



Exploring Christianity:

Why does God allow pain and suffering?

Why Does God Allow Pain And Suffering?

Name: _____

Grade: _____



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1. If God is so good and so powerful, why do you think he allows so much pain and suffering in this world?

2. Some atheists believe that the mere existence of pain and suffering in our world strongly suggests that there really is no God. Do you agree? Why or why not?

“Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to; or he cannot and does not want to. If he wants to, but cannot, he is impotent. If he can, but does not want to, he is wicked. But, if God both can and wants to abolish evil, then how comes evil in the world?”

Epicurus, 350 BC

3. In what ways can you relate to the following words written by the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk? Share a personal experience you have had with pain or suffering that caused you to doubt the existence or the goodness of God.

How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. . . . Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? (Habakkuk 1:2–3, 13)



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4. At one point Sweeney believed that God put us here on the earth but did not involve himself with us very much. To what extent do you believe God is involved in our lives here on earth? Give reasons for your response.

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pains. Suffering is God’s megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

C. S. Lewis

5. Craig Detweiler claims pain and suffering are tests of character. How do you respond to this claim? What is the point of pain? Does pain exist for a reason? Are there any possible benefits from pain and suffering?

“Babies are born with multiple birth defects. Genetic disorders plague many of us. An earthquake levels a city, and thousands lose their lives in the rubble. The Bible teaches that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between sin and suffering. When we human beings told God to shove off, he partially honored our request. Nature began to revolt. The earth was cursed. Genetic breakdown and disease began. Pain and death became a part of the human experience. The good creation was marred. We live in an unjust world. We are born into a world made chaotic and unfair by a humanity in revolt against its Creator.”

Cliffe Knechtle, *Give Me an Answer*



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6. In what ways do pain and suffering push you away from God? In what ways do pain and suffering have the capacity to draw you closer to God?

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Psalm 34:18

7. If God has the power to end human suffering right now, why doesn't he do it?

“Believing God is the sovereign creator and in control of the world doesn't mean He is directly, causally connected with everything that happens on this earth. He doesn't make the decision to reach down and shake loose a rock to start every avalanche. When some people hear this kind of thinking, they get nervous. They think I'm limiting God. I'm not. But I am saying God doesn't ordinarily interfere with the natural course of the universe any more often than He directly interferes with man's choices.”

Jay Kesler, *Making Life Make Sense*



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8. Lee Strobel suggests that it's impossible to create a world with free will and not allow the possibility of pain and suffering. In other words, God cannot create human beings with a total ability to freely make meaningful choices and at the same time control them so they always make good choices. Do you agree with this logic? Why or why not?

9. Do you consider your freedom to choose to be a good gift from God? Why or why not? What would human relationships be like without free will?

“So how do theists respond to arguments like this? They say there is a reason for evil, but it is a mystery. Well, let me tell you this: I’m actually one hundred feet tall even though I only appear to be six feet tall. You ask me for proof of this. I have a simple answer: it’s a mystery. Just accept my word for it on faith. And that’s just the logic theists use in their discussions of evil.”

Atheist Quentin Smith

10. If you could eliminate all evil, suffering, and sin (wrongdoing) in your life by giving up your free will, would you do it?



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11. If there were no sin or wrongdoing in the world, do you think there would be any suffering and evil? Why or why not?

"For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is—limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—he had the honesty and courage to take his own medicine. Whatever game he is playing with his creation, he has kept his own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He has himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money, to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, and death. When he was a man, he played the man. He was born in poverty and he died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile."

Dorothy Savers

12. Do you believe in an afterlife free of pain and suffering? Why or why not?

13. Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Does it bring you any comfort to know that in the afterlife God will put an end to all pain and suffering and evil? Why or why not?