

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics

## What Does the Bible Say about Suffering?

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The problem of suffering is challenging, and people often wonder how a kind, loving God can allow suffering. Responses to suffering are deeply personal and evoke strong emotions, but the Bible offers examples that reveal not only the mystery of human suffering but God's eternal perspective. Let's look at 10 things the Bible says about suffering and how we should respond so that our faith can be built.

### 1. Suffering Has Many Faces

Christians can experience “many troubles”—mental, physical, emotional or spiritual suffering ([Psalm 34:19](#)). All Christians have or will suffer ([John 16:33](#); [Acts 14:22](#)). The Apostle Paul experienced various faces of suffering ([2 Corinthians 4:8-10](#)).

Suffering can come because of foolish choices. We see this in Proverbs: fools suffer harm ([13:20](#)), lazy people become hungry ([19:15](#)), adulterers reap bad consequences ([6:32](#)), etc.

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While suffering can be a result of sin, all creation, even the righteous, will groan under the weight of sin and suffering ([Romans 8:20-22](#)). Only in heaven is there no pain, death or grief ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

## 2. Suffering Is Not Random

Suffering is not without purpose. God sovereignly uses circumstances to teach powerful lessons or accomplish His will.

We see this in Joseph's tough circumstances ([Genesis 37-50](#)). His suffering led to many people being rescued ([50:20](#)). Another example is Hosea's marriage to Gomer, an unfaithful woman. Hosea suffered as a demonstration of God's love ([Hosea 3:1](#)).

Suffering causes the biblically-grounded believer to worship God—praising His providential hand and trusting His loving heart—even when the causes for hurtful circumstances are unclear.

Tragedies are especially difficult to understand, but sometimes God uses earthly calamities as agents of change, calling people to repentance ([Luke 13:4-5](#)). Suffering should motivate all people to ask, "Am I ready to meet God?"

## 3. Suffering Touched Our Savior

Jesus in the flesh experienced weariness and other human weakness. He was tempted in every way humans are, yet he was without sin. In the midst of impending suffering, Jesus' example was: "Not my will, but yours be done" ([Luke 22:42](#)).

Jesus said His people would follow in His footsteps, and that would include suffering ([John 15:20](#)). He left us an example of how to suffer ([1 Peter 2:19-21](#)). He said His followers would be blessed when they faithfully endured suffering for His name's sake ([Matthew 5:10-12](#)). Paul deeply desired to share in Christ's sufferings ([Philippians 3:10](#)).

The author of salvation entered fully into suffering and emerged victorious over it ([Hebrews 2:10](#); [1 Peter 3:18](#)). The ultimate answer to suffering was at [the cross](#) when Jesus declared, "It is finished" ([John 19:30](#)). Our suffering as we follow Him has purpose, and it will come to an end.

## 4. Suffering Is Mysterious and Pervasive

Christ-followers know only "in part" many of the mysterious purposes of God ([1 Corinthians 13:9](#)), but it's clear how suffering began.

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Satan is the author of sin, and suffering came on mankind as a result of Adam's sin ([Genesis 3](#)). Because of that choice, the curse of sin pervades all creation—humans have a sin nature ([Romans 5:12-21](#)); but people also are sinners because of their choices ([Romans 3:23](#); [Galatians 6:8](#)). Suffering because of sin is a tragic part of all human life.

Though no trial can separate the Christian from Christ's love ([Romans 8:35](#)), the mystery of suffering is real. David felt this struggle when he asked, "How long will you hide your face from me?" ([Psalm 13:1](#)). Sin separates us from God ([Isaiah 59:2](#)), and the believer keenly feels this loss of fellowship when dealing with a sin.

## 5. Suffering Can be a Battlefield

Some suffering comes because of a battle for the believer's allegiance, as in the case of Job ([Job 1:11-12](#)). He wasn't aware of the conversation between God and Satan that set up this battle. He didn't question God's sovereignty, but he did agonize over things he couldn't understand ([Job 10:2](#)).

Satan still comes to believers in times of uncertainty or suffering, tempting them to doubt God. In this arena of warfare, God's children can either curse God because of suffering, or trust Him in the midst of trials as Job did ([Job 2:9-10](#)).

## 6. Suffering Teaches Us to Seek and Trust God

The psalmist said his afflictions were good, because they made him more faithful and taught Him God's commands ([Psalm 119:67, 71](#)). Resting in Scripture, Christians can learn to respond to suffering in godly ways. They can trust God with their anger when they are sinned against, and learn to forgive ([Romans 12:19](#); [Colossians 3:13](#)).

All who desire to live godly will be persecuted ([2 Timothy 3:12](#); [Philippians 1:29](#)), but even in times of mistreatment or persecution, believers can seek God, find His blessing and give a powerful testimony for Christ ([Matthew 5:10-11](#); [1 Peter 2:19-20](#)).

## 7. Suffering Matures and Equips Us

In the midst of an extreme trial, it can be hard to develop mature faith. Whatever character and faith are *already* built into a Christian's life prior to going through suffering tends to come out during suffering. But lessons learned in suffering can equip a believer for future ministry ([2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)).

New wisdom and maturity are tools God can use. When Christians face trials and tribulations and find God faithful, they have firsthand experience to encourage others in

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their suffering. When God's children hurt, He can strengthen them to make wise choices and desire the will of God more than anything else ([1 Peter 4:1-2](#))

God also uses the pruning work of suffering to help Christians bear more fruit ([John 15:2](#)). Suffering produces endurance, character and hope ([Romans 5:3-5](#); [1 Peter 5:10](#)). God teaches His children to persevere and be sensitive to others' needs ([James 1:2-4](#); [Matthew 25:35-36](#)).

## 8. Suffering Finds Refuge in Community

The church is meant to be a refuge for those who hurt, a place where those who suffer in various struggles can come for help. Christians are meant to carry each other's burdens ([Galatians 6:2](#)).

The church is where believers practice all the "one anothers" of Scripture. Loving those who suffer is an evidence of God living in us, and it illustrates His perfect love ([1 John 4:12](#))

## 9. Suffering Can Bring Glory to God

God sometimes allows things that are undeserved—disease and disabilities—to display His marvelous work. An example of this is the healing of the man blind from birth ([John 9:1-3](#)). Jesus said the man's blindness was to show the works of God through his healing.

[Lazarus'](#) sickness was "for the glory of God," and Jesus would also receive glory ([John 11:1-4](#)). When Lazarus died, this gave Jesus the opportunity to encourage faith. He said, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" ([John 11:40](#)). Paul's suffering—his "thorn" in the flesh—tormented him, but he found in weakness the opportunity to boast of Christ's power ([2 Corinthians 12:7-9](#)).

When Christians suffer, people are watching, and Christians' intent in times of suffering should be to honor God. Paul said when we share Christ's sufferings, we can rejoice when His glory is revealed ([1 Peter 4:12-13](#)).

## 10. Suffering Prepares Us for Greater Glory

We don't like suffering and try to avoid it. But Paul says the Christian's "light and momentary" troubles achieve for them greater joy and eternal glory that outweighs anything they will suffer ([2 Corinthians 4:17-18](#)).

In a sense, suffering for Jesus proves the believer's faith. The Christ-follower suffers for Jesus' sake, is conformed to His image, places all hope in Him—trusting that all things

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work together for His purposes— and enters into the freedom and glory of Sonship for all eternity ([Romans 8:18-30](#)). The justified, sanctified believer will be glorified in heaven.

This should cause Christians to rejoice. When suffering proves the genuineness of the Christian's faith, this results in "praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" ([1 Peter 1:6-9](#)).

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