

Why does God allow sufferings?

1-Objectives

- ❖ To understand why does God allow suffering and learn how to endure sufferings and afflictions

2-References

- ❖ A sermon by father Anthony from St Mark church of Washington, DC: “Why does God allow suffering?”
- ❖ “10 Reasons to believe in a God who allows suffering”

3-Scriptural Verses

- ❖ “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- ❖ “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11)

4-Lesson Guidelines

We have to admit that there are lots of things that we cannot know or explain, but we actually have enough light to follow and this will help us to accept what we cannot understand. There are 5 kinds of general truth we should know:

1- God is not the creator of evil and sufferings but He created “free will”

- ❖ God loves us, respects us, and needs us as beloved ones and not as robots. So, we are the ones who chose evil by being selfish, liars, killers and sinners.
- ❖ Sometimes also even the natural disasters may be caused by men as if mother nature is rebelling against the sinners (Romans 8:22).
- ❖ There is a research in a scientific magazines stated that there is enough food on the planet that can feed every human being 3000 calories per day which is enough for an average person; despite of that Famines strike many places.
- ❖ Why did God create man as He knew in advance how evil he will be? God knew that some people will rebel against Him but as a loving father, who know that His child may ruin his life but still He wants children hoping that they will be good to Him and consider the joy of having good children is far better than the chance of having a rebellion child. Actually God got many saints who made His loving heart rejoice and for that, He created man.

2- Although suffering is bad, but God can use it to accomplish good things for His beloved ones

- ❖ God uses pain to draw us toward Christ: In cases of sufferings or death, people get closer to God asking mercies, so they repent and change their life contrary to the period of good and pleasure, people are satisfied and do not feel the need to ask for mercies (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- ❖ God uses pain to make us love our Lord Jesus Christ: He trained us to grow till we become in His image and likeness. Maturity is very much needed with age and always remember that “no pain no gain” applies also spiritually. You have to train very hard to win a marathon, also improving your characters to be more closer to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ requires lots of hard work; you cannot be courageous unless you face danger “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5: 8).
- ❖ God uses pain to lovingly discipline His children for their own good: Even parents do not like to punish their children, but they have to do out of love to discipline them (Hebrews 12: 10- 11). The worst thing parents can do is not to discipline their children. Please note that God do not punish people; punishment focus on the past and reflects anger (it is postponed to the last day if we do not repent); but He disciplines us as disciplining is future focused to correct future behavior out of love.
- ❖ A mature person can clearly see the hand of God in all tribulations and sufferings. Look at Joseph who saved his family and said “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50: 20).

3- The day is coming when suffering will end and evil will be judged

- ❖ Do not ask the question: “Why the revenge is not now?” Wait to the end. God will end things in the perfect time according to His great wisdom.
- ❖ Do not ever forget that God wants that everyone will be saved including the sinner and the evil doers. St. Paul severely persecuted the church and he became a chosen vessel for the work of God and labored more than anyone else. So, God allows time to give the chance to everyone to get to know Him.

4- Our Suffering will pale in comparison to the future reward (Romans 8: 18)

- ❖ Sufferings may be very hard but it will never be as bad comparing to the future reward as St. Paul, although he suffered almost all kinds of sufferings, said: “For our light

affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4: 17).

5- It is our choice and decision either to live in the bitterness of pain or to look forward to God and the eternal glory

- ❖ The bad event or disaster strikes everyone almost with the same frequency but the reaction to it differs from a person to another according to his degree of spirituality.
- ❖ Many people get angry and upset and return their back to God considering Him the cause of their affliction like Adam who said “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3: 12).
- ❖ But few are those who are very mature spiritually and see the hand of the merciful God in all tribulations like the righteous Joseph and like Fr. Bishoy Kamel when he was struck with cancer, called it “the sickness of paradise.”
- ❖ Always remember The Lord’s saying in John 16: 33 “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

10 Reasons to believe in a God who allows suffering

- ❖ Suffering comes with the freedom to choose.
- ❖ Suffering reveals what is in our hearts (Capacity for love, mercy, anger, pride...).
- ❖ Pain can warn us of danger (a sick person feel the need of a doctor).
- ❖ Suffering takes us to the edge of Eternity (the most fortunate people in the universe are those who discover, through suffering, that this life is not all we have to live for).
- ❖ Pain loosens our grip on this life (in its own way, pain paves the way for a graceful departure (Ecclesiastes 12:1-14).
- ❖ Suffering gives opportunity to trust God.
- ❖ God suffers with us in our sufferings (1 Peter 2:21; 3:18; 4:1).
- ❖ God’s comfort is greater than our suffering (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). St. Paul learned that he would rather be with the Lord Jesus Christ in suffering than without Him in good health and pleasant circumstances.
- ❖ In time of Crisis, we find one another. Each time we discover God’s comfort in our own suffering, our capacity to help others is increased.
- ❖ God can turn suffering around for our good as in Joseph’s story.

5-Conclusion

- ❖ Whatever hard time we face, we should always have faith that the sun is behind the cloud and all what happen is for our good as long as we are in the hand of God.
- ❖ The answer of our sufferings cannot be explained by words but it is in “THE WORD” who endured sufferings and He is able to help those who are in tribulations.

6-Activities / Discussion Points

- ❖ Make groups to compare between the sufferings of Joseph and the success he enjoyed later as the 1st man after Pharaoh and why did God permit these sufferings to happen. (Genesis 45: 4-13) and (Genesis 50: 15-21)
- ❖ Discuss the verse: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1: 2-4).