

John 11:1-57... Now a man was sick, Lazarus, from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Him: "Lord, the one You love is sick." ⁴ When Jesus heard it, He said, *"This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."* ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. ⁶ So when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. ⁷ Then after that, He said to the disciples, *"Let's go to Judea again."* ⁸ "Rabbi," the disciples told Him, "just now the Jews tried to stone You, and You're going there again?" ⁹ *"Aren't there 12 hours in a day?"* Jesus answered. *"If anyone walks during the day, he doesn't stumble, because he sees the light of this world."* ¹⁰ *"If anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him."* ¹¹ He said this, and then He told them, *"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm on My way to wake him up."* ¹² Then the disciples said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well." ¹³ Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought He was speaking about natural sleep. ¹⁴ So Jesus then told them plainly, *"Lazarus has died."* ¹⁵ *"I'm glad for you that I wasn't there so that you may believe. But let's go to him."* ¹⁶ Then Thomas (called "Twin") said to his fellow disciples, *"Let's go so that we may die with Him."* ¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem (about two miles away). ¹⁹ Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. ²⁰ As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. ²² Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You." ²³ *"Your brother will rise again,"* Jesus told her. ²⁴ Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live."* ²⁶ *"Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?"* ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told Him, "I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world." ²⁸ Having said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ As soon as she heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him. ³⁰ Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met Him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. So they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there. ³² When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and told Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!" ³³ When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was angry in His spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ *"Where have you put him?"* He asked. "Lord," they told Him, "come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Couldn't He who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?" ³⁸ Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ *"Remove the stone,"* Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told Him, "Lord, he's already decaying. It's been four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, *"Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"* ⁴¹ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, *"Father, I thank You that You heard Me."* ⁴² *"I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me."* ⁴³ After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, *"Lazarus, come out!"* ⁴⁴ The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, *"Loose him and let him go."* ⁴⁵ Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what He did believed in Him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we going to do since this man does many signs? ⁴⁸ If we let Him continue in this way, everyone will believe in Him! Then the Romans will come and remove both our place and our nation." ⁴⁹ One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You're not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to kill Him. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim. And He stayed there with the disciples. ⁵⁵ The Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple complex: "What do you think? He won't come to the festival, will He?" ⁵⁷ The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it so they could arrest Him.\\

Trusting Jesus in Troubled Times

“Charlie Brown builds a beautiful sandcastle, works on it for hours. Finally he stands back, looks at it. It’s wonderful. Just as he’s admiring it, a storm comes up and blows over all of his sandcastle. Now, he’s standing where his beautiful masterpiece was, on level sand, saying to himself, “I know there’s a lesson in this, but I’m not sure what it is.” One thing everyone here has in common is that we have had storms come and wipe out our sandcastles”. (Byron H. Hand. <https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/4373-dealing-with-the-struggles-of-life>)

“When a disaster happens, we want to know why. Sometimes we ask the question in very personal terms. Why did this man get cancer and his brother didn’t? Or why did they both get cancer and one survived while the other didn’t? We wonder why the drunk driver hit this car and not that one. Why did one person walk away from an accident while another person ends up paralyzed? Why did one lose their life at such a young age?

No question challenges us more deeply than the question “Why?”

Why me?

Why here?

Why now?

Why this?

The question “Why did this happen?” challenges us to probe the connection between the goodness of God and human suffering. I think this is the # 1 objection many people have to the Christian faith and to the existence of God in general. One writer called the problem of suffering “God’s Problem” because the obvious pain we see all around us turns many people away from any sort of faith in God.

If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?

If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?

If God is all-powerful, why doesn’t he use his power to stop the suffering”?

(adapted from <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/who-sinned-john-chapter-9/>)

In Matthew 5:3, Jesus makes a definitive teaching about mourning. “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*”

I. Troubles Are an Unfortunate Fact of Living in a Fallen World

John 16:33...*These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

https://www.gospelway.com/christianlife/help_for_troubles.ph

“There are several reasons, not just one reason, why people suffer.

➤ ***Sometimes people suffer as a result of their sins.***

King Saul lived a miserable life and eventually was slain because he had rebelled against God (1 Chron. 10:13,14).

Judas killed himself because he had betrayed Jesus (Matthew 27:3-5).

Likewise today, alcoholics may develop disease, thieves may be imprisoned, etc.

Some people think this is the only reason people ever suffer, but we will see that it is not.

➤ ***Sometimes innocent people suffer as a result of other people's sins.***

This may result from cruelty or accident, as when innocent bystanders are killed by a drunken driver, or when a thief violently attacks his victims.

In other cases wicked people may harm righteous people because they resent them. This kind of religious persecution is described in many verses.

1 Peter 2:19-23 - Jesus is an example of one who committed no sin at all, yet He was persecuted and killed by wicked men. So we may follow His example and suffer, not for our faults, but when we do good.

John 15:18-20 - The treatment Jesus received should warn us of the treatment we can expect. The world hated Him and persecuted Him, and it will do the same to His servants.

2 Corinthians 11:23-26 - Paul's life shows that Jesus' followers truly often are persecuted.

2 Timothy 3:10-12 - All who live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution.

(See also 1 Peter 4:12-16; Heb. 11:35-38; 1 Thess. 3:2-4; Acts 14:22; John 16:33; Gen. 50:20)

➤ ***All people suffer as a result of Adam and Eve's sin.***

God originally placed Adam and Eve in a state of bliss with no problems of any kind. But He warned them of the consequences of sin. When they sinned anyway, He decreed they would endure pain, suffering, hardship, and eventual death (Gen. 3:16-19). All people since that time have endured these same problems. In particular, because of Adam, all people die (1 Cor. 15:22; Heb. 9:27).

Much of the suffering people endure, therefore, cannot be attributed to any particular sin committed by anyone now living. It is just the common lot of mankind because sin is in the world.

This does not mean, as some teach, that people today are born guilty of Adam's sin or will be eternally punished for it (Ezek. 18:20; 2 Cor. 5:10). But we do suffer in *this* life because of it.

➤ ***Some suffering is simply a temptation from Satan.***

Job 1:1-2:10 expressly states that Job's suffering was a temptation from Satan. He hoped that, because he was suffering, Job would turn away from God.

Many other passages teach that Satan is responsible for the suffering of other people. (See 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38).

Lessons We Should Learn

Suffering is not limited to those who are wicked. We should not be surprised by troubles.

Some people think that only wicked people suffer, but God is on the side of the righteous and will remove all their troubles. It follows that, if a person is suffering, he must have committed some sin he should repent of. This was the theory of Job's friends (Job 4:7-9); disproving this idea is a main theme of that book. This same false doctrine is taught by many "faith healers" who teach people that God must remove all their problems if they are right with Him.

But we have learned that even righteous people suffer. This is important for the following reasons:

* We should not conclude that we have been guilty of sin every time we have a problem. *Maybe* we are suffering because of sin, so we should examine our lives. But maybe we are suffering for other reasons, perhaps because we are righteous.

* We should surely never reject a Bible teaching just because it may lead to suffering. If all suffering was the result of our own sin, and if a course of action led to suffering, then we would conclude it was a sinful act. But we have learned that godly people often suffer for doing right.

* We should not become Christians thinking it will automatically solve all our problems. If this is our motive, we may fall away when the hardships come.

But the main lesson to learn is the next point:

God should not be blamed for the existence of suffering.

If we believe that all suffering results from a person's own sin, and if we see good people suffering, we may be tempted to blame God or to think He is not keeping His promises. But we have learned that all people suffer, whether or not they are righteous. The command to endure suffering is just another part of a Christian's life, like the command to study the Bible, pray, worship, etc. Faithful Christians of all ages have suffered; we are not the only ones. We should expect suffering to come, so our faith will not be shaken when it does.

The ultimate and primary blame for suffering rests on *Satan* who tempts people to sin and thereby brought sin into the world. The secondary blame rests upon *people*, ourselves included, who have given in to temptation and committed sin that led to suffering. Yes, God did create suffering as a punishment for sin, but only after He had given people a life without problems and had warned them of the consequences of sin. When they chose to sin, He should no more be blamed for punishing them than a parent should be blamed when he must punish a rebellious child. (Cf. James 1:13,15.)

Remember, if you blame God and reject Him because you are suffering, then *you are doing exactly what Satan wants you to do*. He has defeated you! The only way to defeat Satan and really overcome hardship is to maintain your faithfulness to God in spite of it". https://www.gospelway.com/christianlife/help_for_troubles.ph

II. **We Rarely Understand God's Plan in Advance or Know When God Will Break Into Our Lives.**

Isaiah 55:8-9...⁸ *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.* ⁹ *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Romans 11:33,34...³³ *O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways!* ³⁴ *"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?"*

John 11:21-26...²¹ *Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died.* ²² *Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You."* ²³ *"Your brother will rise again,"* Jesus told her. ²⁴ *Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* ²⁵ *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live.* ²⁶ *Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?"*

As I Have said many times before... "God did not ask my opinion about how to create the world, and He doesn't need my opinion now on how to sustain it". Let God be God! He is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. At some point we must just accept that God is in control and stop fighting Him

III. **We Need Other's to Help Us in Our Grief**

John 11:30,31...³⁰ *Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met Him.* ³¹ *The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. So they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there.*

How to Help a Friend Who's Grieving

1. Acknowledge the situation and express concern.
2. Offer practical help—run errands, buy groceries, do the laundry.
3. Practice the ministry of presence. Just be there. That's all you can do.
4. Understand that grieving is a long process. Just because your friend looks fine, doesn't mean he or she is fine. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/collegiate-how-to-deal-with-grief>

IV. **We Discover Christ's Power When We Dare to Trust Him.**

John 11:38-44...³⁸ *Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.* ³⁹ *"Remove the stone,"* Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told Him, "Lord, he's already decaying. It's been four days." ⁴⁰ *Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"* ⁴¹ *So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me.* ⁴² *I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me."* ⁴³ *After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"* ⁴⁴ *The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him and let him go."*

Acting on the Belief Part

People who survive great trials with their faith intact make a moment by moment choice to believe that God is who he said he is and that he will do what he said he will do. Faith is not about feelings or emotions or positive circumstances because very often we won't "feel" like having faith in God and our circumstances may be all messed up.

Faith is belief plus unbelief and acting on the belief part.

Faith is belief plus unbelief and acting on the belief part.

Like the story in John 9 of the blind man did. *He “acted on the belief part”* and received a miracle from our Lord. When J. C. Ryle wrote about this story, he said it is meant to teach us an “old truth” that we can never know too well: Jesus the Savior of sinners “has all power in heaven and earth.” Such mighty works could never have been done by one that was merely man. In the cure of this blind man we see nothing less than the finger of God”. <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/who-sinned-john-chapter-9/>

V. **We Must Prepare and Plan Ahead on How To Deal With Troubles, Grief and Suffering**

A. **Understand the Stages of Grief “Here is the grief model called the 7 Stages of Grief:**

1. **SHOCK & DENIAL-**

You will probably react to learning of the loss with numbed disbelief. You may deny the reality of the loss at some level, in order to avoid the pain. Shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once. This may last for weeks.

2. **PAIN & GUILT-**

As the shock wears off, it is replaced with the suffering of unbelievable pain. Although excruciating and almost unbearable, it is important that you experience the pain fully, and not hide it, avoid it or escape from it with alcohol or drugs. You may have guilty feelings or remorse over things you did or didn't do with your loved one. Life feels chaotic and scary during this phase.

3. **ANGER & BARGAINING-**

Frustration gives way to anger, and you may lash out and lay unwarranted blame for the death on someone else. Please try to control this, as permanent damage to your relationships may result. This is a time for the release of bottled up emotion. You may rail against fate, questioning "Why me?" You may also try to bargain in vain with the powers that be for a way out of your despair ("I will never drink again if you just bring him back")

4. **"DEPRESSION", REFLECTION, LONELINESS-**

Just when your friends may think you should be getting on with your life, a long period of sad reflection will likely overtake you. This is a normal stage of grief, so do not be "talked out of it" by well-meaning outsiders. Encouragement from others is not helpful to you during this stage of grieving. During this time, you finally realize the true magnitude of your loss, and it depresses you. You may isolate yourself on purpose, reflect on things you did with your lost one, and focus on memories of the past. You may sense feelings of emptiness or despair.

5. **THE UPWARD TURN-**

As you start to adjust to life without your dear one, your life becomes a little calmer and more organized. Your physical symptoms lessen, and your "depression" begins to lift slightly.

6. **RECONSTRUCTION & WORKING THROUGH-**

As you become more functional, your mind starts working again, and you will find yourself seeking realistic solutions to problems posed by life without your loved one. You will start to work on practical and financial problems and reconstructing yourself and your life without him or her.

7. **ACCEPTANCE & HOPE-**

During this, the last of the seven stages in this grief model, you learn to accept and deal with the reality of your situation. Acceptance does not necessarily mean instant happiness. Given the pain and turmoil you have experienced, you can never return to the carefree, untroubled YOU that existed before this tragedy. But you will find a way forward. You will start to look forward and actually plan things for the future. Eventually, you will be able to think about your lost loved one without pain; sadness, yes, but the wrenching pain will be gone. You will once again anticipate some good times to come, and yes, even find joy again in the experience of living”. <https://www.recover-from-grief.com/7-stages-of-grief.html>

B. Develop a Proper Understanding of the Process to Recovery

How can I best heal after a loss? There is no one right way to grieve. Everyone's experience of grief is unique. In the words of author Anne Morrow Lindberg, " ... suffering ... no matter how multiplied, is always individual." There are some general guidelines, however, that will allow you to mend more quickly and completely:

1. Remember that no matter how much pain you may feel, with God's help you will survive your loss.
2. Emotional ups and downs are a normal part of any grieving process. Here's the paradox: In order to get past the difficult feelings, you must experience them. Don't try to speed up or avoid the process. If you do, you will not heal properly. Your grieving will have been incomplete, and your energy to deal with the present will remain bound to the past.
3. Care for yourself as if you are caring for a dear friend. Rest, eat well (even if you aren't hungry), and exercise (even if you don't want to). Avoid other changes and don't make big decisions unless you absolutely must. Make a point to look for the good things around you, the joy of children, loving relationships, favorite foods, past-time, etc. Know your limits and realize that sometime you need some quiet, alone time. This is OK, as long as it does extend over a consistent long period of time.
4. Build a network of caring people. Ask those you love and trust for support. You don't have to face this alone. Family friends, neighbors, colleagues and strangers in a self-help group who have "been there" can give support. Let the people close to you know what you're going through and warn them that you may soon need more support than usual, or not to be offended if you don't contact them for a while. Your fellow church members are a great source to lean upon in times of grief.

How to Help a Friend Who's Grieving

- a. Acknowledge the situation and express concern.
- b. Offer practical help—run errands, buy groceries, do the laundry.
- c. Practice the ministry of presence. Just be there. That's all you can do.
- d. Understand that grieving is a long process. Just because your friend looks fine, doesn't mean he or she is fine. <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/collegiate-how-to-deal-with-grief>
5. Write about your loss. Journaling will bring your unexpressed emotions to the surface, thereby encouraging the grieving process to move along. <https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-truth-about-grief-and-loss/>

Final Words:

John 11:25-27...²⁵ Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. ²⁶ Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?"*

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told Him, "I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

The bottom line is that we must choose to put our complete trust in Jesus because He said He would deliver us and He has the power and authority to back it up.

Trust & Obey ... Receive Life & Peace