

Suffering and Why?

December 2014

Book: When God Weeps – Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty: Joni Eareckson Tada & Steven Estes

Suffering... What is it:

1. Joni definition: “Wanting what you don’t have and having what you don’t want”
2. Some causes of Suffering: (When God Weeps p220)
 - a. Self or other people (deliberate actions, negligence)
 - b. Satan & demons
 - c. Animals and plants (insects, bites, attacks, allergies, itching, poisonous plants, etc)
 - d. Nature’s inanimate forces (weather, earthquakes, etc)
 - e. Man-made machinery, tools, and technology (breakdown, bridge/building collapse, explosion, etc)
 - f. Bodily afflictions (illness, disabilities, genetic disorders, etc)
 - g. Psychological/Spiritual afflictions (depression, fear, sorrow, guilt, nightmares, etc)

Response to suffering in the Bible:

1. Joseph Gen 50:20-21 “... you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. 21 So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”
2. Job 40:4-5 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. 5 Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more.”
3. Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego Dan 3:16-18 “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed- nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, ... 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; ... 18 But even if He does not, let it be known to you, ...”
4. Daniel 1:8 “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...”; Dan 6:10-11 “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. 11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.”
5. David Psalms 42:11 Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
6. Stephen Acts 7:55-60 “But he[Stephen], being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, [tormenters heard] Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
7. Paul
 - a. Acts 9:15-16 “...how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.”
 - b. 2 Cor 12:7-10 “... to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong”
 - c. Phil 1:21-25 “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard- pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith,”
 - d. Phil 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;
8. Many in Heb 11
9. Jesus! A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 - a. Heb 12:1-3 “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

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Others who we know who have been strengthened through trials:

1. Illness
2. Children sick or died
3. Loss of work
4. Spouse unfaithful

Helps:

1. God of all comfort 2 Cor 1:3-4
2. We may be able to comfort one another 2 Cor 1:3-4
 - a. Coming alongside... quietly
 - b. Steve Psalm 34
3. God wants to dwell with us... be near us! (Adam & Eve; rent veil; Rev22 loud voice)
4. Ask the brethren to pray James 5:14
5. Look unto Jesus Heb 12:1-3
6. Run to Him... do not run away (Shannon story)
7. I don't know... I don't have to know... HE sees... HE hears... HE knows...
 - a. Furrowed brows can relax
8. Hope...Hope...Hope 1 Peter 1:3, 13, 21; 3:15; Heb 10:23
9. Joy set before us Rom 5:3 "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;"
10. Scriptural songs: Because He Lives
11. Fear can turn into courage (Joshua 1) in Him; or cowardice
 - a. "...Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go"
12. Recognize (joyfully accept) that God exceeds our understanding. Leads us to thanksgiving!
 - a. Rom 11:33-34 "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"
 - b. God (not us) defines fairness... justice... right/wrong.

Incorrect Understanding	Correct Understanding
Law of Fairness	God
God	Justice

13. Be able to say "If it is the Lord's will..." ... not in resignation... but in rest and complete confidence.

The answer to Why... is WHO

1. Naghmeh Abedini, wife of Iranian-American pastor Saeed Abedini who is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence for his faith, shares how she's experienced God's grace in the midst of the fire.
 - a. <https://www.reviveourhearts.com/resource-library/videos/naghmeh-abedini-answer-why-who/>
2. Could Joseph trust God through the suffering...to know best? Why?
3. Could Job trust God to know best? Why?
4. Could Daniel...Shadrach... Meshach...Abednego... trust God to know best? Why?
5. Stephen...Paul...Jesus...
6. Saeed... Me...You... Why?
7. We are not helped to even know the reason why... we are helped to know WHO... we can trust to ALWAYS know best.