

the beginning from the end, your loving Heavenly Father does, and works according to the purposes of His will, for His glory and your good.

3) Trust in God's love. When all else around you is crumbling, never lose sight of God's love for you personally.

4) Pray without ceasing. Pray that God's will and His purpose be accomplished in your life. Pray that above all else He would be lifted up and glorified.

5) Be thankful in all things. Thank God that He is sovereign (in absolute control of everything); that He is at work conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ, that He will complete the work He began. He will accomplish all things to His honor and for our greatest good, in spite of what we see or believe.³

FOOTNOTES

¹ Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible, unless noted

² Beth Moore, *Praying God's Word*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

³ Number 2, 3, 4, and 5 are taken from class notes taught by Robert Dunzweiler

All scripture is from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Trusting God
by Jerry Bridges

Future Grace
by John Piper

A Path Through Suffering
by Elisabeth Elliot

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SUFFERING



Suffering

A Tool in God's Hand

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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A Tool in God's Hand

Human suffering is the experiencing or enduring of (what is perceived to be) extended or persistent pain or distress.

Suffering may be physical, emotional, or spiritual in nature and origin, and may be caused by external or internal factors and/or influences."

– ROBERT DUNZWEILER

Suffering is an expected part of life. It is a common human experience. John 16:33, "In the world you will have tribulation" 1 Peter 4:12, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."¹

Suffering has a purpose. Dave Shoppy (former KESWICK staff member) commented one time that suffering has two basic purposes. For a person who does not have a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ, suffering is a tool God uses to bring him to Himself. For a person who has been saved, it is a tool God uses to refine him in Jesus Christ, to make him more like Him.

Part of what suffering accomplishes in the life of believers is to conform them to the image of Jesus Christ. God doesn't necessarily cause the suffering but allows it and uses it redemptively to transform and cause growth in an individual. Romans 8:28-29, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."

Suffering is a learning opportunity. Christ Himself learned (experientially) through suffering. Hebrews 5:8, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

God doesn't necessarily cause the suffering but allows it and uses it redemptively to transform and cause growth in an individual.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and my burden is light." – MATTHEW 11:28-30

Suffering can produce fruit. Suffering can bear the fruit of perseverance, develop character, nurture hope, patience, and growth in Christ-likeness.

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." – ROMANS 5:3-4

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." – JAMES 1:2-4

Commit yourself to the One who judges righteously.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." – 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Jesus Christ, our example, suffered. He suffered through life, being rejected by the very men He came to save. He suffered in His death.

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously." – 1 PETER 2:21-23

Christ did not sin in His suffering. He did not lash out. He trusted the hand of His Father. Likewise, commit yourself to the One who judges righteously.

A higher goal. Our goal when we are suffering is, frankly, to get out of it. Our focus is often getting

from point A to point B. God is more interested, not in getting us from point A to point B, but rather in HOW we get from point A to point B. "God is more interested in our getting to know the Deliverer than simply being delivered."² Suffering provides ample opportunity to grow in the richness of knowing the One true God.

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." – PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11

A passion for God's glory. If our greater concern is for our comfort rather than His glory, our suffering will seem unfair and pointless. If, however, our greater passion is for God's glory — then we will seek to glorify Him moment-by-moment in the midst of our suffering. Then our suffering will have purpose and value in transforming us more and more into Christ's image.

Prescription for Growth:

1) Repent. Whenever we become aware that our attitude or actions have been sinful we are called to repentance. That is not to say that everyone who is suffering is sinning in his or her response, but if this applies to you, take heed. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9.

2) Trust in God's faithfulness. If you knew the beginning from the end, you would find the suffering much easier to go through. Though you don't know