



Where is God when I'm Hurting?

The Day begins. Any given day. A family of five starts out on a drive across town.

The crash is sudden. Metal, plastic and flesh are torn apart.

Three are dead and two are severely injured. But the drunk driver in the speeding truck that hit them is merely bruised. Why?

A terrible dictator gets control of an entire nation, and millions suffer his abuses. Why?

The doctor says, "I have some bad news," and then he sadly explains that you have cancer. Why?

Every day stories like these unfold. Sometimes we merely hear about them secondhand or on the nightly news, and other times the story is our own. Once we steady ourselves from the shock, we can't help but ask the most natural question in the world: If God is all-powerful and all-good, why do we suffer at all? It's hard to imagine a bigger or more important question. And the fact is, we all ask it sooner or later.

It turns out there aren't too many possible answers to choose from. Think about it. Either God is willing to prevent bad things from happening and can't, in which case He is not all-powerful. Or God is able to prevent bad things from happening but He's unwilling, in which case He is not good. Or, there's a third option: God is both able and willing, but God is love, in which case there is a line that even Almighty God will not cross, and that line is our free will.

The Bible teaches the third position, and it is hard to imagine a better or more comforting answer. In short form, the human story, as told in the Bible, goes like this:

1. “God is love” ([1 John 4:16](#)). This is the basic, fundamental truth about who God is.
2. Therefore, “God created man in His own image” ([Genesis 1:27](#)). That is, God made humans with the capacity to love like God loves—by the exercise of free will.
3. And having been made with free will and therefore with the capacity for love, mankind has “sinned and fallen” from the glorious moral position of his original creation ([Romans 3:23](#)).
4. But there is good news: God is working out an incredible rescue plan by which any and all human beings who so desire will be “saved by grace...through faith” ([Ephesians 2:8](#))—not by imposed power of force, but by the drawing, transforming power of God’s love. Love is the only way God can destroy evil and suffering while at the same time preserving our free will and with it our ability to love.

Is it Fair?

So the short answer to why we suffer is that we and other human beings—in the past and in the present—have chosen evil, and suffering is the result. It’s not fair. It’s not even reasonable. Sin is, by definition, unfair, unjust, hurtful and wrong. It’s downright brutal. But one thing it is not: it is not God’s will. God does not want us to suffer. But neither does He want to make us slaves or robots. To be human is to be free, and to be free means we can either choose good or evil with their respective effects.

The plain truth of the matter is that love cannot exist without free will, and free will by its very nature allows for bad choices to be made. So when we say that if God were good He would not allow anyone to ever do anything to cause pain to ones self or to anyone else, we simply are not making logical sense. The opposite is actually the case: precisely because God is good, He must allow us to make choices, both good and bad, and experience their outcomes. God always and only wants us to choose good, but He will not force us. God never wills evil or the pain that attends it. We do. Suffering is the by-product of human choices, not God’s. And that is the sober reality of freedom.

And yet, God is so good that He cannot remain isolated or insulated from our suffering. According to the Bible, He is “touched with the feelings of our infirmities” ([Hebrews 4:15 KJV](#)). Speaking of God’s relation to human pain, the prophet Isaiah said, “In all their affliction He was afflicted” ([Isaiah 63:9](#)). So deeply loved by God is each member of the human race that Jesus basically said that anything we do for or against one another, it is as if we did those deeds to Him ([Matthew 25:41-45](#)). All suffering touches God. He is aware of all the tears we cry and the sorrow, grief or anguish behind them. King David sang of God’s deep sympathy: “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book” ([Psalm 56:8](#), New Living Translation). Love is like that. It suffers with those who suffer.

God Felt our Pain

But here’s where the story gets even more amazing still. Not only does God feel our pain in His heart from a distance, He literally plunged down into our pain to make a way of ultimate escape from it. Jesus Christ came to, “...taste death for everyone.” ([Hebrews 2:9](#)). “He has born our griefs and carried our sorrows...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” ([Isaiah 53:4-6](#)). The greatest evidence of God’s love in the face of our pain is that He shares it. He has not left us to suffer alone. What makes the God of the Bible so totally incredible is that He came into our world and voluntarily experienced our suffering.

Whatever comes your way, there are two unchangeable truths you can be sure of: first, God is love and He loves you personally. And second, God will ultimately make all wrongs right and heal the wounds this world has given you. When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He proved that God loves fallen, suffering humanity more than His own life and He ensured that all who put their faith in Him will have a glorious future completely free from all suffering. The promise of the Bible, made sure by the death of Christ on the cross, is for you:

“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” ([Revelation 21:4](#))