

## Why Does God Allow Suffering?

How can a loving omnipotent God allow intense pain, suffering and death in this world?

## Introduction

- The world is filled with all types of human suffering
- One example on 4/16/07 – Virginia Tech Massacre
  - Lone gunman murdered 32 before killing himself
  - Wounded at least 20
- Suffering brings us great pain in all forms

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## Introduction

- Also, suffering brings us perplexing questions about God and the world in which we live
- Suffering has become one of the chief reasons why many abandon believing in God completely
- What questions does suffering raise in our minds?

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## Introduction

- What answers do the Scriptures provide?
- Is there any good purpose in our suffering?

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## Why Does God Allow Suffering?

1. The problem stated
2. Sources of our suffering
3. What use will we make of our suffering?

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## The Problem Stated

- If God is all-wise, all-good and all-powerful, then why does he allow such terrible suffering in our world?
- If he is both good and powerful, then why doesn't he remove this suffering from us?
- Looking at suffering in nature and mankind, how can we reconcile this suffering with the goodness of God?

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## The Problem Stated

- Is suffering always the result of someone being punished for sin?
- If so, then why do the innocent and the righteous suffer?
- People have concluded
  - If God is good, He would not allow suffering to exist
  - If God is powerful enough to remove suffering and does not, then He must not be good

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## Common But Wrong Reasoning About Suffering

- If God is all-good and all-powerful, we would not have suffering
- We have suffering
- Therefore, God is either
  - not good
  - or not powerful enough to remove it
  - or doesn't exist at all

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## Some Christians Surrender To Wrong Reasoning About Suffering

1. Cannot accept and face intense suffering in their own lives and the lives of others
2. Cannot reconcile the character of a good, loving all-powerful God with the suffering in this world
3. Faith either becomes unfruitful or disappears completely

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## Possible Responses To The Suffering In This World

1. Reject faith in God
2. Have a weak unfruitful faith in God
3. From the Scriptures, we seek to answer the question "Why does God allow suffering?"

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## Sources Of Our Suffering

1. Suffering from nature
2. Suffering from man

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## Suffering From Nature

- Examples - tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes, famines, diseases and so on
- Although there is suffering from nature, there must be destruction in order to have regularity
- Example – forest fires burning off old brush so forest will be safer and stronger

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## Suffering From Nature

- God had a purpose for creating both man and nature
- He has given man the ability to find good and bad in nature and use it to his benefit
- Although we suffer from nature, we also receive life-giving physical blessings from nature
- Much of our suffering from nature has come from Adam and Eve's sins

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## God Gives Man Dominion Over Nature

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Gen 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

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## God Gives Man Dominion Over Nature

Gen 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Gen 1:29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

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## God Gives Man Dominion Over Nature

Gen 1:30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given every green plant for food*"; and it was so.

Gen 1:31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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## God Gives Man Dominion Over Nature

Gen 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Gen 2:16 The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

Gen 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

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## Man's Sin Results In Nature Turning Against Him In Some Ways

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

Gen 3:2 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

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### Man's Sin Results In Nature Turning Against Him In Some Ways

Gen 3:3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'

Gen 3:4 The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die!'

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### Man's Sin Results In Nature Turning Against Him In Some Ways

Gen 3:5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Gen 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

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### Man's Sin Results In Nature Turning Against Him In Some Ways

Gen 3:16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."

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### Man's Sin Results In Nature Turning Against Him In Some Ways

Gen 3:17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.

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### Man's Sin Results In Nature Turning Against Him In Some Ways

Gen 3:18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;

Gen 3:19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

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### God Gives Man Dominion Over Nature

Psa 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;

Psa 8:4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?

Psa 8:5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!

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## God Gives Man Dominion Over Nature

Psa 8:6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet,

Psa 8:7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field,

Psa 8:8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

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## Suffering From Man

1. Much of the suffering from nature brought about because of man's sin
2. Man inflicts all types of suffering on himself and others
3. Covetousness
4. Wars
5. Murder
6. Sexual abuse
7. Drug abuse
8. Hatred

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## Suffering From Man

- Can be caused by ignorance and carelessness in violating God's laws of nature
- If we lived in harmony with His laws of nature, much suffering would not occur
- Can be caused by misuse of freedom of choice God has given us with which we can do either right or wrong, sin

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## Suffering From Man

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Gen 3:20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all *the* living.

Gen 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

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## Suffering From Man

Gen 3:22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"--

Gen 3:23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

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## Suffering From Man

Gen 3:24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

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## Suffering From Man

- Why did the Lord create us with such freedom?
- So we could make the free choice to love, honor and glorify Him instead of sinning against Him and others causing great suffering

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## Why Does God Allow Suffering?

1. The problem stated
2. Sources of our suffering
3. What use will we make of our suffering?

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## What Use Will We Make Of Our Suffering?

- Instead of asking why suffering, a better question that is more clearly answered is, "What use will we make of our suffering?"
- The universe is orderly implying that behind it is a Designer and Lawgiver with purpose in mind for creating both nature and man

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## What Use Will We Make Of Our Suffering?

- Generally speaking, His purpose is to develop within man a character like Himself
- This can only be accomplished through a series of tests, some of which involve our suffering

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## Some Purposes Of Suffering

1. Punishment and correction for sins
2. Spiritual discipline
3. Testing of faith
4. Vicarious suffering for others' sins
5. Unexplained

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## Punishment and Correction For Sins

Rom 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Rom 13:2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

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## Punishment and Correction For Sins

Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

Rom 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. <sup>37</sup>

## Punishment and Correction For Sins

1Pe 2:13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

1Pe 2:14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

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## Punishment and Correction For Sins

Ecc 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.

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## Spiritual Discipline

Heb 12:1 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,

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## Spiritual Discipline

Heb 12:2 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.

Heb 12:3 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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## Spiritual Discipline

Heb 12:4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

Heb 12:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

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## Spiritual Discipline

Heb 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

Heb 12:7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

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## Spiritual Discipline

Heb 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Heb 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

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## Spiritual Discipline

Heb 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

Heb 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 1:8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 1:10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Job 1:11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 1:12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 2:3 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."

Job 2:4 Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life."

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 2:5 "However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."

Job 2:6 So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."

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## Testing Of Faith

Job 23:10 "But He knows the way I take; *When* He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Job 23:11 "My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside.

Job 23:12 "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

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## Testing Of Faith

Jas 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

Jas 1:3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Jas 1:4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

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## Vicarious Suffering For Others' Sins

1Pe 3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

1Pe 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

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## Vicarious Suffering For Others' Sins

1Pe 4:14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1Pe 4:15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

1Pe 4:16 but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

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## Unexplained

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## Unexplained

- Although sometimes we can't explain it, we must realize that God cares, entering into suffering Himself for us
- God does have purpose in all things including suffering
- Ironically, suffering should lead us closer to God not farther away from Him

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## God Loves and Provides For His People Even In Suffering

Rom 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Rom 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

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## God Loves and Provides For His People Even In Suffering

Rom 8:30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

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## God Loves and Provides For His People Even In Suffering

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Rom 8:33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

Rom 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

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## God Loves and Provides For His People Even In Suffering

Rom 8:35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Rom 8:36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."

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## God Loves and Provides For His People Even In Suffering

Rom 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

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## God Loves and Provides For His People Even In Suffering

Rom 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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