

Why Must We Suffer?

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Introduction: Why couldn't God protect us from suffering? It is certainly within God's abilities to keep us safe from harm. Why must we suffer? To answer that question we need to explore the purposes for suffering.

I. If we never suffer we'll never learn.

A. Suffering is a form of discipline. We learn obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:8). If suffering was good for Christ it certainly is good for us.

B. God uses suffering to correct our conduct (Heb. 12:5-11).

1. God treats us as His children by punishing us through sufferings (Psm. 119:71).

2. Parents recognize that spankings provide the proper amount of suffering to get their children to learn valuable lessons (Prov. 3:11-12; 15:5).

3. When I was a child we use to live on a busy public highway. Dad told us not to race our bikes along the road. Now I suppose I could have learned my lesson had I lost control of my bike and slammed into a car. But Dad made sure I learned my lesson by a less brutal way but just as effective. I never raced my bike along the road again. In fact, for a while I walked my bike along the road just in case Mom or Dad was watching.

4. We all learn lessons the hard way. When Melanie was about a year old and still learning to walk she would balance herself against walls. The stove in the kitchen would get the door pretty hot so Janine warned her not to touch it. However, Melanie didn't heed the warning and soon thereafter planted her hand on the hot stove door. Her hand didn't blister but it did get real red. Melanie never touched that door again. She learned a valuable lesson through suffering.

II. If we never suffer we'll never prove our worth.

A. Suffering gives us opportunity to prove our commitment to God (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

1. If Christians never suffered, everyone would want to be a Christian. Not because they love God but to avoid hardships (Job 1:9-11; 2:9-10).

2. However, the Lord's children are more than willing to suffer because they love Him. It proves the genuineness of our faith (Acts 5:40-42)!

B. When people turn their backs on God because of some terrible event that occurred in their life, what does that say about their faith in Him?

III. If we never suffer we'll never grow spiritually.

A. "No pain; no gain" (Jas. 1:2-4). What person has ever increased his patience without having his patience suffer?

B. Suffering through trials can make us stronger (Rom. 5:3-5).

IV. If we never suffer we'll never be humbled.

A. Suffering taught Paul to trust in God (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

B. The reason God did not remove Paul's thorn in the flesh was to keep him humble (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

C. An old Arab proverb says, "All sunshine makes a desert." In other words, too much ease and prosperity dries up our dependence upon God. If we never suffered in life, we would take things for granted to include God (Deut. 6:10-12; 8:11-20; 2 Chron. 33:10-13; Rev. 3:17-18).

V. If we never suffer we'll never be as compassionate.

A. Most people think compassion is feeling sorrowful for someone so you let them have their way. That's not compassion. Compassion is feeling sorrowful for someone, so you try to help.

B. Suffering taught Christ to be merciful (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Through suffering, Christ learned to be compassionate with us.

C. Our suffering might only be meant to teach us to be compassionate with others. Suffering doesn't necessarily mean anyone did anything wrong. It could simply be the will of God for a greater purpose (John 9:1-3).

D. Suffering teaches many more lessons and serves many more purposes.

Conclusion: In the entire book of Job, God never told Job why he must suffer. Although Job didn't know, he remained content to trust in God. We too might not know why we must suffer. But likewise we can learn to be content in whatever situation we find ourselves (Phil. 4:11-13).