

This week's Message:
God and Suffering Part I

1. Hope East Renovation—the story
2. Some Starting Points
3. God and suffering

- Suffering hurts
- Suffering is relative
- There are no easy answers to suffering—only long conversations

- God hates suffering
- God will end our suffering
- God uses suffering
- The great irony - God uses evil to defeat evil

4. The Suffering, Loving God

The Suffering God
Hebrews 2:9-10

The Loving God
Romans 8:14-18

Three images of God

- The Cosmic Sadist
- The Disinterested Owner
- The Loving Father

5. Our Response—Will we say “yes” to our Father?

Hebrews 2:9-10

9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Romans 8:14-18

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

RENOVATION PROJECT

HOW THE GOSPEL CHANGES US



RENOVATION PROJECT

HOW THE GOSPEL CHANGES US
THROUGH SUFFERING



Tallying up the loss:

Time: I have had to hit the pause button on life, ministry, ambitions; my life was put on hold so to speak

Health: it seems my diet is forever altered; because of my concussion and my weight loss (15 lbs) I don't feel robust, strong, and healthy anymore; I am weak and tired most of the time

Tallying up the loss:

Money: my health costs have emptied our health savings account; we have nothing in the bank for current health needs, including my physical recovery

Rest: we have missed two summers; we have not been able to truly enjoy vacation, rest, refreshment

Self: I don't know joy, fun; I've forgotten how to be lighthearted; will I ever be myself again?

Tallying up the loss:

Job: I have gone from love it to hate it; my dream job has turned into a nightmare; I know Hope East was not my "real" job, but all the emotions, fears, anxieties that color the way I feel and think about my job still linger

Family: my relationship to Jeanie has been stretched to the point of breaking; I've become estranged to my boys; their father has changed and is now distant and reserved, easily angered and uptight

Tallying up the loss:

Vision: my passion and heart for life and ministry has waned; I don't get excited about anything; I wonder if I can even get this back again

Love for God: I feel like I've been beat up and kicked around; I know God is loving, but I have not felt it; now I just feel distant; Scripture doesn't come alive to me; I can't seem to pray

RENOVATION PROJECT

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THROUGH SUFFERING

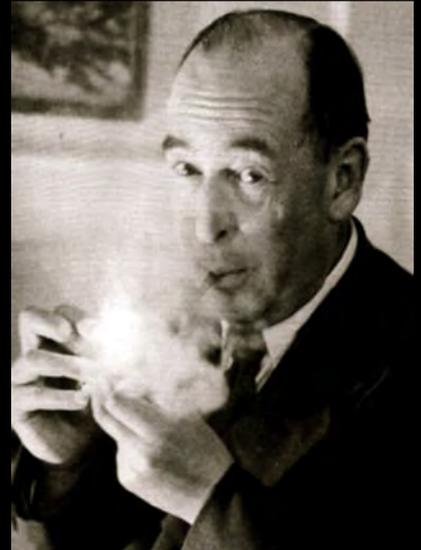


Starting Points:

#1 – Suffering hurts

I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made 'perfect through suffering' is not incredible. To prove it palatable is beyond my design.

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



Starting Points:

#1 – Suffering hurts

#2 – Suffering is relative

Starting Points:

#1 – Suffering hurts

#2 – Suffering is relative

#3 – There are no easy answers to suffering –
only long conversations

Continuing the Dialogue:

smallgroups@hopecc.com

restoringhope@hopecc.com

Suffering dialogue – Oct 25th

Small Group Leaders Roundtable – Nov 1st

stories@hopecc.com

God and suffering:

#1 – God hates suffering

Genesis 3:17–19

¹⁷ To Adam he said...“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

John 11:32–38

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

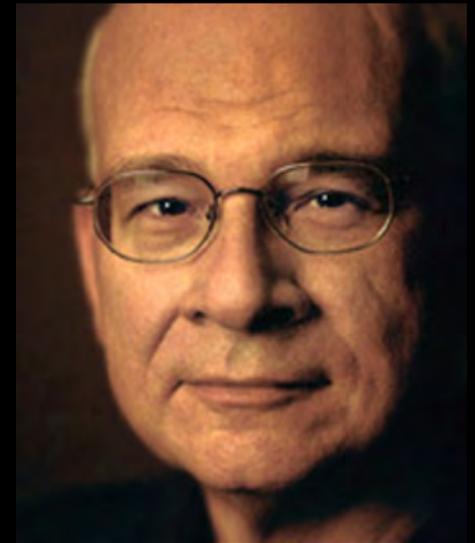
³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked. “Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept...

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

When he approaches the tomb, most translations say he was “once more deeply moved” or “he groaned in himself.” But these translations are too weak. The Greek word used by the gospel writer John means “to bellow with anger.” It is a startling term. Theologian B. B. Warfield writes: “What Jon tells us, in point of fact, is that Jesus approached the grave of Lazarus in a state, not of uncontrollable grief, but of irrepressible anger.”

Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*



God and suffering:

#1 – God hates suffering

#2 – God will end our suffering

Isaiah 25:7–8

⁷ On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;

⁸ He will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears
from all faces;

He will remove his people's disgrace
from all the earth.

The Lord has spoken.

Revelation 21:3–4

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘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.’”

God and suffering:

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#2 – God will end our suffering

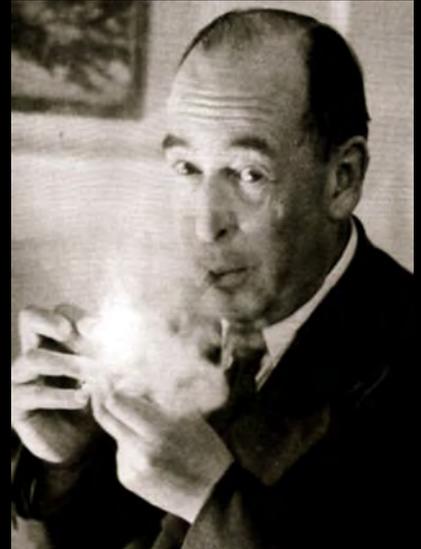
#3 – God uses our suffering

#3 - God uses our suffering:

The banner planted in the heart's fortress

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. A bad man, happy, is a man without the least inkling that his actions do not 'answer', that they are not in accord with the laws of the universe.

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



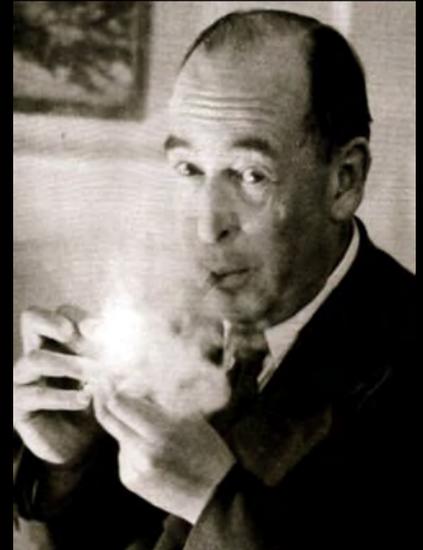
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The banner planted in the heart's fortress

The glasses to see clearly

“You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn't you then first discover how much you really trusted it?”

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



#3 – God uses our suffering:

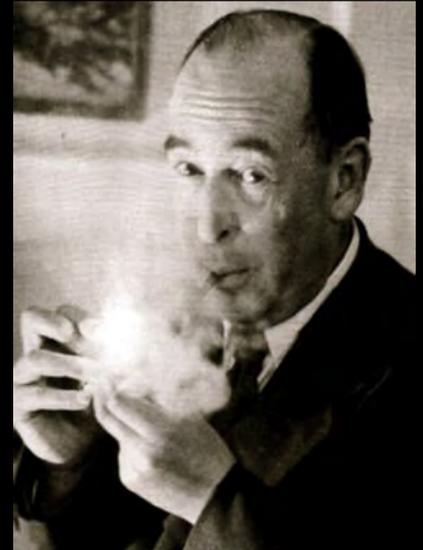
The banner planted in the heart's fortress

The glasses to see clearly

The railroad tracks to bring about redemption

When we act from ourselves alone — that is, from God in ourselves — we are collaborators in, or live instruments of, creation: and that is why such an act undoes with ‘backward mutters of dissevering power’ the uncreative spell which Adam laid upon his species.

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



#3 – God uses our suffering:

The great irony:

God uses evil and suffering,
the thing he hates the most,
to undo evil and suffering.



The Suffering God

Isaiah 53

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

The Suffering God

Mark 1:9-13

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹

And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." ¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan.

The Suffering God

Matthew 27:46

⁴⁶ About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

This infinite distance between God and God—the
supreme tearing, agony that no other has approached,
marvel of love—is the crucifixion.

Nothing could be further from God than the One who
was made a curse.

Simone Weil,
The Love of God and Affliction



“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” are the greatest words in all of Scripture.

In Christ, the God-forsaken sinner has a Savior who has taken on himself the full depths of human estrangement from God—and overcome it.



Martin Luther, *Reformation of Suffering*

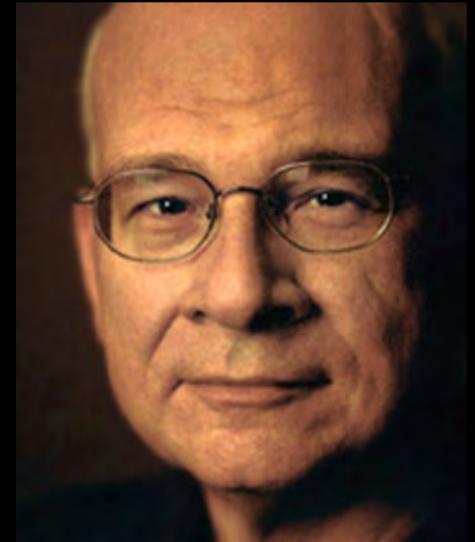
The Suffering God

Hebrews 2:9-10

⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

The Sovereign God himself has come down into this world and has experienced its darkness. He has personally drunk the cup of its suffering down to the dregs. And he did it not to justify himself but to justify *us*, that is, to bear the suffering, death, and curse for sin that we have earned. He takes the punishment upon himself so that someday he can return and end all evil without having to condemn and punish us.

Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*



The Loving God

Romans 8:14–17

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Yes, we do not know the reason God allows evil and suffering to continue, or why it is so random, but now at least we know what the reason is not. It cannot be that he does not love us. It cannot be that he does not care. He is so committed to our ultimate happiness that he was willing to plunge into the greatest depths of suffering himself.

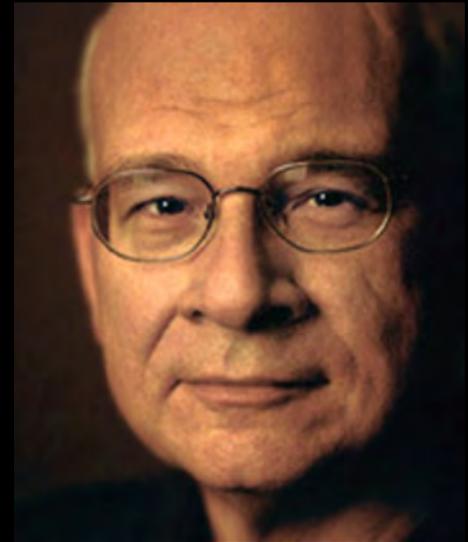
Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*



“He understands us, he has been there, and he assures us that he has a plan to eventually wipe away every tear.

Someone might say, “But that’s only half an answer to the question ‘Why?’” Yes, but it is the half we need.

Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*







Our Response to a loving, suffering God

1. Will you trust God?
2. Will you say “yes” to God?