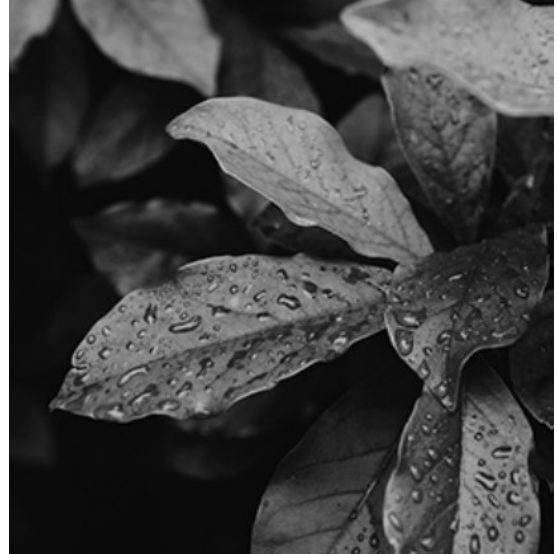


# Suffering: *Three Reasons God Allows It*

## 1. BECAUSE GOD WON'T ROB US OF FREE WILL

The problem of suffering is usually posed as a question: 'If God is all-powerful and all good, why does he allow evil to exist in the world?'

Perhaps the most common response is known as the 'free will defense'. After all, where does most of the evil in this world come from? Much of it is a direct consequence of our wrong choices as human beings. Yet one of the greatest goods that God has given us is free will – the ability to choose between right and wrong. The problem is that many people choose to do evil rather than good.



Imagine if God intervened at every moment anyone was going to make a wrong choice. Free will would no longer exist. If God waved his magic wand every time we made a bad choice, we would merely be puppets controlled by a puppeteer who overruled our thoughts and actions. Would we want to live in such a world, even if it meant we were insulated from suffering? Could we even speak of concepts such as 'love' without it being something freely given, and freely rejected?

The great gift of freedom and love that God has given us comes at the cost of the evil that people freely choose to carry out in the world.

'Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching...I have been bent and broken, but –  
I hope – into a better shape' - Charles Dickens

'You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have'  
- Corrie Ten Boom

'Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our  
Lord' (Romans 8:39) - St Paul

## 2. BECAUSE WE LIVE IN A BROKEN WORLD

But why has God allowed death, disease and natural disaster to exist at all? This question can only be answered by a Christian from within their own worldview and means we must expand our perspective to a cosmic scale.

The apostle Paul states that 'We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Romans 8:22). We believe, then, that the whole created order is in some sense 'out of kilter' at a cosmic level. Some theologians trace this to human rebellion – an outworking of 'the fall' which acts both forwards and backwards in time. Others point to the existence of an earlier rebellion in the angelic realm that sparked a 'cosmic fall' (hinted at in Revelation 12:9).

Whatever the origin, the result is a world that is not as it should be. Yet Paul includes the promise that one day 'the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God' (Romans 8:21).

So we live in the tension of a broken world that is awaiting renewal. The natural laws that operate are both a blessing and a curse. Tectonic plate activity renews the surface of the earth with minerals, yet wreaks havoc when humans build cities on the fault lines. Cell replication allows our bodies to grow and develop yet can result in cancer when natural processes misfire. Death is a necessary part of the cycle of life yet remains our 'last enemy' (1 Corinthians 15:26).

As Christians we are called to live faithfully for the kingdom that has already come in Jesus, while awaiting the kingdom yet to be in which "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' (Revelation 21:4).

### **3. BECAUSE SUFFERING CAN DRAW PEOPLE TO GOD**

Underlying many people's questions about suffering is an assumption about God's purpose in creating us. We must ask the question 'what does a loving God *want* for the human beings he created?'

Here are two possible answers: It's God's job to keep human beings happy, comfortable and pain-free. That's what a lot of people assume is meant by God being 'loving'.

But there is another possible answer: God's purpose for human beings is to bring them to know and love him.

Those are two very different responses. Coming to know and love God may be quite different to him keeping us comfortable and happy.

The reality is that comfort tends to make us forget about God. It's evidenced by a prosperous Western world where belief in God is increasingly absent. Yet Christianity often thrives in places which are experiencing the fires of persecution or hardship.

For some, suffering leads to an abandonment of belief in God, but for many the opposite is true – it causes them to seek God in a world that seems absurd without him. Many people have counted pain and suffering as a crucial part of their journey towards Christianity. CS Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, ‘God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.’

By the same token, it can be argued that meaningful moral and spiritual growth as human beings requires a world where some suffering exists. I cannot be generous unless there is someone who has less than me. I cannot show compassion unless there is someone who needs caring for.

While I don’t believe that God directly causes pain and suffering, I do believe that God is masterful enough to weave all the experiences and tribulations of our life into a tapestry that is ultimately beautiful and, if we allow him, draws us towards being the people he wants us to be.

- Premier Christianity, Justin Brierly  
<https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2016/July-2016/3-reasons-why-God-allows-suffering>



Peaks & Creeks Life Development ♦ 470 Circle K Ranch Rd ♦ Evergreen, CO 80439  
<http://peaksandcreeks.com> ♦ (720) 382-9420 ♦ [karl@peaksandcreeks.com](mailto:karl@peaksandcreeks.com)