

God allows us to suffer...

...to prove and develop our faith.

John 11:14-15 "So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe."

Jesus intentionally delayed to create a situation where the disciples' capacity to trust him could increase. Jesus delays in our lives for the same reason.

1 Peter 1:6-9 The most valuable asset we have in life is the capacity to trust God and take him at his word, even when it doesn't make sense and when it doesn't feel good. At this point, God is more interested in us developing that kind of faith in him than he is that we live a sinless life. He has left us in this imperfect condition where our flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, so that we learn how to trust and obey God through the maturation process to become more like Christ.

...to mature our character.

Job 23:8-10 "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold."

Romans 5:3-5 "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (cf. **James 1:2-4**)

...to protect us from pride.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 "For when I am weak, then I am strong." Our greatest point of ministry in the future may grow out of our greatest point of pain or failure in our past or present.

...to teach us to obey his word.

Psalms 119:67, 71 "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word...It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."

Hebrews 12:6-11 God disciplines his children, whom he loves. It doesn't feel good at the time, but it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.

...to prepare us for ministry.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

...to glorify his name and accomplish his will in our lives.

John 9:1-3 "As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth... this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good..."

...to let us share in Christ's identity and work.

John 15:18-21 Jesus said, "If I suffer, you will suffer too..."

Acts 5:41 The disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Christ.

Philippians 3:1 "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..."

Colossians 1:24 "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church."

1 Peter 4:16 "rejoice that you bear the Name"

...to prepare us to share in Christ's glory.

Romans 8:16-18 "if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (cf. **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**)

1 Peter 4:13 "rejoice insofar as you share Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed"

Some Helpful Thoughts to Consider During Difficult Times

God is infinitely good and always works to benefit his children. (**Psalms 107:8, 9, 43; Romans 8:31-39**)

God never allows our hardship to exceed our capacity to endure it. (**1 Corinthians 10:13**)

As Christians, facing difficulty is essential, not unfair. (**Hebrews 12:6-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9**)

As soldiers in spiritual warfare, enduring hardship is expected, not unusual. (**2 Timothy 1:7-8; 2:3-4**)

In difficult times move as quickly as possible from "Why God?" to "How can I manifest God's glory in this situation?" (**Genesis 45:5; 50:20**)

Experiencing God's comfort in life's pain makes us competent to comfort others who hurt. (**2 Corinthians 1:3-4**)

Recommended Resources on Processing our Emotions

A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows Through Loss by Gerald Sittser

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero

Finding God by Larry Crabb