

Got Proof #6

God...why all the evil and suffering?

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Part of Connect Group Questions

May 20, 2018



This week's teaching addressed one of the most difficult questions for us to answer – intellectually, emotionally, and sometimes very personally.

GETTING STARTED

One of the key factors in understanding evil and suffering has to do with the necessary, potential “outcomes” which result from power of (free) choice God has endowed to us. Simply put, God lets us choose knowing He would also lets us experience the consequences. What's more, He allows the consequences of our choices to impact (for good or for ill) other people. In other words, creating a system of free choices and consequences involved risk. We wonder if God *should* have done this.

To get your discussion going (and before you are “too hard” on God), **what choices have you made that involved substantial risk (perhaps you are making some now?** (cite a number of examples within the group) Why didn't the risk keep you from making the choice? Did you believe the potential benefits were worth the risk of substantial loss?

Finally...**what “potential benefit(s)” did God have in mind when he created a system which could also experience great loss?**

IN THE WORD

The Scriptures are quite clear about the origin of evil and suffering, and the reasons why God does not suspend all of the consequences of our choices nor reroute His children's lives away from all suffering. **As**

you look up the following Scriptures, complete together (from the Scripture) the ideas of the sentences below...which highlight God's explanation for our tough times.

1] Suffering and struggle, expressed in **the “_____” of the physical world and universe, are the direct result of _____**. All creation, including all animal and human life, experiences the _____ of living with the degenerative effects of sin in the created order. **Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:20-22**

2] Suffering and struggle are the **consequential results of _____**. While the

consequences of sinful choices can be used by the Holy Spirit to help men understand their need of Christ (thru the ministry of _____) the of these struggles is nonetheless the death-like outcomes of sin.

Romans 6:23, James 1:14-15, 1 Peter 4:15, John 16:8-11

3] Suffering (related to the “frustration” in the created order) as a Christian **increases _____**

God is preparing for us. **John 14:1-4, Romans 8:23, 2 Corinthians 5:1-5**

4] Suffering (related to our “witness” as belonging to Christ) **enhances _____**

at the revelation of Jesus Christ. **Romans 8:16-17, 2 Timothy 2:12, 1 Peter 1:6-9, 4:12-14**

5] Suffering and struggle, Divinely designed and/or allowed, refines _____, **progressively shaping us into _____**. **Romans 5:1-5, 8:28-29, Hebrews 5:7-10, James 1:2-4.**

What did you discover, learn from this? Did you find encouragement? How so?

MY LIFE - OUR MISSION

In his excellent chapter on “How could a good God allow suffering?” (Chapter 2, *A Reason For God*), Pastor Timothy Keller notes, “We need hope that our suffering is ‘not in vain.’ Have you ever noticed how desperate the families of lost loved ones are to say that. They work to

reform laws or change social conditions that led to the death. They need to believe that the death of their loved ones has led to new life, that the injustice has led to greater justice” (p.31).

While we may not always understand all the reasons for the evil we encounter and the suffering we may endure, we have a heavenly Father who *truly* does. A Father in whose hands are our lives. Christians MUST share these true, Biblical perspectives with one another. It’s how our lives are “defined” by those we know in Christ.

- Do you have someone in your Connect Group or circle of godly friends with whom you **“share your tough stuff”** so as to keep your perspective “Biblical” and balanced? If not...what steps will you take to connect with others in this way?

- In difficult times, **does God make your day?** Rather than running from the Word, are you leaning in, listening to the cries of the Psalms, or learning from the struggles of the godly who have gone before us? If you don’t know where to start reading and praying, ask a godly friend, or touch base with one of the CCC pastors.