

***Why Would a Loving  
God Allow Evil, Pain  
and Suffering?***



# Why God Allow Suffering?

1. If God was **all-powerful**, he **could** prevent evil and suffering
2. If God was **all-loving**, he would **want** to prevent evil and suffering
3. If there was an all-powerful, all-loving God, there would be no evil and suffering in the world
4. But, evil and suffering exist in the world
5. Therefore, God is powerless, loveless, or non-existent

# Why God Allows Suffering?

- (1) Why does a loving God allow **evil human behavior** (moral evil)?
- (2) Why does a loving God allow **disease and natural disasters** (natural evil)?
- (3) Does suffering have purpose?

# Why God Allows Moral Evil

- **God created humans with free will**
  - Gift of free will had potential for evil
- **God made sin and moral evil possible, but humans made it actual**
  - Origin of evil when first humans turned away from God & towards selfish desires
    - “The Fall” and “Original Sin”
- **God did His part perfectly**
  - We are the ones who messed it up

# Why God Allows Moral Evil

- Why did God give humans free will and allow us to misuse it?
  - Free will is required for true love
  - True love must involve free choice
    - Love cannot be forced
- God wants us to **voluntarily choose** to know, love, and serve Him
- *Video: Why we have a free will*
  - *Rick Warren, Purpose-Driven Life*



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# Why Does God Allow Pain?

- **We all experience:**
  - Physical pain (e.g., disease or illness)
  - Mental anguish (e.g., death of loved one)
- **Many people experience severe suffering from natural disasters**
- **Why God allows undeserved suffering is a mystery**
  - Let's look at some possible reasons



# Why God Allows Pain

- **Most people self-centered and want to be self-sufficient and in control**
  - Don't want anyone telling us what to do
- **In times of difficulty we may turn to God and seek His help**
  - God is a vague emergency service
  - Called upon only when going gets tough
- **If everything always wonderful, do you think we would need God or seek Him?**

# Why God Allows Pain

- Our Creator knows that true happiness lies in our relationship with Him
  - Find joy when **align our will** with God's
- Suffering is often means by which we give ourselves to God and seek His Will
  - We may not do this as long as there is any other place to look for happiness
  - We may not realize God is all we need until God is all we've got
- *Video: Personal Testimony*



# Why God Allows Pain



“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains. It is His **megaphone** to rouse a deaf world.”

C. S. Lewis

# Why God Allows Pain

- **Our illusion of self-sufficiency and self-control must, for our own sake, be shattered**
- **Pain & suffering shatter the illusion**
  - We are reminded we are not center of universe and not in control of our lives
  - Helps us find proper perspective in life
    - Abandonment of self-will to God's Will

# Why God Allows Pain

- **God can bring good out of disease and natural disasters in other ways**
  - **Opportunity to help and develop virtues**
    - **Compassion, empathy, unselfishness, charity, generosity...**
  - **Our own suffering allows us to develop courage, patience, humility, endurance**
  - **St. Augustine: “God judged it better to bring good out of evil, than to have no evil at all.”**
- ***Video: Why God allow natural disasters***



# Why God Allows Suffering?

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# Purpose of Suffering

- **If everything always perfect, we would become lazy, hedonistic & selfish**
- **Hardships can be blessings in disguise**
  - **Can be catalyst for achieving new heights in our personal and spiritual lives**
- **Growth occurs during hard times, times of struggle, pain and suffering**
  - **In times of trial we turn to God and seek His power and presence**

# Purpose of Suffering

- God allows physical suffering to draw us closer to Him and to teach us spiritual truths
- We learn wisdom through suffering
  - Moral character gets formed through hardship
  - Swimming against current makes us stronger
- *Video: Suffering opportunity for personal and spiritual growth*



# Purpose of Suffering

- **God knows we may need short-term suffering for our long-term good**
  - **Spiritual maturity and eternal life**
  - **“No pain, no gain”**
- **Spiritual growth is not automatic**
  - **Some people become bitter, rather than better, when faced with suffering**
  - **Adversity can make us or break us, depending upon our reaction**

# Purpose of Suffering

- **God can cause good to emerge from evil and suffering**
  - If run towards, instead of away, from God
- **“The redemptive nature of suffering”**
  - Integral part of Christian discipleship
  - “Take up your cross and follow me.”
- **Christians throughout history have shown how suffering brought them closer to God and a better person**

# Purpose of Suffering

- **Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*:**
  - “When you are troubled and afflicted, then is the time to gain merit.”
  - **“In the cross (suffering) there is the completion of virtue; in the cross there is the perfection of sanctity (holiness).”**
  - “There is no health for the soul nor hope of eternal life, except in the cross.”
- ***Video: Hope After a Major Loss***



# Purpose of Suffering

- Our problems are “storms on the sea of life that are not meant to sink us, but to sanctify us”
  - Each “storm” is opportunity to grow closer to God
  - As we grow closer, the more we love God
  - The more we love God, the more we desire to **serve** Him and others
  - The more we serve God and others, the more **like Him we become**



# Purpose of Suffering

- Raw gold is dull, dark, and clumpy
  - Its beauty is only potential
  - Only after it is melted and poured into a mold, does it make beautiful jewelry
- God allows trials to “**melt** me, **mold** me, **make** me” into His image
- “**T**emporal **t**rials are **p**eople’s **p**ath to **h**eavenly **h**oliness”
- *Video: Rick Warren on spiritual growth*



# Purpose of Suffering

- Pope St. John Paul II, *On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*:
  - “Suffering must serve for conversion, that is, for the rebuilding of goodness.”
  - “Its purpose is to **strengthen goodness** in man himself and in his relationships with others and especially with God.”
  - “It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls.”

# Summary

- (1) Why does a loving God allow **evil human behavior** (moral evil)?
  - Our free will
- (2) Why does a loving God allow **disease and natural disasters** (natural evil)?
  - “God’s megaphone”
- (3) Does suffering have purpose?
  - Personal and spiritual growth

# The Answer to Suffering

- The answer to problem of suffering is not just an abstract idea, because this is not just an abstract issue
  - It's a personal issue and requires a personal response
- The answer to problem of suffering is not a logical answer, but an Answerer
  - The Answerer is Jesus Himself

# The Answer to Suffering

- God understands our suffering because He has experienced it
- Jesus willingly suffered for our good
  - So that we might have eternal life
- Jesus asks us to love and to trust Him in all things
  - Especially in our trials and suffering
- *Video: Jesus with us in the midst of our suffering*



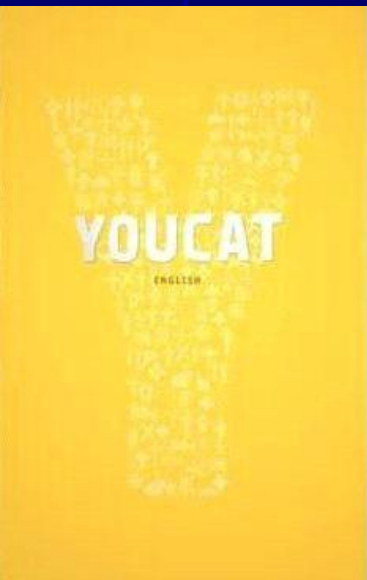
# The Answer to Suffering

- How can we not help but love in return this person, Jesus, who:
  - Voluntarily entered into our world,
  - Suffered our pains, and
  - Offers Himself to us in the midst of our pain and suffering



# The Answer to Suffering

- From YOUCAT, *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Question #102):
  - “Christians should not seek suffering, but when they are confronted with unavoidable suffering, it can become meaningful for them if they unite their suffering with the sufferings of Christ.”
  - “**In faith** we can accept our own suffering and share the suffering of others.”



A scenic landscape featuring a wide river or lake in the foreground, reflecting the sky. The sky is a mix of blue, purple, and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the background, there are mountains and a line of trees. The foreground is a rocky shore.

**Closing Song**

***“Blessings”***  
***by***  
***Laura Story***

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***Questions?***

***Comments?***

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