**9 Reasons for Suffering – By Thailer Jimerson**

Spend any amount of time with people or on this earth and you’re going to experience it: suffering. It’s during these times that humans seem to grow most contemplative and humble – and yet, ironically, we still wonder about the reason behind it all.

The following is not meant by any stretch of the imagination to be the final word the reason for suffering; instead, it’s just a list I’ve compiled as possible answers for why we so often must walk through the flames.

**1. Suffering is the effect left over from a world ravaged by Sin**. First, we absolutely must put pain and suffering and evil within its proper context. God created a world that he called “good”. It was perfect. The brokenness everywhere apparent was not in the original blueprint. And one day, the Bible promises, it will be completely removed. In the meantime, God will use suffering in our lives as a tool, redeeming it for his good purposes.

**2. Suffering often happens because of the freewill of others.** It's not that God does it, but with human free will to do good also comes the propensity or ability to do great harm. Humans can choose to go to parties and get drunk out of their minds, only to hop onto the interstate, colliding into the opposite car, killing the entire family within. Much suffering is caused by sinful human beings.

**3. Suffering is allowed to indicate something is wrong**. Sometimes God will allow suffering in our lives to function in much the same way as pain sensors do on the body. When one really comprehends the purpose for pain in the body, they quickly realize what a blessing it is when your body is able to signal to you that something is wrong. Likewise, trials come in to wake us up and allow God a venue through which to communicate with us.

**4. Suffering awakens our dependence on God.** God will allow suffering into our lives in order to shatter like glass the most common and dangerous illusion enslaving us right now: our self-sufficiency. And you can see it all around you? Have you ever noticed how people become religious after some great tragedy in their lives? How some people start going to church only after they suffer? How church attendance spiked by and large after the great wars?

**5. Suffering humbles us.** 2 Corinthians 12 holds one of the most powerful lessons on the reason for trials in our lives. In that chapter, Paul simply states that God allowed a “thorn” into his flesh, a servant of Satan to torment him in order to keep him from becoming prideful over the supernatural visions of God he was receiving. Sometimes God feeds us with hunger. Sometimes he makes us walk with a limp so we lean on him more.

**6. Suffering is allowed to accomplish some great plan in the future that we can't foresee.** In the Bible, Hannah had to live through years of infertility and the raging torment of Peninnah mocking her barrenness before God decided to bring about a child for her. But she couldn’t see God’s plan, or understand his timing during her suffering. Or you think about Joseph. He had to undergo years of suffering, treachery, and pain. In the end, as he was commenting on it all, he said “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about the salvation of others.” (Ge.50.20).

**7. Suffering is used to test us for his praise and glory.** Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1.7f, that trials are given in order to test and strengthen our faith in God so that he’ll be glorified in our steadfastness on the Last Day. The story of Job relates much the same goal. God is glorified in his people when they serve him despite all the evil Satan produces to dissuade us. “Will a man serve God if God is all that he has?” is the great question lingering over the book of Job. When man says “Yes!” despite losing his wealth, family, and health – God is shown to be worth more than all earthly things combined. (To explore this particular theme more, search for John Newton’s poem “These Inward Trials”.

**8. Suffering is given to train and discipline us in order to make our faith stronger.** For the Christian, suffering has simply turned into a Father’s loving discipline according to He.12.5f. We’re taught to look at difficulties in our lives as merely training. And it makes sense, for how can we help others unless we've gone through difficult things? Therefore, our God disciplines and trains us in suffering.

**9. Suffering doesn’t mean God doesn’t love us**. I’m not sure if it matters that we know what our suffering means as much as we know what it does NOT mean. Many people assume that suffering that enters their lives must mean God’s displeasure or that God doesn’t love them. However, since we have the cross we know it cannot mean that. Suffering can’t mean that God doesn’t love us because he sent his Son to suffer, to identify with the suffering and to take the most immense suffering imaginable (physically and spiritually) upon himself on the cross in our place out of his deep love for us.