

Suffering

Cancer is a stark reminder that this world doesn't work as it should. God created humans to live forever in health, but sin has ruined this. We now live in a world where we are defined by our needs. Our bodies are not just weak, they are wasting away (1 Cor 15:42-44). We are subject to pain, sickness, and suffering. Cancer is just one of the ways this brokenness manifests.

In the midst of suffering, it is normal to question the goodness of God. Psalm 88 makes it clear that Scripture is honest about the things we experience on earth. God understands what we are going through, and through a saving relationship with Jesus, He invites us to an authentic faith that cries out to Him in the midst of pain. Sometimes people feel as though they can't approach God until they have it all together. They wear spiritual masks, afraid to show their true self to God. Yet, God is a God who suffers! He is a king who came to earth and suffered. He traded His throne for the cross! Therefore, God can be trusted in the midst of suffering because He, Himself, suffered!

How God Uses Suffering

- Suffering brings out the worst in us. It shows us our weakness. It strips us of our pride and shows us how fragile we really are. It highlights our dependence on God. In our humble state, God can begin to build us up in Him.
- Suffering will transform our relationship with the good things in our lives. Our attitude towards God and others will be changed. If we cling to God through the pain, He will bring more love and joy into our lives than we thought possible (Eph 3:20).
- Suffering can conform us into the image of Christ and bring us to a level of intimacy with God that could not

“But I, O Lord,
cry to you”

PSALM 88:13

be achieved any other way. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we share in the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil 3:10-11).

Responses to Suffering

Be real. God gave us emotions and understands our struggles. In fact, Jesus shared a full range of emotions during His time on earth. Scripture calls Him a “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3). He wept (John 11:35) and He rejoiced (Luke 10:21). He grew tired (John 4:6), felt hunger (Matthew 4:2) and thirst (John 19:28). He also felt physical weakness (Luke 23:26). Likewise, allow yourself the freedom to experience grief and pain during suffering. Approach your prayer life with authenticity and allow yourself to be real with God.

Be Alert. Allow suffering to wake you up out of spiritual complacency. Allow God to use this time to mold you into the image of His Son. God doesn't waste our pain. He never brings us to suffering without using it to produce fruit in our lives. All things work together for the good of those who love God (Rom 8:28)!

Be Hopeful! Every instance of evil and suffering has a final answer. God's Word teaches that one day God will bring about the restoration of all things. All wrongs will be made right. The suffering of Jesus will put an end to suffering for those who put their faith in Him!