

Theodicy – Why Does God Allow Suffering?

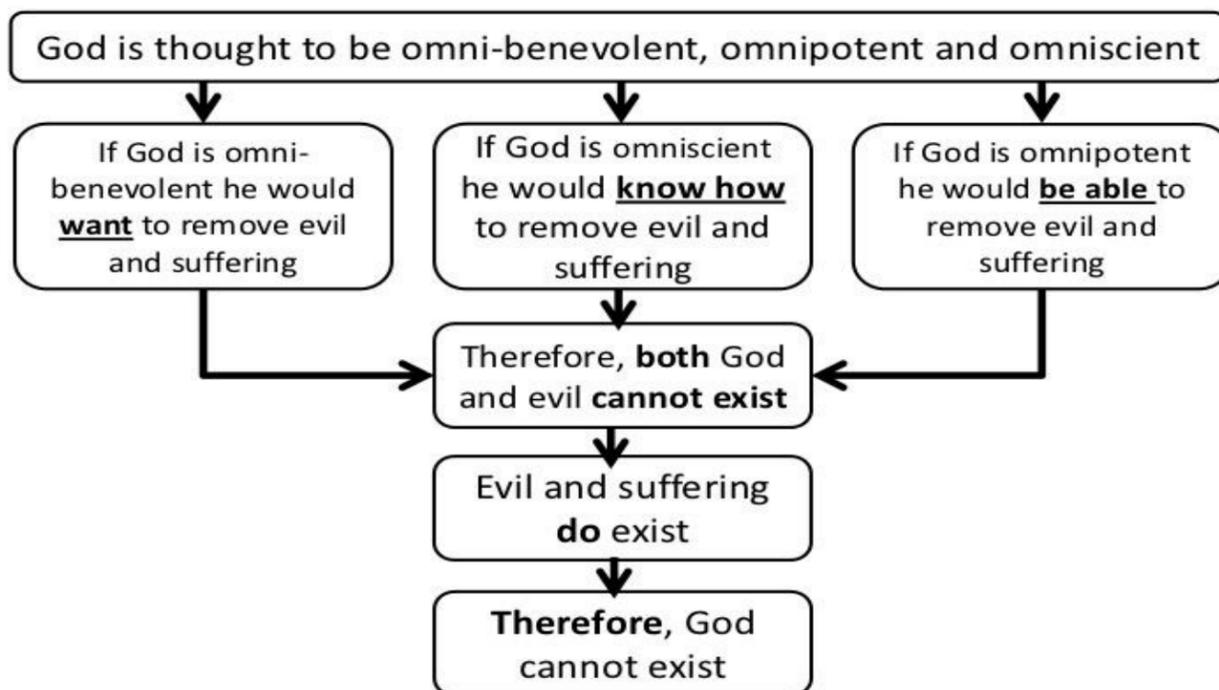
- 1- Definition
- 2- Examples of suffering
- 3- Why Explore this subject?
- 4- Some ideas “out there”
- 5- Real Answers
- 6-Resources
- 7-End of this temporary tool



1- Theodicy is ...

- the answer to the question of why God permits evil or suffering
- (technical answer! ...) theological construct that attempts to vindicate God in response to the evidential problem of evil that militates against the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity
(ie ... why would a just God allow evil and suffering if he is all powerful and all merciful?)
- attempting to make the existence of an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-good or omnibenevolent God consistent with the existence of evil or suffering in the world
- Theodicy of suffering ... Theodicy of evil ... Theodicy of good fortune (Why do some people prosper?)
- theodicy literally means "justifying God"

The ‘problem of evil’ recap



2- Pain and suffering exists EVERYWHERE!

- Every day, **200,000** people **starve** to death—and this is after weeks or months of horrible suffering. Such suffering is not limited to physical pain, but includes psychological and mental anguish of parents often having to watch their children die in their arms. Starvation is so awful that death is actually a blessed relief. **Why doesn't God stop this?**
- ***Even more people*** die each day from disease. The very word disease means people are not “at ease.” As we sit here, untold trauma, pain and suffering, due to crippling conditions, infections and disease of every sort, are occurring around the world. Just in Africa, children are orphaned by the **millions every year**, due to **AIDS** alone. **Why isn't God intervening?**
- Now consider **poverty**, which affects **one-third of all people** on earth. The lack of even the most basic necessities (sufficient water, sanitation, clothing and shelter, as well as food) brings untold suffering to **over two billion** people. Conditions are growing worse instead of better. **Why does God allow this to continue?**
- War now ravages much of the world, with some nations suffering almost complete destruction of their economy, property, homes and businesses, including injury or death to large numbers of their civilian populations. **Why doesn't God banish war?**

- Earthquakes, fires (western Canada!), floods, volcanoes, tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards, other violent storms, drought, blights and insect infestations due to weather, also take their toll on the human misery index.
 - **Super Typhoon Yolanda** in the Philippines in 2013. This superstorm was considered to be one the largest storms ever recorded to make landfall. Haiyan was 370 miles across, had sustained winds around 200 miles per hour and produced 20-foot storm surges. Those on the Philippine Islands had no place to hide from the storm. More than **6,000** people died, and more than **3 million** were displaced
 - The Indian Ocean earthquake and **tsunami** in 2004 that killed more than **225,000**
 - The Haiti **earthquake** of 2010 that killed more than **160,000**
 - **Cyclone Nargis** that killed more than **84,500** in Myanmar in 2008
 - The Kashmir **earthquake** of 2005 that is estimated to have killed up to **100,000**
 - The Sichuan **earthquake** of 2008 that killed about **70,000** in China

Why doesn't God better control the weather and nature?

3- Why Explore this subject? – It is messy and negative and not pleasant



- It equips us to have answers when people face tragedy
- This is a major reason for people to not believe God exists
- It will help us know more about God, and His plan ... and more about mankind too!
- It will clear up some wrong ideas
- I will help us when we face pain and suffering in our lives

4- Some ideas (How other religions explain suffering)

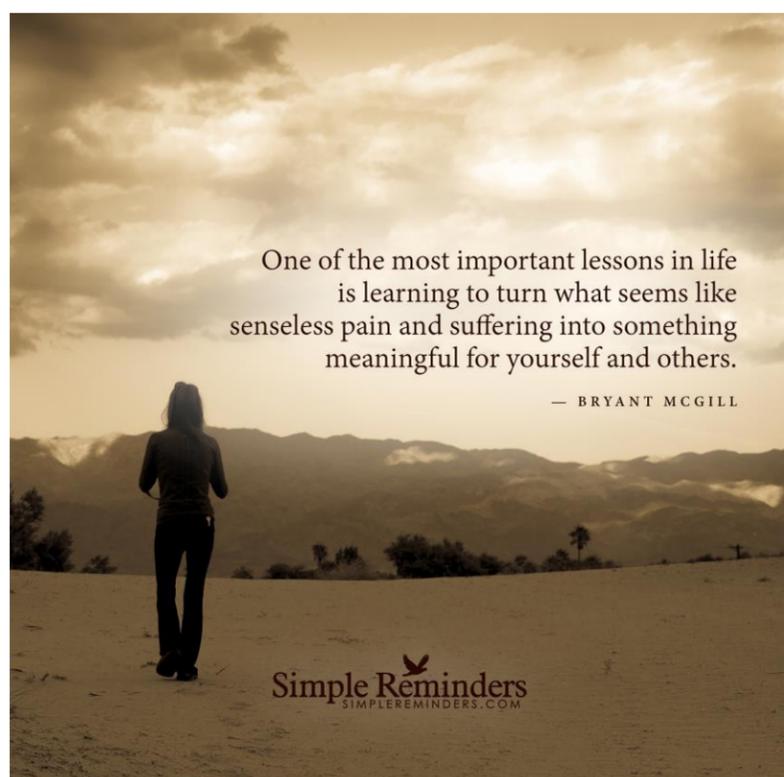
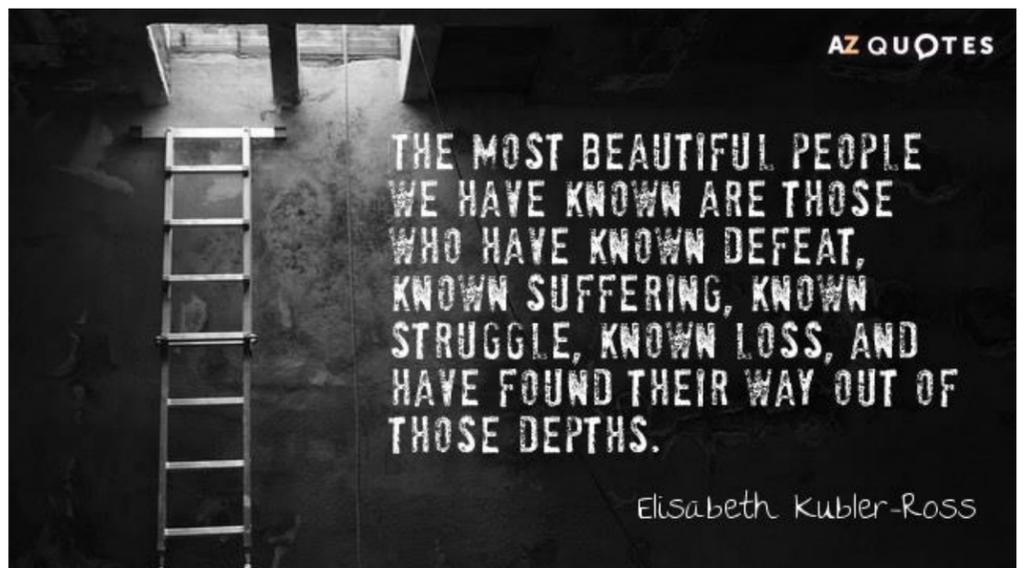
Buddism

- According to the first two Noble Truths of Buddhism all of life is suffering and suffering is caused by attachments to worldly things
- Suffering is not necessarily punishment from a divine being, but rather something that must be transcended by not clinging to material objects or relationships

Hinduism

- Many Hindus view suffering as punishment for misdeeds committed in this lifetime or past lives.

Even a seemingly innocent person who has not eradicated bad karma from past lives through charitable deeds is susceptible to such payback



Islam

- As Islam means "to submit", many Muslims understand that to include suffering--enduring pain or loss is a way of submitting to the will of Allah.
- Some suffering is Satan's doing or is the work of his cohorts in the spirit world (the "jinn") & is allowed by Allah as a test

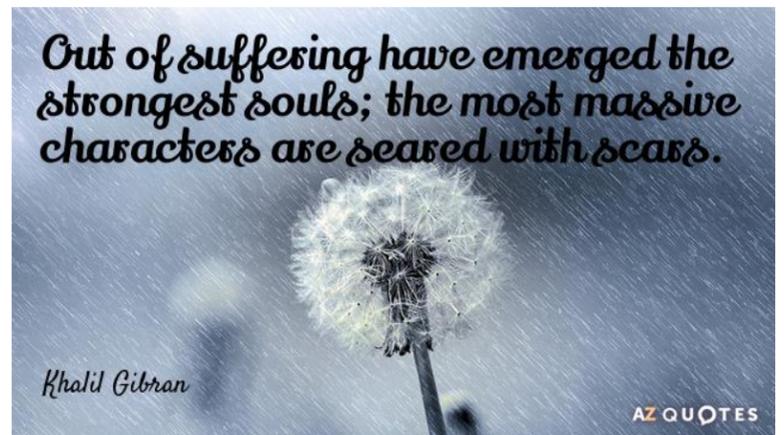
"Mainstream" Christianity

- Some Christians see suffering as God's punishment of sinful people or the world as a whole.
- Some Christians see suffering as a struggle between Satan and God. Satan "messed up" God's creation with "the Fall of man", and he continues to out-manoeuvre God with evil and destruction on earth
- Some Christians offer no explanation ... In the past, Roman Catholic Christians were taught that they should "offer up" pain, with the idea that through faith, suffering that seems meaningless can be redeemed and transformed

5- Real Answers – Principles to Remember about Suffering!

A) The first thing we need to remember when considering pain, is that there is **Someone who knows what suffering is**. He has suffered more than any human being in history. No matter what, we will never experience a trial that goes beyond what we can handle. He will give us the strength and the way to bear it. He will never leave or forsake us.

Isa 53:5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.



Why Christ Suffered ...

“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**” (Hebrews 2:10)

There you have the definition of the reason **why suffering exists**. **The purpose is ... to achieve perfection of character** - perfect means complete – Suffering helps with the completion of our holy righteous character development.

B) Some other Biblical examples of Suffering

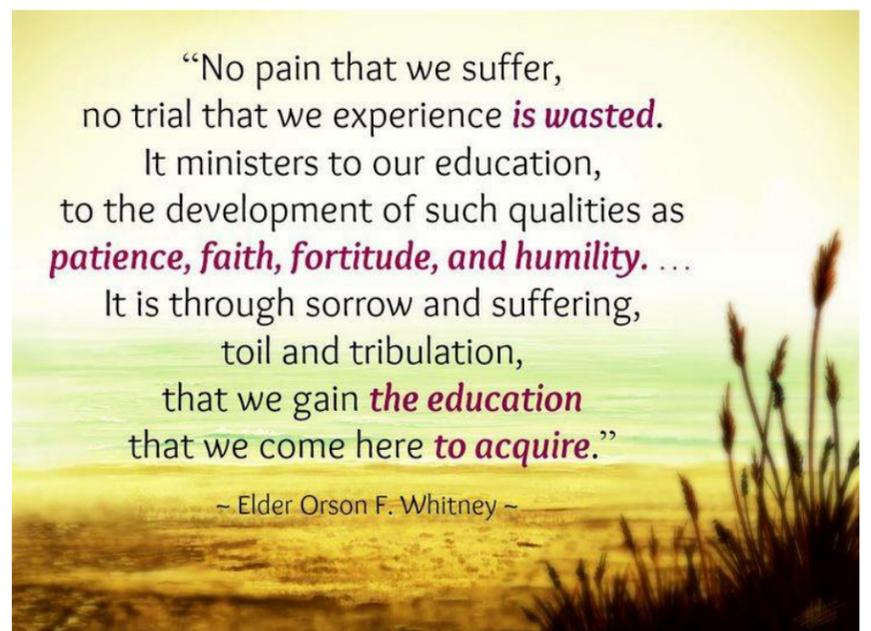
- God tested the **Israelites in the wilderness** to humble them & to remind them that they were made of the dust of the earth. Their garments did not wear out in 40 years. That means God was watching even the slightest details. Although He allows people to suffer, His eyes are still watching, and He takes care of us. He let Israel get hungry sometimes, but He did not starve them.

“You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him” (Deuteronomy 8:5–6)

- **Joseph** - He was a well-behaved young man. He obeyed God, yet he ended up in a pit, sold as a slave and then in prison. When we wonder **What is God Doing?** ... we learn to “keep reading” ... God isn’t finished yet! Joseph was 30 years old when he became the Prime Minister of Egypt ... and he was used of God to save many lives
- **Job** - Satan causing tremendous destruction in Job’s life, killing his ten children and causing the death of all of his servants and animals through four separate disasters. The devil wiped out the most precious things—people and possessions—in Job’s life. Yet Job’s reaction to this devastating turn of events was not to attack or blame God. The account continues with Satan smiting Job with horrible boils over his entire body. As a result, his wife tried to convince him to curse God (Job 2:9). His response to her:

“You speak as one of the foolish women... What? Shall we receive **good** at the hand of God, and shall we not receive **evil**? In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:10)

This is a remarkable passage. It reveals Job’s understanding that **human beings must sometimes “receive evil” from God**. Notice that the account does not record God correcting Job for misstating the facts! Rather, it validates Job’s conclusion by inspiring “in all this did not Job sin with his lips.” Grasp what it says. God permitted disastrous, even catastrophic suffering in Job’s life—physical and emotional pain beyond imagination! Yes, **God directly permitted and endorsed** this nightmarish **suffering**. **But** it was for a **great purpose** for Job’s life within God’s Master Plan.



C) Satan influences this world

2Co 4:4a whose minds the god of this age has blinded..

Joh_12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

1Pe_5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour

Rev_12:12 Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

D) Time and chance

Luke 13:1-5 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

E) Free will & the choices made (ie people make bad choices)

Pro 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.

Jas 4:1-2a Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war.

F) God can choose to punish evil with suffering

2Sa 24:12-13 Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three things; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do it to you. So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.

Psa 50:21-23 These things (wicked ways) you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes. "Now consider this, you who forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, And there be none to deliver: Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

Rev 2:20-22 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And **I gave her time to repent** of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

G) Sometimes God does permit disaster (so people will seek Him)

Amo 3:6b If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?

Isa 9:13 For the people **do not turn** to Him who strikes them, Nor do they **seek** the LORD of hosts.

H) **9 Character qualities developed in difficult times**

Paul wrote of a **process of growth** that starts with **anguish (pain, suffering)** and leads to absolute confidence in God.

“And not only that, but we also boast in our **sufferings**, knowing that suffering produces **endurance**, and endurance produces **character**, and character produces **hope**, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (**Romans 5:3-5**, New Revised Standard Version)

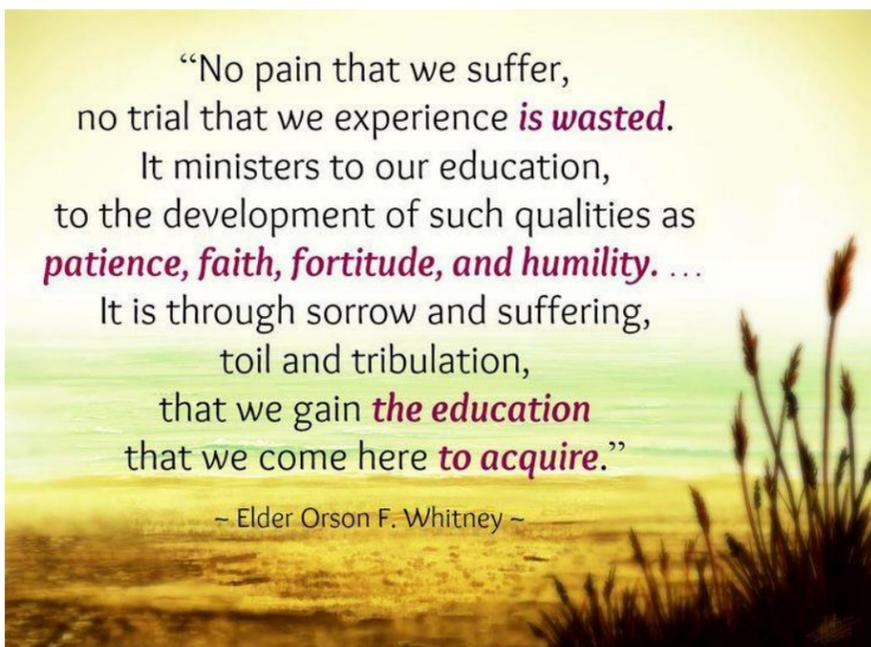
Endurance and character are not easy to come by.

They are forged in **difficult times**, giving us the strength to remain steadfast and exercise our faithfulness as we suffer.

We only develop this kind of strength by **working through** the severe challenges of life.

Just as physical endurance is built by exercise, **spiritual endurance is established in troubled times**.

Hope—unshakable confidence in God’s love and the anticipation of His promises. Hope is a powerful resource that is the result of tested and proven endurance and character. Hope is our sure footing when life seems slippery, based on our certainty that even in the hardest of times, God has not forsaken us (Hebrews 13:5).



In addition **to endurance, character and hope** (Rom 5:3-5), there are other qualities we develop when we experience difficult times, such as:

- **Faith**—our trust in the love, power and mercy of God to watch over us and care for us at all times.
- **Patience**—a willingness to wait with confidence for God to take care of us in a difficult situation.
- **Empathy**—an understanding and compassion for others based on a shared experience.
- **Courage**—the determination to overcome our fears to continue to follow and trust in God.
- **Appreciation**—realization, even in our most difficult moments, God has given us much to be thankful for & hopeful in
- **Perspective**—the ability to see our situation from God’s point of view & the good that can come from our circumstances.

Each of these qualities makes us **stronger**, more **stable** and more **mature**. Each is an **aspect of character** that God is looking for in His children. And each grows within us as we encounter and successfully work through difficult times

6-Resources – To help us and others facing pain, suffering and trials

1. Prayer
2. Bible Study
3. Meditation
4. Fasting
5. Friends & family
6. Hymns and music
7. Council with minister
8. Church resources:

Booklet – **When Tragedy Strikes**

Armor of God – BW – What about Tragedy?

Armor of God – BJ – When Tragedy Strikes

Audio Sermon [CGI-2007-69-BC-Trials&Tests.mp3](#)

[CGI-1993-01-VS-FellowshipOfHisSuffering.mp3](#)

[CGI-2005-10-VS-FromSufferingToGlory.mp3](#)

[CGI-2009-60-MJ-WhySuffering.mp3](#)

[CgiBurlington-AdrianDavis-ThisPresentEvilWorld.mp3](#)

9. Government and community resources
10. Books, blogs, Social Media
- 11.
- 12.



7-End of this temporary tool (pain & suffering & trials)

Concerning that time, God says,

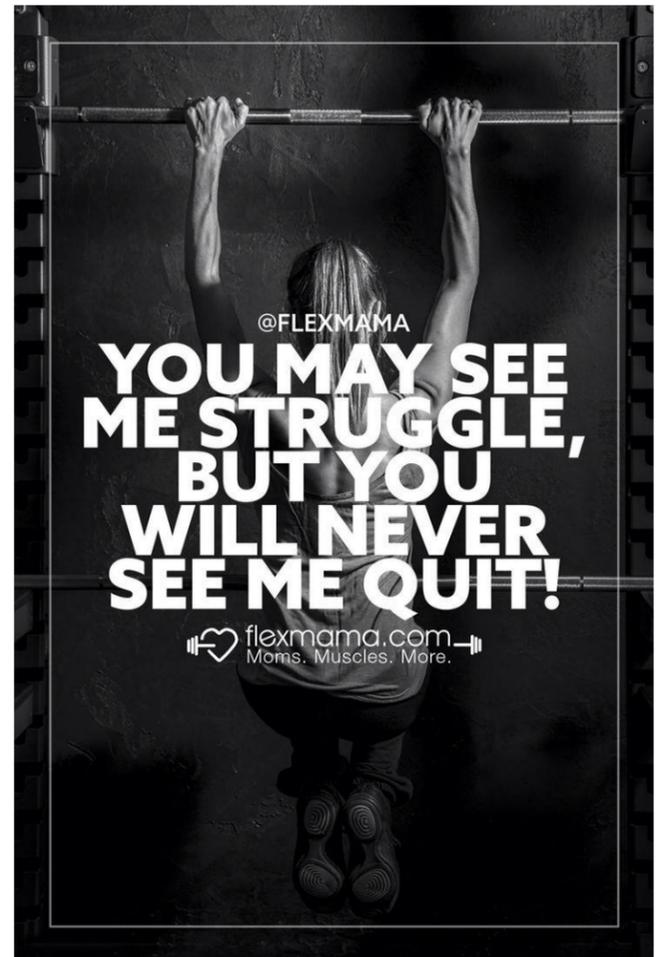
“I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing” (Ezekiel 34:26)

Although **we mourn today** because of natural disasters, poverty, war, and illness, we can look forward to this future when **God will rain down blessings**.

Yes, we do live in a world of hurt. *But it won't always be this way.*

When we have learned those lessons and are prepared to become part of His Kingdom, there **will no longer be any need for suffering**—it will have served its purpose and will no longer be part of our lives. In His vision of the Kingdom of God, the apostle John wrote of a time to come when

“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).



Other examples of suffering and different reasons:

- Some suffering is so **God's power & mercy & miracles can be revealed**

Joh 9:1 Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.

Joh 9:2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Joh 9:3 Jesus answered, "**Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.**"

- We suffer since we **follow Jesus example** (and we benefit from His comfort provided)

2 Cor 1:5 We share in the terrible sufferings of Christ, but also in the wonderful comfort he gives.

1Pe 4:12 – 13, 16 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of **Christ's sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Yet if *anyone* **suffers as a Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

- We suffer to **keep close to God-rather than trusting riches & forget God**

Deu 8:10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

Deu 8:11 "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,

Deu 8:12 lest—*when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell *in them*;

Deu 8:13 and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;

Deu 8:14 when your heart is lifted up, **and you forget the LORD** your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

Rev 3:16-17 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, '**I am rich**, have become wealthy, **and have need of nothing**'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—