

Day #5: The WHYs and WHATs Behind Suffering

Read: Romans 8:28; Job 1:6-8

The WHYs in life are tricky, and this is never truer than when it comes to WHY God allows a trial. Maybe it's to move someone **geographically** – “Their house burned down because God wants them to move to Texas near their son.”

Or is it to change someone's **heart**? – “God is teaching that person not to be arrogant.”

Maybe it's to change someone's **mind**? – “He got fired so he'll stop refusing God's call to ministry.”

When it comes to the WHYs behind trials and crises, filling in the ocean-wide gaps between our knowledge and God's is sketchy at best and dangerous at worst. Too often we get it all wrong, which only makes it harder for the person in crisis.

JUDGING

Of course, Exhibit A ~~of this~~ is the experience of Job. Job's comforters thought for sure they knew why he was suffering so: it was because of secret sin in his life. But the truth was just the opposite, wasn't it? Indeed, Job was targeted for trouble precisely *because he was upright*, not because of sin in his life! God was confident Job's faith would withstand Satan's worst. So Job's comforters' speculation led them to a conclusion exactly opposite from the truth.

COLLATERAL EFFECTS

Sometimes a trial touches us while the real target is someone else. For example: An unsaved nurse needs to meet you, so you land in the hospital. Or your insurance man is struggling with suicidal thoughts and needs hope; of course the natural connection between you and your insurance man is a claim. Ouch!

If there's any truth to the theory of “Six Degrees of Separation” – the belief that every person on the planet is six or fewer people away from all others – it is quite possible that the primary reason trouble may come to me may at times be for someone else, someone I may not even know!

Though the WHYs of trouble are often too sketchy for conjecture, we can at least be confident about the most important thing: the WHAT of hardship – that ***God is wringing every ounce of good out of trials touching those who love Him.***

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The devotional says, “When it comes to the WHYs behind trials and crises, filling in the ocean-wide gaps between our knowledge and God’s is sketchy at best and dangerous at worst. Too often we get it all wrong, which only makes it harder for the person in crisis.”

Share an experience you know (in the Bible or otherwise) where someone “got it wrong” about the Whys behind someone else’s suffering.

- How did the wrong conclusion make it harder for the person in the difficulty?
- What lesson can we learn about trying to divine the reasons behind suffering?