



**Pain and Suffering**  
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**January 15, 2023**

**The Crossing Church**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

### **OPENING**

Last week we started a series called Dismantled. It's all about reconstructing our faith. We are in a time of deconstruction where many people have been disillusioned by the church or by Christianity and they are drifting from their faith in God. The goal of this series is to tackle some of the reasons they give for this happening so that they can reconstruct their faith on a firm foundation.

### **SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>**

**Genesis 1:31a** God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.

**Luke 13:1-5b** Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were *worse sinners* than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, *no!* But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were *more guilty* than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, *no!* But unless *you* repent, you too will all perish.

**John 16:33** In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! *I have overcome the world.*"

**Job 19:25-27** I know that my *redeemer lives*, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

**Romans 8:28** And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who *love him*, who have been *called according to his purpose*.

**Galatians 6:2** Carry *each other's* burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-5** 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 receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

### **OBSERVATION**

When God had finished creation in just the way He wanted, there wasn't any pain, tragedy, suffering, taxes, hangnails or Cowboy fans. LOL. It was all perfect, complete whole and good.

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<sup>1</sup> The NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

When Adam and Eve sinned, pain and suffering entered the world. This week we are discussing the “why” of these two tragedies and, if God didn’t create them, find out where they came from: **1) Sometimes pain and suffering are the result of our own bad choices and sin.** Drinking too much, gambling compulsively, abusing prescription drugs and pornography are all going to have some consequences that have nothing to do with God. **2) Sometimes they are the results of other people’s bad choices and sin.** Maybe our greatest pain is from childhood when we were not loved or protected the way we should have been. Maybe an affair ended in pain or a drunk driver took away someone we’ve loved or senseless shootings happened in our community. Princess Diana died in a car crash and **Philip Yancy** shares with us his perspective: “Could it have had something to do with a drunk driver going 90 miles per hour in a narrow tunnel. How, exactly, was God involved?” **3) Most of the time they are the result of a broken and sinful world.** When sin entered the world it ushered in death, sorrow, illness, despair, natural disasters and accidents. These events have nothing to do with anyone’s sin or bad choices – they are the consequence of global sin. The rain falls on the just and unjust. **4) At times they are the result of spiritual warfare.** We have an enemy who seeks to steal, kill and destroy. Job’s story is a great example of spiritual warfare. He was not responsible for any of the losses in his life although his friends told him they happened because of sin.

**QUESTION: When has suffering caused you to drift from your faith? What brought you back?**

**QUESTION: Read Job 38 and tell us what impressed you the most in this chapter. What did you learn about spiritual warfare?**

**QUESTION: As you reflect on past suffering, what reasons can you identify for that pain?**

**QUESTION: When have you realized that spiritual warfare was at work in your life?**

## **APPLICATION**

“Why” is not the appropriate question. The answer to pain and sufferings’ “why” is “who.” Who do we trust, Who will sustain us, Who will give us hope again, Who will get us through this? Our Who is Jesus. If Jesus is who He claimed to be – then all these things will be reconciled and made right in Him. He has overcome the world. So, **how** do we respond? **1) Trust that God can bring purpose to the pain.** This is not a universal promise in **Romans 8:28** – it is for those who love God. **2) Find a safe, compassionate person to share our pain with.** Find fellowship at church and in small groups where others who share our faith can provide solace and wisdom; **3) We allow God to equip us** to handle pain and suffering in our lives and comfort others in their pain.

**QUESTION: Where are you finding fellowship today?**

**Martin Luther King, Jr.** writes about his response to pain: “As my suffering mounted, I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation – either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter.” He could have become bitter and sought revenge, or turned his back on God, but he allowed Him to use that pain to help others and leveraged his own suffering to bless those coming after him. We can emulate King’s example in our lives and bring peace to those around us. **John Stott’s** quote about suffering reminds us how important it is to respond to suffering appropriately, in faith, as we look to the Word of God to sustain us in all of our most difficult days. “The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation.”

**QUESTION: How have you handled a pain in your life in the past? When have you comforted others in their suffering?**

**QUESTION: When have you read the Bible from beginning to end? What do you think is stopping you from knowing everything God is trying to teach you?**

#### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, as we struggle in our pain and suffering, we turn to You for relief. Understanding how You can use those challenges for Your purposes and bring salvation to others, helps us to submit to Your will. In Jesus' name.

#### **QUESTIONS**

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**QUESTION: As you reflect on past suffering, what reasons can you identify for that pain?**

**QUESTION: When have you realized that spiritual warfare was at work in your life?**

**QUESTION: Where are you finding fellowship today?**

**QUESTION: How have you handled a pain in your life in the past? When have you comforted others in their suffering?**

**QUESTION: When have you read the Bible from beginning to end? What do you think is stopping you from knowing everything God is trying to teach you?**