

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

- Setting the Foundation:
 - First key presupposition: God is the creator of all that was, is, and will be. Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16
 - Second key presupposition: God's creation was perfect, and humans introduced sin that had both human and cosmic implications. Genesis 1:31; 1 Timothy 4:4
 - Third key presupposition: God gives humans free will "A voluntary choice or decision; freedom of humans to make choices that are not determined by prior causes or by divine intervention." Genesis 1:27; Galatians 5:13
 - Fourth key presupposition: 'Christ calls men to repent. Matthew 4:17; Luke 5:32
 - Fifth key presupposition: God is loving, good, just...with consequences either way. Romans 2:12-16
 - Sixth key presupposition: God suffered like man on the cross. 1 Peter 2:24

1

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

WHO IS BEING COUNSELED

- The first advisor said that God was trying to correct: "Somewhere, you must have displeased God. Somewhere, you must have stepped out of his will....God is warning you...what is he telling you?"
- The second advisor said that God was showing the lack of faith: "Sickness is never God's will! Haven't you read the Bible? The devil stalks us like a roaring lion, but God will deliver you if you can just bring up enough faith to believe you will be healed. Simply name your promise, in faith, and then claim victory."
- The third advisor said: "...you need to come to the place where you can say, 'God, I love you for making me suffer like this. It is your will, and you know what's best for me...'"
- The fourth advisor said that God had selected you for this mission: "...you have been appointed to suffer for Christ, and he will reward you...he is using you as an example to others...you should feel privileged, not bitter?"

WHO WAS COUNSELED?

2

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

- WHO WAS COUNSELED?
 - Does this sound like God showing what true faith is through Job? Yes - 1520 B.C.
 - Is it Claudia with a body almost destroyed by cancer/treatments? Yes - 1980's
 - Advisor 1 – A Deacon of the church
 - Advisor 2 – A friend from church
 - Advisor 3 – Perhaps the most “spiritual” leader of the church
 - Advisor 4 – The pastor
- 3500 YEARS LATER, AND EXPLAINING GOD AND SUFFERING IS STILL ONE OF THE LARGEST CREDIBILITY PROBLEMS FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

3

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

- 3500 YEARS LATER AND EXPLAINING SUFFERING IN THE CONTEXT OF GOD IS STILL ONE OF THE LARGEST CREDIBILITY PROBLEMS FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH..
 - For atheists – “...then suffering is your God’s great goof up.”
 - Those exploring the Christian Faith – “I want to believe but...”
 - Christians and evangelists like Charles Templeton
 - “How could a loving God ‘orchestrate’ such suffering. If there is a God, he is not a loving god.”

AFTER 3,500 YEARS WHY CAN'T THERE JUST BE A 3"x5" CARD OR A YOU-TUBE VIDEO THAT IS SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND AND DEFINITIVE THAT EXPLAINS SUFFERING IN THE CONTEXT OF GOD...ONCE AND FOR ALL?

“And too often the Christian defense (about suffering in the context of God) sounds like a red-faced, foot-shuffling, lowered head apology.” Phillip Yancey ‘Where is God When It Hurts?’

4

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

- TROUBLING QUESTIONS INDEED!
 - Why me? Why my wife, son, daughter, grandchild?
 - Why now?
 - Did God plot the trajectory of that hurricane to make a point...to hit that community...to target those innocents?
 - Why do the 'bad guys' go unpunished?
 - Did God create all diseases as punishment or a warning about something?
 - Is suffering virtuous and a sign of holiness, or is it a warning that we have sinned?
 - Did God cause that school bus to crash and explode in flames, killing those onboard?

5

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

- WHAT IS SUFFERING THEN?
 - Physical pain – from the body –aging, disease, broken bones, burns, etc.
 - Disease - cancer, lupus, Lou Gehrig disease, heart disease, Alzheimer's
 - Broken relationships – emotional hurt and damage
 - Poverty – depredation in general
 - Violent crime – rape, sexual abuse, terrorism, genocide, political crimes
 - Chronic fear – dread, phobia, terror
 - Disappointment – feelings of failure, loss of hope
 - Death of a loved one – bereavement, mourning
 - Aftermath of extreme weather and climate events – tornados, hurricanes, floods

SUFFERING IS THE CONSEQUENCES OF: NATURAL PHENOMENON; UNNATURAL PHENOMENON – DARK SPIRITUAL FORCES THAT WANT TO DESTROY GOD'S GOODNESS; AND HUMAN FREEDOM AND ACTIONS

6

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

TWO IRON CLAD WAYS FOR THERE TO NOT HAVE BEEN ANY OF THIS SUFFERING

1. No Creation
- or
2. No Sin

BUT...IT IS WHAT IT IS!

- THERE IS CREATION AND WE ARE A PART OF IT!
- IF THERE WERE NO CREATION THERE WOULD BE NO 'WE' TO BE DISCUSSING SUFFERING
- THERE IS SIN AND WE ARE A PART OF IT!

OK...I GET IT...A 3" x 5" CARD OR YOU-TUBE VIDEO IS NOT GOING TO GIVE ME THE ANSWER.

SO, CAN WE DEAL WITH THIS ON GOD'S TERMS, NOT THE WORLDS TERMS?

7

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON THE WORLD'S TERMS

- God is responsible for suffering because he didn't remove bad stuff from free will and just leave the good stuff
- God is responsible for suffering because he didn't create the world differently so there would be no tornados, hurricanes, blizzards, storms, floods.
- God is responsible because he didn't stomp out the first COVID virus, or the first onset of cancer so that non of these progress beyond the first cell
- If God is all powerful than, as Charles Templeton asserts, He is 'orchestrating' all that occurs, and we puppets with no hope
- That's what happens when the future is no more than chance and randomness
- God can be good, all powerful, or all knowing....but, not all three at the same time

8

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- Could there be a morally sufficient reason for God to allow suffering?
- Can there be true freedom without suffering in this world?
- Does excluding the possibility of suffering due to "Nature" begin to exclude life itself?
- Does suffering help us get to loving of others and God?

From David: *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge."*
Psalms 19:1-2

9

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TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- God created a physical world with natural laws
 - Created all that is from nothing by His words, and it is complex
 - In this world "Nature" cannot satisfy me, and everyone else at the same time if the laws of nature are fixed
 - A free soul in this world must mean a relatively independent "Nature"
 - From God's word, we know that righteousness can exist alongside danger and suffering
 - We can conclude that God is providing a human response to the natural dangers that can, by blessing us with mercy and compassion, bring about 'One Kingdom Come' which we are being called to do

10

BELIEVE IN GOD WITH SUFFERING?

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- God created a spiritual world with moral laws and free will to obey or not obey
 - Free will can provide compassion, justice, mercy, love for others as a child of God
 - Free will can provide anger, greed, addiction, pride jealousy, violent assaults, selfishness, cruel power and control, genocide, massacres
 - Does excluding free will begin to exclude life itself?
 - What God 'could have done' imposes on Him the limitation on Him of thinking like humans, without the complete and infinite big-picture of God
- Why doesn't God simply decree that everyone will obey His moral laws?
 - Free will lets us worship God out of love for Him, not as a directive from Him
 - But why exist if we are merely a 'puppet'...surely that is not what it means to be made in God's image.
 - He would never be able to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Satan was wrong about the desire of man to love God

11

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TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- God is longing for suffering to end - 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Rev. 21:4
- The Bible begins with perfection: Paradise – the Garden of Eden
- Genesis through Revelation – the story of God's plan to restore his creation to its original state of perfection.
- The Bible ends with perfection: The coming of the City of God inhabited by the living that are His image bearers
- Judge the present state of creation, or judge the beginning and the end
- And be ready to say "We don't know everything about the mysteries of our God and how he accomplishes that 'perfect-close' to this world and then begins His New Kingdom.

12

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TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- WE DON'T GET TO PICK THE SUFFERING WE ENDURE, BUT WE CAN PICK HOW WE RESPOND
 - Brian Sternberg
 - Joni Eareckson-Tada
 - The Windermere Children
 - A grandson and his friend
- Victor Frankl – An insight and confirming what we observe

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." Romans 4:8-10

13

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TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- HOW WE RESPOND
 - Suffering can be a battlefield: Job 1:11-12; 2:9-10
 - Suffering can teach us to seek and trust God: Psalm 119:67,71; Colossians 3:13; 2 Timothy 3:12
 - Suffering matures and equips us: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 1 Peter 4:1-2; John 15:2
 - Suffering finds refuge in community: 1 John 4:12
 - Suffering can bring glory to God: John 9:1-3; John 11:40
 - Suffering prepares us for glory: 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Romans 8:18-30; 1 Peter 1:6-9

And, just then, someone asks: "But, what about a child with terminal cancer, or spinal bifida, or progeroid syndrome, or a heart defect....what about from the child's perspective?"

14

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TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- THE CHILDREN THAT SUFFERFROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE
- SLIDE TBD

15

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TRYING TO UNDERSTAND SUFFERING ON GOD'S TERMS

- THE CHILDREN THAT SUFFER
 - We believe - we have faith - we have hope....but there are times when it still seems so inadequate when we try to make sense of it from the child's perspective
 - Scripture shows that the rational answer is not always there
 - Revelation 21:4
 - But in the end, we know from God's revelation to us of His Story that:
 - The Lord is Sovereign
 - God is good....and just
 - God loves us
 - The power of the cross is that God suffered with us, He didn't abandon us, and from that cross we, and the suffering children, have hope....but how do we explain 'Hope' to a suffering child? The rational answer is not always there.

16