

I. Biblical responses of God's children in trials and suffering

A. You must be responsible no matter how you feel to always please Christ since we will also give an account (2 Cor. 5:9-10).

B. Don't pray to just "hang in there" or "just get me through" the trial and suffering – but ask God to help you grow in the midst of the difficulty to be more like Jesus (Rom. 8:28-29; Jas. 1:2-4).

C. Ask yourself:

1. Could God have stopped this? Absolutely, yes!
2. Did He? No.
3. If not, why not?

D. Possible reasons why God allows trials and sufferings:

1. Unconfessed sins (1 Cor. 11:30; 2 Kgs. 5:15-27)

Use caution here – Job's counselors thought this was the only reason

2. To chastise His children (Ps. 119:67; Heb. 12:5-11)
3. God wants to increase our usefulness (pruning process – John 15:2; 2 Cor. 1:3-9; 2 Pet. 1:5-8)
4. To help us realize this isn't heaven and we live in a fallen world (Gen. 3:8-19; Rom. 8:22-24)
5. To show us that other people's sins have an effect on us (Eph. 6:4; Josh 7; Jonah 1)
6. To allow us to reap what we sow (a natural consequence to our own choices – Gal.6:7-8; Prov. 5:22)
7. To teach us about our own weaknesses and cause us to depend on God (2 Cor. 1:8-9; 12:7-10).
8. To have us realize that we have placed our hope somewhere else or have spread it out between God and self/circumstances/other people/possessions. Our hope is to be squarely fixed upon God alone and His promises (1 Pet. 1:13; Heb. 6:19). At times we don't even know we have "little hopes" elsewhere until God allows a trial to come and reveal them to us.
9. To enlarge our appreciation of His sufficiency (2 Cor. 4:7; 12:7-10).
10. To test and strengthen our faith (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12).
11. To create opportunities to witness for Christ (1 Phil. 1:12ff).
12. To develop Christ-like character (Jas. 1:2-5).
13. To cause us to recognize our need of one another in the Body of Christ and to draw us closer to one another (38+ "One Anothers;" 1 Cor. 12:25; Rom. 12:15; Gal. 6:2).
14. To always bring glory to Himself (John 9:1-7; Job 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:26-31).
15. It drives us to God's Word (Ps. 119:71).

II. Biblical Resources available to the Christian through Christ

- A. The Father providentially is carrying out His decreed will for our lives: His will is good, perfect and acceptable (Rom. 12:2).
- B. Christ prays on our behalf (John 17:20-21; Heb. 4:14-16).
- C. His Holy Spirit indwells His children (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- D. His grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12) – He always promises victory in, not necessarily deliverance from (1 Cor. 10:13)
- E. There is no temptation that is too powerful (1 Cor. 10:13).
- F. The local church body are to be involved “one anothers” (Rom. 12; Heb. 10:24-25).
- G. Our earthly life is short compared to eternity in Heaven (2 Cor. 4:16-18).
- H. Heaven is our home and it is sure (John 14:1-3; Heb. 6:19)
- I. Christ is soon to return (1 Pet. 1:13).

III. Conclusion

- A. When people ask “WHY?”
- B. “Let me suggest some possible reasons” (use above list).
- C. “Which of these might apply to your situation?”
- D. BE focused (on Christ and His Word) + BE faithful = BE fruitful.

Selected Resources

A Path Through Suffering, Elliot, Servant Publications, 1990.
How Long O Lord? D.A. Carson, Baker Books, 1990.
How to Handle Trouble, Jay Adams, P & R Publishers, 1982.
Pain, the Plight of Fallen Man, James Halla, Timeless Texts, 2002.
Surprised by Suffering, R.C. Sproul, Tyndale, 1989.
The Power of Suffering, John McArthur, Jr., Victor Books, 1995.
Trusting God, Jerry Bridges, NavPress, 1988.
When Trouble Comes, Jim Berg, BJU Press, 2002.
Why Does God Allow Suffering? Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Crossway Books, 1939, 1994.