

3. A Theological Understanding about Suffering

A. Suffering is a part of living in a “fallen” world.

i. Moral Evil (wicked people—NY on 9/11, mass shooting, etc.)

Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT) -⁹ *The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?*

Mark 7:21 (NIV) -²¹ *For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.*

ii. Natural Evil (Accidents and Natural Disasters)

Romans 8:22 (NIV) -²² *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

B. Suffering is unrelated to our own “personal goodness”.

Matthew 5:45 (TLB) – *[It] rains on the just and the unjust.*

Luke 13:1-5 (NCV) - ¹ *At that time some people were there who told Jesus that Pilate had killed some people from Galilee while they were worshipping. He mixed their blood with the blood of the animals they were sacrificing to God. ² Jesus answered, “Do you think this happened to them because they were more sinful than all others from Galilee? ³ *No, I tell you ...* ⁴ *What about those eighteen people who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think they were more sinful than all the others who live in Jerusalem? ⁵ *No, I tell you. But unless you change your hearts and lives, you will all be destroyed too!”***

C. Suffering amplifies God’s message; we need a Savior—His name is Jesus!

Acts 17:29-31 (NIV) -²⁹ *“Therefore ... we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”*

2 Peter 3:9-10 (MSG) - *God isn’t late with his promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining himself on account of you, holding back the End because he doesn’t want anyone lost. He’s giving everyone space and time to change. But when the Day of God’s Judgment does come, it will be unannounced, like a thief.*

4. Two Important Scriptures to Encouragement You:

1

Study Verse Section—Romans 8:28, NASB95 - ²⁸ *And we as Christians **know** intuitively and can experience personally **that God causes** lit., “harmonizes” **all** i.e., every single one--all **things to work** we get our English word “synergy” from this word **together for good** lit., “the good” **to those who** (1) **love God**, and (2) **to those who are called according to His** i.e., eternal purpose.*

1. There is always something **CONFIDENTIAL** about hard times.
“And we know ...”
2. There is always something **COMPREHENSIVE** about hard times
“... that God causes all things ...”
3. There is always something **CONSTRUCTIVE** about the hard times.
“... that God causes all things to work together for good...”
4. There is always something **CONDITIONAL** about the hard times.
“... to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose ...”

God wants to bring the good out of your bad!

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2

Matthew 7:24–27, NASB95 -²⁴ *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”*

- One Secret to See: Built your life on Christ and you will survive.**
One Issue to Settle: How will you build your life in this fallen world?

The Life Build Upon Christ:

- A. Is built on the bedrock of obedience to God’s Word.**
- B. Is tested by the trails of tragedy.**
- C. Is delivered from the disaster of destruction.**

Who is he that builds his house upon the rock? It is he who hears the Words of the Lord and does them. Who is he who builds his life upon the sand? It is he who he who hears the Words of the Lord and does not do them. –Dr. Warren Wiersbe

5. Significant Quotes:

“Paul who wrote in Romans 11:33 that ‘How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out’...clearly understood the difference between God’s promises and His processes. He was absolutely content to rest in His will even though he knew he could never fathom His ways. He knew that purposes and plans were vastly different truths and that they operated in entirely different spheres ... Genuine faith is never intimidated by sight ... while always welcoming divine explanations, faith never stoops to the silliness of demanding them ... faith is never threatened by the unexplainable. It respects His sovereignty and delights in His mysteries. It gladly acknowledges that God cannot always be understood, but He can always be trusted.”
- Evangelist Junior Hill

“God is in the business of *sustaining* not *explaining*.” - Pastor Paul Powell

“Remember, Christianity is not a vaccine that immunizes us to problems and difficulties in life. God never promised us there would never be ‘storms,’ He did promise that we would never be alone in the midst of them—our God will be with us!”
- Pastor Joe K. Taylor

“Pain insists upon being attended to; 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.”
- C.S. Lewis

“The trials and difficulties we face in life should be a reminder to us all that ‘this world is not our home; we’re just a pass’n through.’ If life was too good here on Earth, we might have a thought of wanting to stay here and miss Heaven. Suffering is a witness that we left the Garden (of Eden). Suffering is the impetus for the believer to long for Heaven—not Earth.” - Unknown

6. Significant Books Well Worth Reading:

The Hidden Price of Greatness by Ray Beeson and Ranelda Hunsicker.

The Rest of Grace by Wayne Barber

You Will Get Through This by Max Lucado

Hope Again by Charles R. Swindoll

Getting Through the Tough Stuff by Charles R. Swindoll

Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts by Jerry Bridges

Why Suffering? by Ravi Zacharias

Surprised by Suffering by R.C. Sproul

If God is Good by Randy Alcorn

A Path through Suffering by Elizabeth Elliot

TOUGH QUESTIONS

and Straight Answers by Pastor Joe K. Taylor

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Here’s the **TOUGH QUESTION:**

Why is ^{The Christian} Life So Hard?

Here’s the **STRAIGHT ANSWER:**

1. The Short Answer:

It just is.

2. Introduction to the issue:

Why is ^{the Christian} Life so Hard?

- A. In our fallen world, there is intense pain and unspeakable suffering.
- B. We are emotional beings (and we do not control our “feelings”).
- C. We hinge our happiness on others (and not Christ).
- D. We don’t realize how much effort and emotional energy life takes.
- E. We are constantly confronted with criticism.
- F. We have constant contact with the media/news.
- G. Most of us spend little or no time with God—our faith is starved.
- H. Most of us have no theological understanding about hard times.
- I. We have no *mechanism(s)* in our lives to get through hard times.