven (Colossians 3:1-2).
- 2. Use Hardships As An Opportunity To Grow In Character:** Trials refine us and reveal areas where we need to grow. When faced with suffering, ask yourself, "How can this challenge make me more patient, humble, or faithful?" (James 1:2-4).
- 3. Remain Faithful To God In Difficult Times:** Just as Job remained steadfast despite his suffering, determine to stay committed to God no matter what trials come your way. Let your faith silence those who doubt the sincerity of your devotion (1 Peter 2:15).
- 4. Cultivate A Heart Of Gratitude:** Even in suffering, recognize the blessings you still have. Like Paul in prison, practice gratitude by focusing on what God has given rather than what has been taken away (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
- 5. Deepen Your Dependence On God Through Prayer:** Suffering reminds us of our need for God. Use trials as an opportunity to pray more fervently and with greater trust in His power and provision (Philippians 4:6-7).
- 6. Let Trials Strengthen, Not Weaken, Your Faith:** Hardships are meant to refine, not destroy, our faith. When difficulties arise, see them as part of God's process of molding you into His image (1 Peter 1:6-7).
- 7. Use Your Experiences To Comfort And Help Others:** If you have endured suffering, use what you have learned to support and encourage those who are struggling. Share the comfort you have received from God with others in need (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Questions:

1. Why does suffering remind us that this world is not our home?
2. How can suffering bring out the best in people?
3. What example from the Bible shows that suffering can silence the enemies of God?
4. Why do trials help us appreciate our blessings more?
5. How does suffering deepen our dependence on God?
6. What does the Bible compare suffering to in terms of refining faith?
7. How did Paul view suffering in relation to spiritual maturity?
8. Why is personal experience with suffering important in developing empathy?
9. How should a Christian respond to suffering in prayer?
10. What should we do with the lessons we learn through suffering?

True Or False:

1. Suffering is always a punishment from God for personal sin.
2. Suffering can help us develop greater empathy for others.
3. The Bible teaches that Christians should expect a life free from suffering.
4. Suffering can help us grow in faith by teaching us to rely on God.
5. Paul remained bitter toward God because of the suffering he endured.

Questions & Answers:

1. Why does suffering remind us that this world is not our home?

Answer: Suffering reveals the temporary nature of life and encourages us to long for the eternal home God has prepared for us (**1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 13:14**).

2. How can suffering bring out the best in people?

Answer: It often leads to acts of kindness, generosity, and support from others, strengthening relationships and demonstrating love in action (**Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 13:16**).

3. What example from the Bible shows that suffering can silence the enemies of God?

Answer: Job's faithfulness in suffering proved Satan wrong, showing that Job's devotion to God was genuine and not based on blessings alone (**Job 1:9-11; Job 2:3-10**).

4. Why do trials help us appreciate our blessings more?

Answer: When we experience hardship, we realize how valuable our health, relationships, and God's provisions truly are, leading to a heart of gratitude (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Psalms 119:67, 71**).

5. How does suffering deepen our dependence on God?

Answer: It strips away our self-sufficiency and reminds us that we rely on God for strength, guidance, and provision (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Proverbs 3:5-6**).

6. What does the Bible compare suffering to in terms of refining faith?

Answer: Suffering is compared to fire refining gold, removing impurities, and strengthening character (**1 Peter 1:6-7; Malachi 3:2-3**).

7. How did Paul view suffering in relation to spiritual maturity?

Answer: Paul saw suffering as a means to develop endurance, patience, and Christlike character (**Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:16-17**).

8. Why is personal experience with suffering important in developing empathy?

Answer: Going through hardships ourselves helps us truly understand the pain of others, allowing us to comfort them with the same comfort we have received from God (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Romans 12:15**).

9. How should a Christian respond to suffering in prayer?

Answer: Christians should pray with greater fervency, persistence, and dependence on God, trusting that He hears and provides according to His will (**Romans 8:26; Philippians 4:6-7**).

10. What should we do with the lessons we learn through suffering?

Answer: We should use our experiences to help, comfort, and strengthen others who are going through similar trials (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Galatians 6:2**).

True Or False Answers:

1. Suffering is always a punishment from God for personal sin.

False. While suffering can sometimes result from sin, the Bible teaches that trials can serve other purposes, such as refining faith, strengthening character, and drawing us closer to God (**Job 1:8-12; John 9:1-3**).

2. Suffering can help us develop greater empathy for others.

True. Experiencing trials firsthand enables us to better understand and comfort those who are suffering (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Romans 12:15**).

3. The Bible teaches that Christians should expect a life free from suffering.

False. Jesus and the apostles taught that believers would face trials and tribulations in this life, but that suffering has a purpose and leads to spiritual growth (**John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12; James 1:2-4**).

4. Suffering can help us grow in faith by teaching us to rely on God.

True. Trials remind us of our dependence on God, leading us to trust Him more deeply and seek His guidance (**2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Proverbs 3:5-6**).

5. Paul remained bitter toward God because of the suffering he endured.

False. Paul viewed suffering as a way to grow spiritually, rejoice in God's strength, and encourage others through his endurance (**Romans 5:3-4; Philippians 1:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-17**).