

If God Exists



**Why is there
Suffering?**

By Ian Coate

Why is there Suffering?



In times of adversity we often point our finger heavenward saying, 'If God exists, how can He let disasters, crime, illness and war happen?'

God is not the author of suffering. He intended paradise for mankind. However, He also created humans with free will and most suffering is the direct result of our individual and collective bad choices.

God is working overtime to bring us back to paradise. It was never His design for us to live in a corrupt world in a corrupt body. Everyday, He works silently behind the scenes stopping millions of disasters that we will never know about. When God does allow a disaster to take its course, He has taken everything into consideration.

This booklet examines some of the reasons for suffering and endeavours to put them into a Biblical perspective.





If God Exists, Why Is There Suffering?

Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| There is suffering: <i>so many will seek salvation.</i> | Page 4 |
| There is suffering: <i>because warnings are ignored.</i> | Page 6 |
| There is suffering: <i>at our own hands.</i> | Page 8 |
| There is suffering: <i>for the purpose of new growth.</i> | Page 10 |
| There is suffering: <i>to avoid greater suffering later.</i> | Page 12 |
| There is suffering: <i>to make us stronger.</i> | Page 14 |
| There is suffering: <i>from bad choices.</i> | Page 16 |
| There is suffering: <i>because we separate ourselves from God.</i> | Page 18 |
| There is suffering: <i>because we have been chosen for a special mission.</i> | Page 20 |
| There is suffering: <i>because we live in a fallen world.</i> | Page 22 |
| There WILL BE suffering: <i>if we have no insurance.</i> | Page 24 |

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
so many will seek salvation.



Preventing A Greater Disaster

Romans 10:13

A week before the 'February 2009 Bushfires' (Australia's worst recorded natural disaster), firefighters were control-burning in an attempt to avert the sort of tragedy that would soon follow. In the process, an unusual event was filmed and shown around the world – a koala, driven to extreme thirst, allowed a fireman to approach and accepted a gift of life-saving water.

When a disaster occurs, we naturally question as to why God allows it to happen. God knows of all events beforehand, because of this He is consciously aware that a greater disaster (hell), is heading towards those who have not accepted His gift of eternal salvation. God does not want anyone to eternally perish. To prove this, He took on the form of a man (through Jesus Christ) and paid the complete penalty for all sins on the cross - so that whoever believes in Him will receive eternal-life (John 3:16).

However, God also gave people 'free will' and does not force anyone to accept His gift. Consequently, the greatest of all disasters is to reject the 'gift of eternal salvation'.

God does not desire any to suffer in life and He grieves at the terrible loss, yet He sometimes allows disasters to take their course so masses of people wake-up to their mortality and start seeking spiritual answers. Only during these times of dire hopelessness do many people allow God to approach and accept His life-giving 'waters' of eternal salvation.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
because warnings are ignored.



Iceberg Warnings

Proverbs 3: 5-6

Early in the morning of April 15, 1912, the SS Titanic struck an iceberg and sank, taking with her 1513 passengers. It was a tragedy that should never have occurred. The Titanic received many warnings but failed to heed them all.

As with the Titanic, we are on our maiden voyage (life) and tragedies often are the result of not heeding warning signs. When we misuse drugs, over or under eat, don't exercise or over exercise, sleep too little or too much, our body gives signals of pain and discomfort, warning us to change our direction. The soul also gives warning signs of depression, despondency, bitterness, fear, jealousy, pride - all signals that something is not right in our spiritual life and we need to change course. More often than not, we ignore these warnings of impending danger, thinking we are unsinkable. Individually and nationally we set a course that will either sink or aid us to our destination. God, being a perfect Gentleman, lets us choose our own course in life. God, also being omniscient, sees the icebergs that lay ahead of our choices and sends many signals to adjust our course. If we choose to ignore His warnings, we must take responsibility for the outcome. God is not to blame for the tragedies in our life, but He is always there with a lifeboat ready to rescue if we call.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
at our own hands.



Protecting Us From Self

Proverbs 3:11,12

We all desire to be safe from those who would do us harm. When our 'way of life' or safety are in jeopardy, we immediately cry out for protection. The police force protects us from criminals within the nation, and the military protects us from enemies outside the nation. Generally, people who have been saved or their liberty restored are very grateful to their rescuer (for a short time anyway).

God wants to protect us from those who would do us harm. We also naturally desire this - our prayers constantly ask God to guard us from enemies. However, what if the person harming us the most is ourself? Usually, it is our own thoughts and actions that prevent us from gaining true happiness and becoming everything that God intends for us. Frequently, it's our own foolish decisions that wreck our lives or hurt the ones we love. We are our own worst enemy. When God disciplines us it is often an act of divine protection. He is graciously trying to save us from ourselves. Ironically, we should be thankful whenever God chastises us, but when do we think to thank someone for protecting us from ourselves.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
for the purpose of new growth.



Cuttings

John 15: 1,2

It is amazing how we can cut pieces from certain plants, then plant these cuttings and they take root and grow. From the sacrifice of one plant, many new plants can be cultivated.

God is not the author of suffering. He intended Eden (paradise) for mankind. However, He sometimes allows cuttings (afflictions) to occur for the purpose of new growth. In looking at the big picture, God is working all things together for our eternal happiness - not for temporal happiness. Like in Job's case, any suffering we are presently undergoing may be the cause of future growth - not only for ourselves but for many others. Furthermore, disasters, large or small, remind believer and unbeliever alike that their time is limited and Heaven can not be found on Earth.

Everyday, God works silently behind the scenes, stopping millions of disasters that we will never know about. When God does allow a disaster to take its course, He has taken every minute detail into account. He knows the sufferings and sacrifice of one person can lead to the inspiration and salvation of many. Sometimes the greatest triumphs emerge from the greatest tragedies. Where would we be if God did not allow Christ to suffer on our behalf?

There is suffering:

*to avoid greater
suffering later.*



Needles

John 5:24

Parents allow their children to go through the pain of having injections because they know that a small amount of distress now is far better than serious illness later.

God allows suffering in our life for the same reason. Often, a small amount of hurt in life will generate wisdom, which in turn gives immunity to making some very serious mistakes later. If we look from the eternal perspective, it is far better to have a life of suffering if it leads us to Christ and eternal salvation - rather than live a life of prosperity if it leads us to an eternity in Hell.

God doesn't want any of His children to suffer everlasting damnation. Like any good parent, He would rather we go through temporal discomfort if it eventually leads us safely to Heaven. Remember, life on Earth is but a pinprick compared to eternity.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

**There is suffering:
*to make us stronger.***



Punishing to Prepare

1 Corinthians 10:13

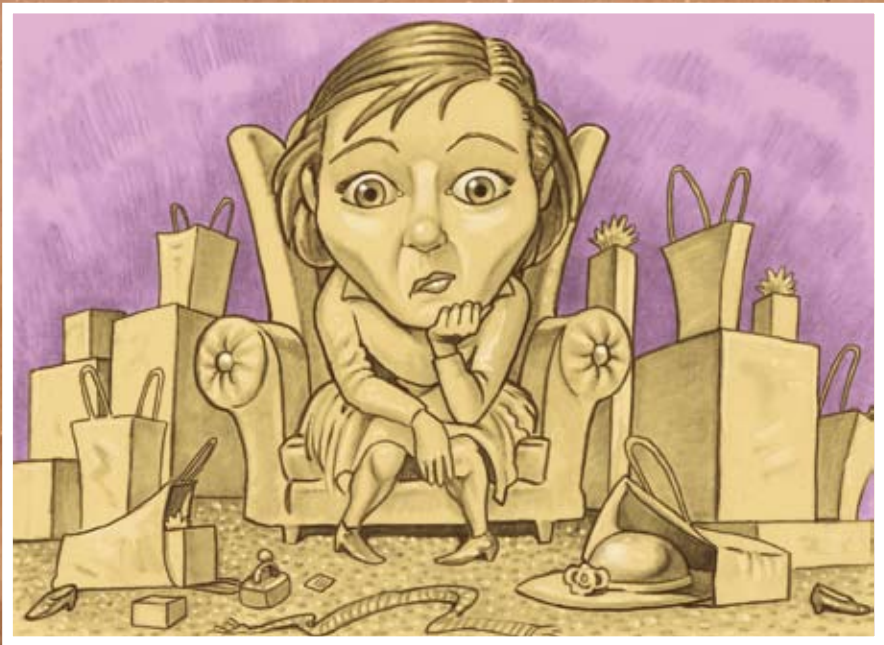
Metal is shaped and strengthened through heating. A diamond is formed through pressure. A beautiful piece of ceramic must go through the fiery kiln. An athlete's body is only formed through punishing exercise.

Often, when going through adversity, we ask 'Why is God punishing me?' The answer is simple, God is not punishing - but preparing. He uses life's sufferings to either remind us that we are on the wrong track or to strengthen and refine our soul. God has a specific plan for each of us, and it is up to us to voluntarily put ourselves into His hands. When we do, it's like placing a metal rod into the hands of a master blacksmith. Soon we feel the heat and pressure as God toughens our spiritual metal into a useful shape. At times adversities that God allows us to go through will feel like they could break us, but God is the Master Blacksmith – He knows our limits and has promised not to test us beyond what we can handle. If we stay the course and leave ourselves in His capable hands, we will come out of our ordeal stronger than we have ever been and imminently ready for the specific purpose for which we were originally created.

Many great things are born from suffering. The greatest example is salvation which came from the unimaginable suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
from bad choices.



Buy Now - Pay Later

2 Timothy 2:15

Apart from the things of God, everything in life has a price. Don't be fooled - we seldom get out of paying. We either pay beforehand or pay later - often with interest.

Buy now – pay later, is an accepted concept when buying goods in life - but it also applies to our physical body. If we don't find time to exercise, then we will pay later when we are unwell. If we don't find time to eat the right food, we pay later when we are sick.

That which is true of the body is often true of the spirit. If we don't find time to study God's Word, trust in Him and utilise His power, then we will have no option but to pay the price later when life's many problems break us. We live in a time of mental break downs, stress, depression, hatred, fear and suicide. We are all running up accounts that must be paid some day.

We can save much grief and avoid mounting debts if we simply remember - prevention is better than the cure.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
*because we separate
ourselves from God.*



Cutting the Branch

2 Corinthians 9: 10,11

It would be ridiculous to cut through the branch on which we sat. The branch is supported by the tree. In separating our perch from its support, it shouldn't be surprised when we plummeting down.

When cutting ourselves off from God, we cut from the very support that sustains us. God supplies all our needs. He upholds and governs all the laws of science. He controls the traffic of the universe. He maintains the delicate balance in nature (oxygen, sunshine, gravity, etc) that keeps us alive moment by moment. He has given promises to sustain those who claim them. And He has written His wisdom (the Bible) to increase enjoyment in life for those who apply it, (God's Word provides a place of refuge and puts everything into perspective).

How silly to separate our existence from our Omnipotent Benefactor. When cutting loose from our 'Divine Support' we shouldn't be surprised when our life takes a dramatic plummet downward.

There is suffering:
*because we have been chosen
for a special mission.*



Missionaries of Circumstance

1 Corinthians 1: 3-7. James 1: 2-4.

A missionary is, one sent on a mission. A Christian missionary is understood to be a spiritually gifted person sent to a foreign country to overcome any language or cultural barrier in order to teach the Gospel.

We have a very narrow view of what is involved in being a missionary, if we believe they only preach in foreign countries. God requires us all to be missionaries within our immediate surroundings. We are to witness to those who cross our path (by word or action), whether at school, home or in the office. No matter in what field, a Christian should be a beacon of professionalism, grace and virtue. When those in our periphery ask what makes us tick, we can reply in lingo they understand.

However, missionary work is even broader than this. Sometimes God requires us to go into foreign circumstances (adversity or prosperity) where our lives are dramatically changed. No one complains about prosperity, but when suddenly hit with adversity we could initially curse God and ask, 'Why have You afflicted me with this tragedy? Haven't I tried to follow You with all my heart?'

In reply, God may convey to us that many people are also suffering through similar tragedies and they too have been calling out in confusion and seeking answers. God needed a strong Christian who understands their pain, who can give them answers, comfort and lead them to Christ and eternal life by example.

When our lives are suddenly and dramatically changed, it could be that God has specially chosen us for a very important mission.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There is suffering:
*because we live in a fallen
world.*



Living in Paradise Lost

1 Corinthians 15: 22

In the past, decisions made by a king affected his entire nation. When making good decisions his country prospered, but in making bad decisions, his country suffered. When a king declared war, he did not go off alone to fight - he made the decision for the entire country. Furthermore, if a king spent the country's wealth on frivolous things, all citizens and generations that followed suffered repercussions of that king's decision.

Initially, God created a paradise for mankind. It was never His design for us to live in a corrupt world in a corrupt body. He created a perfect environment and in it placed man, with the power of choice, to rule over it. When Adam, as head of the human race, chose against God - all future generations suffer the repercussions (expulsion from paradise and death – first spiritual then physical).

In times of adversity we are often guilty of pointing a finger heavenward saying, "How can God let disasters, illness and war occur?" We must remember that we are not in Eden now. We live in a dying, diseased world - in our dying, diseased bodies - making stupid decisions with corrupted souls.

However, God is working overtime to bring us back to paradise. He came down to Earth as a man (Christ) and took the repercussions of all sin unto Himself. Now, as a consequence, the path is clear for those who wish to return to paradise. It is as simple as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Adam may have lost paradise with his decision, but the good news is, just like Adam, we are free to find paradise (Heaven) with our decision. We must stop seeking 'Paradise Lost' in this world. God clearly tells us that it can not be found on this corrupt and dying planet.

If God Exists - Why Is There Suffering?

There WILL BE suffering:
if we have no insurance.



After-life Insurance

John 3: 16

It is sensible to insure life and property against possible loss or damage. Most of us have insurance policies that guarantee compensation to save us in time of disaster - those that don't, usually wished they had.

We may have covered ourselves with insurance in this life, but have we covered ourselves after this life? What policy do we have to save us from divine judgement and eternal damnation? We may have life insurance, but do we have 'afterlife insurance'?

*There is only one policy that saves us in the hereafter – John 3: 16, **'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'***

Belief in Jesus Christ is all it takes to avoid eternity in Hell. It is such a simple insurance policy to take out and it costs us nothing (Christ paid the price on the cross). All that is required is a spare second and the tiniest bit of faith to believe in Christ for God to insure and eternally guarantee that when we die we will be in Paradise forever.

*We have nothing to loose by believing in Christ and everything to gain. **DON'T DIE UNINSURED.** How sorry we'll feel after realizing it was so easy to insure life hereafter.*



About Ian Coate

Ian was trained in the army as an illustrator reprographic and military photographer. In the mid 1990's, Ian discharged from the army to pursue a career as a military artist and freelance illustrator. Since this time, Ian has created numerous artworks for museums around Australia and produced military prints for collectors worldwide.

Ian is also endeavouring to make the Christian message easier to understand with the use of illustration. For further Biblical illustrations, that are free to download, please visit his website at:

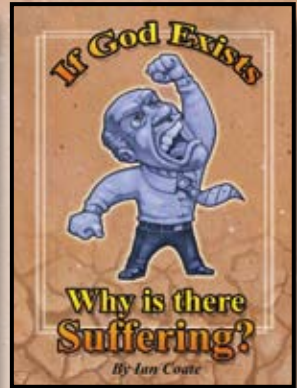
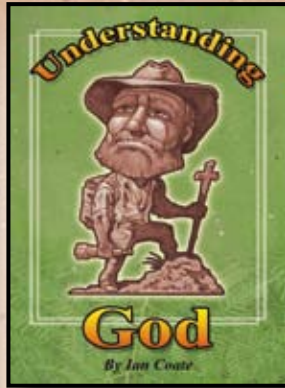
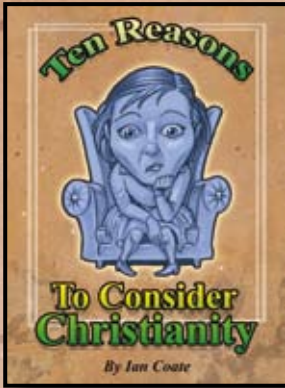
www.freechristianillustrations.com

Acknowledgements

Thank you, Sue - my wife, my muse, my partner, my secretary, my editor, my greatest support, my worst critic and my best friend.

Thank you to the many people who have sat through a session of me reading illustrations at them. Special thanks to my Mum who has given graciously of her time to edit these illustrations. To John, Alan and Caroline, Geoff and Sabine, Peter and Zoe, whose support and insightful comments has enabled these illustrations to bear fruit.

The illustrations in this book may be copied or distributed without permission as long as no cost is charged and author is recognised.



There is no charge for these booklets.

Through grace, we have freely received - through grace, we freely give.

Free Weekly Email

We provide a free service that emails one Christian Illustration for you to ponder each week. Send us an email at: ISCRE5@bigpond.com and let us know that you would like to be put on the Weekly Illustration List.

Your details will remain strictly confidential and no other promotional emails will be sent to you.

For further details, please visit:

www.freechristianillustrations.com