

February 23, 2020

CONFUSED 4 : WHY INNOCENT PEOPLE SUFFER

"Why would a loving God allow children and innocent people to suffer and die?"

Deaths of the innocent are hard to digest – emotionally and spiritually!

The original innocent human beings were living in paradise and never experienced suffering or death!

- No pain during work or
- Bearing the weight of responsibility.
- Not even childbirth was painful (Gen. 3:16).

In fact, there would have been no death, complications or malformations in nature or people at that time.

All suffering was introduced through the original sin;
That is, **the desire to be our own Boss!**

So,
“Why do children and innocent people suffer?”

The answer is “Our first bad decision”!

SIN separates us from all things perfect beginning with God, our creator.

So, when:
Accidents happen – because people are involved

- Decisions that disregard the laws:
 - Natural laws – especially

- Consequences of gravity
- Consequences of imperfect reasoning/rationale

Relationships are difficult because people have the **desire to hold the power of decision!**

Diseases are a threat to anyone – regardless of our lifestyle:

- **Death due to disease** is called death by natural causes.
There are four main types of disease:
- **infectious** diseases,
- **deficiency** diseases,
- **genetic** diseases (both hereditary and non-hereditary), and
- **physiological** diseases.

Seven Causes of Aging and Diseases (Dr. Bill Rawls, MD; Rawls.com)

1. Nutritional Stress:

- Processed foods are the driving force behind obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, digestive problems, cancer, and most all other diseases.

2. Emotional Stress

- Uncontrolled stress sets the stage for all diseases. Chronic emotional stress robs the body of vital energy, suppresses immune function, and disrupts hormonal systems: elevated blood pressure, increased blood clotting, compromised digestive function, elevated blood sugar, chronic sleep disturbances, weight gain and especially suppressed immune function.

3. Toxins

- The role that toxins play in disease and cancer is hard to absolutely define, but it is certainly a factor. Because toxins can only enter the body by three different pathways (ingestion, breathing, and through the skin), limiting this risk factor is fairly simple.

4. Physical Stress

- Three types of physical stress can affect your body—trauma (wear & tear), temperature, and pressure.

5. Free Radicals/Inflammation

- Inside each of the trillions of cells that make up your body, free radicals are being continually generated as a byproduct of energy production. Free radicals can damage all parts of the cell, including DNA. Free radicals is the most significant factor in aging and contributes to all disease. Other sources of free radicals in the body include abnormal fats from processed foods and toxins. In addition, white blood cells actually generate free radicals to destroy foreign substances in the body; this is the root of inflammation in the body.

6. Radiation Exposure

- Like all living creatures, you are exposed to a certain level of background radiation from gamma rays, x-ray and UV radiation from the earth, sun and space. Though these forms of radiation are a force of disease and aging, exposure from natural sources has been relatively constant since humans began walking the earth. Of greater concern are the increased levels of radiation from artificial and unnatural sources (such as electronics).

7. Acute and Chronic diseases (Microbes)

- The role that microbes play in **acute** disease is well understood. Diseases like strep throat, influenza, malaria, small pox, polio, and the plague cause acute illness in most people who are exposed. Collectively, these aggressive types of microbes (which **include viruses, bacteria, fungi, & protozoa**) can be referred to as high virulence microbes.
- In **chronic** disease, however, a different sort of microbe plays a prominent role. You (and everyone around) are almost continually exposed to these types of microbes (also composed of viruses, bacteria, fungi, & protozoa, but different than above). They actually have a low potential to cause disease and most of the time, they pass by hardly noticed. However, if **immune function is compromised by other factors**, chronic low grade infection can occur.

We are all dealing with certain degrees of suffering from our first mistake

Our chronic disease of imperfection is awakened in us when we cannot comprehend the place of suffering and heartache in our personal life.

How do we make sense of it?

WE OPEN OUR HEARTS TO LEARN

From, *Wrestling with an Angel*, Greg Lucas

“After physically raising him from his bed and placing his feet on the floor, I begin the dangerous duty of undressing my teenage son—shirt off, pants off, socks off, diaper off. His whining increases as I remove the clothing, partly because he knows what’s coming next, but mostly because of the sensory integration disorder that brings misery with his nakedness.

Placing Jake on a towel in the middle of the floor, I begin cleaning the excess mess from his backside to make the impending bath as sanitary as possible. This necessary action increases his sensory overload, amplifying his verbal protests and producing a violent thrashing of his long, powerful legs. It’s not that Jake likes being dirty. He just hates being cleaned.”

“Much like my son, I have been disabled all my life. My disability affects everything I am and everything I do. Scripture diagnoses this disability as sin. Not individual acts of sin, but a sin nature, sin residing within my heart. It causes me to reject love and embrace fear. It plagues me with a slumber that makes me strangely satisfied to lie in my own filth and not be disturbed. It’s not that I like being dirty. I just hate being cleaned.

But God is patient, kind, and full of grace. He knows how I am made, but He does not excuse it. He refuses to permit my life to take its natural course. He has sacrificed much to make me His son, and He will not stand by when I am in need—even when I resist His compassion and care.

In my son I see a picture of my own relationship with God. In Jake’s defiant refusal to be loved, cared for, and washed, I am reminded of the cross. There, the violence of divine love overpowered my rebellion and forced upon me a process of cleansing redemption that I did not want to undergo. In my persistent disability I fight against the transformation being worked in me. But I face a power greater than my own and a love stronger than my rebellion. It is as if a bloody, beaten, crucified Savior wraps me in His arms, subdues me with His affection, and whispers in my ear, “I love you. I love you. I love you—no matter what.”

Excerpt From, *Wrestling with an Angel*, Greg Lucas

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Greg learned from his son what God wants us to know about Him:

1. GOD WANTS TO LOVE US THROUGH THIS PAIN

1 John 4:10, 19

“This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

“We love because he first loved us.”

Greg continues his life’s story:

“I am by nature a very prideful person. I care deeply about my appearance, my work ethic, and my reputation. Jake is by nature a pride killer. I love that about him—not often at the moment, but always in retrospect. I love that about him because, especially in his disability, he has a unique capacity to be used as a vessel for God’s glory and as a messenger of God’s grace for my greatest good. Truth is, we are often so self-centered that we fail to notice the most significant and God-glorifying aspects of what’s taking place around us. We miss out on a lot of human joy and deep inner satisfaction because we are so tied up with personal cares. But Jake can shift my focus away from my superficial concerns and force me to reflect on what is most important. As I am caught up in the reality of his limitations, I am reminded of how small and secondary most of my personal concerns really are.

When humility comes in like this and exposes my self-focus, I want to be able to see it for what it is: a loving gift from the grace of God.”

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2. GOD WANTS TO USE OUR BROKEN SPIRIT OF ENTITLEMENT

1 Peter 5:5b-6

“All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

Greg is called to a disturbance in a mall parking lot, and discovers a grown man named Donald, mentally disabled, having a panic attack. And his father who is weathering yet another storm.

“I cautiously knelt back down to Donald’s level and picked up his shoes and socks. I wasn’t sure how he would react to me invading his space and I fully expected to be kicked or punched by this large, confused man. Slowly I un-balled one of his socks and began putting it back on his foot. To my relief, he extended his leg in a sort of surrender to let me know he would comply.

I rolled the sock gently over his toes to his heel and then up to his ankle. His pale, crooked feet felt cold and damp, and his long, sharp toenails were in need of a trim.

Probably true to his lifelong routine, he extended the other foot for me to do the same. Once both socks were on, I unlaced his large, worn-out tennis shoes, slipped them on his feet one at a time, and cinched them up and gave them a double-knot like I had done for Jake so many times before.

A stark vision from John 13 of Jesus washing His disciples’ feet flashed across my mind, and I smiled as I thought to myself that the Lord may have had even this day and this parking lot in mind when He told His confused disciples, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.”

I was beginning to understand that there was much more going on here than a simple police response to an unspecified disturbance at a mall.

Once the disheveled, child-like man was ready to get back on his feet again, I asked his dad, “What does Donald really like?”

“Chicken nuggets and coffee,” he replied. I turned back to Donald and slowly but excitedly asked, “How would you like your dad to take you to get some chicken nuggets and coffee, buddy?” He gave a silent nod of approval and we helped him off the ground and into the truck.

[I told him that I really new what he was going through and that I too had a 17 yr old disabled son much like Donald.]

After buckling Donald in, the elderly man returned to his side of the truck with a simple expression of gratitude. He shook my hand and thanked me in a voice drained of all emotion. I shot back, “No problem, I do this for a living.”

Despite my official duties that day, I knew from experience that mostly he was thanking me because I could offer empathy and not just sympathy. Sometimes just being aware that someone else knows—I mean really knows what you are going through—is enough to bring great comfort in the midst of great despair. We both smiled with a freshly strengthened connection as I opened the driver’s door for him.”

“In response [to this appointment by God], I stood for a moment on holy ground praising the God of mercy and comfort, asking for more strength and grace for the future with my own son. My worshipful hymn and prayer of praise sounded like this:

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the same comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

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No matter what trauma you've been through, you can turn it into something beautiful.

C.S. Lewis

2 Corinthians 12:9

"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

The most significant act is to decide everyday you will embrace the power of God's Spirit in you no matter the circumstances.

NOTES:

Leading Causes of Death (2017 for the U.S.)

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

Books:

Wrestling with an Angel: A Story of Love, Disability and the Lessons of Grace, Greg Lucas, Cruciform Press | Released November, 2010

Be Still, My Soul, by Nancy Guthrie

Suffering and the Sovereignty of God, various authors

When God Weeps, by Joni Eareckson Tada

A Grief Observed, by C.S. Lewis

A Place of Healing, by Joni Eareckson Tada

Being There: How to Love Those Who are Hurting, by Dave Furman

When Darkness Will Not Lift, by John Piper

Is There Anybody Out There?, by Mez McConnell

Job: The Storm Breaks, by Derek Thomas

Christians Get Depressed Too, by David Murray

Don't Waste Your Cancer, by John Piper