


If suffering is to strengthen us, how should we respond to it?


**9** God wants to achieve something in someone else's life. God has set you up to be observed, someone is watching you to see how you will act, how you will respond. You are to be an example to others. If this is the case how should we respond? How should we not respond?

**10** Because we are Christians. Read Philippians 3v10, 1 Peter 4v12-19 Christ suffered and we share His sufferings. The word witness in the New Testament is same word as martyr.


Different reasons for suffering require different responses, we accept hardship as discipline but we reject the enemies junk. What is important is that we respond well in every situation if we do we will grow from every problem we face.

## Why things go wrong


 Read 1 Peter 1v3-9  
As you might have noticed, things go wrong in life. There is a need to mention this because, some of you may not have noticed and others are in denial. There is an idea that if you are a Christian nothing will ever go wrong, nothing bad will ever happen and your life will be on triumph laid upon another. If it does go wrong, it is because of sin in your life or a lack of faith. Christians never suffer loss, get sick, experience trials, problems, persecution, heartaches or suffering and no one ever dies.


 Is this a realistic view?  
Is it Biblical?

Some people seem to read the Bible with their eyes closed. There isn't a righteous person in the Bible of whom some grief isn't recorded. (for example?)

 The problems we face range from minor irritations to major problems. Have you ever noticed that what seems trivial to you may be major for someone else? Why do you think this is?

We are all at different levels of maturity and faith, we all have different weaknesses and hangups from the past. Sometimes something small can be the last straw, or 'reference' some hidden weakness in a persons life. Today's goal is not only to understand why things go wrong but to look at how we should act when they do.

 Some things in life are inevitable.  
If you own a 15 year old washing machine, it is going to break down sooner or later. It's not God's fault, it's not the devils fault, it was just old. Things wear out. It is inevitable.

 What other examples are there?  
Parents will eventually die, children will get chickenpox and tires will wear out. These things are part of life.  
Who should we blame when it happens?  
How should we prepare for these kinds of problems?  
How should we react when this kind of problem faces us?  
How should we not react?

We need to accept these things. We need to be prepared for these kind of things, that may mean taking care of the washing machine or it may mean spending time with your parents while you can. When these things happen we need to be strong in the Lord, to trust Him and to ask Him to help. Problems tend to reveal our strengths and weaknesses, our level of faith and maturity.

If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan? Jeremiah 12v5

What do you think this verse means?

Talking about the trials in his life, Paul once said. But none of these things move me, Acts 20v24 KJV

**6** The enemy.  
The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; John 10v10  
There are times when the enemy brings grief into our life. Job is a good example, as is Paul. There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 2 Corinthians 12v7

Why does the enemy bring grief into our lives?

To distract us from our calling, to disillusion us, to dishearten us, to weaken us spiritually making us vulnerable, to draw us into sin and to stop us from trusting God.

The enemy can only be active in our lives where God allows, for what is intended to weaken us can also strengthen us, depending on how we respond.

**?** How should we react to trouble from the enemy?  
What tools do we have to help us overcome?  
How should we not react?  
Do you think the enemy often gets credit for what he didn't do?

**7** The consequence of our own stupidity.  
We all make mistakes, we are all careless at times and do the wrong thing instead of the right thing. No one is perfect. Like the first category, these things are inevitable.

**?** How should we react?  
How should we not react?  
Why is it important how we react?

We learn our limitation and we learn from our mistakes, we forgive ourselves and ask for God's help. We do not dwell on the past but press on to the future, we do not lose confidence.

Read Hebrews 10v35-39.

Sometime our unrealistic expectations compound this problem. We expect perfection from ourselves and become self critical when we fail to attain this. We concentrate on our weakness and failures, ignoring our strengths and successes.

What is the inevitable outcome of this? How should we see ourselves? Gal 6v4

**8** Time and Chance.  
I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favour to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. Ecc 9v11

**?** This is the closest the Bible comes to admitting the existence of luck.  
How should we react?  
How should we not react?

**2** The Consequences of our Sin  
By definition when we sin we move out of God's will for our lives and consequently we open ourselves up to all kinds of griefs and problems. We can't blame God, (though we often seem to try) We can't blame the devil (ditto) sin is our responsibility.

**?** How should we react when we become aware of a problem caused by our sin?  
How should we not react?

When we confess our sin God always forgives our sin. Sometimes in His grace, He remits the effects of our sin, sometimes He does not and we are left with the consequences of our sin. We might need to make restitution or apologize to people effected by our sin.

**?** Can you think of any examples?  
What should we do?

We ask God for grace to cope with it. We stand up and are responsible for our action and we make the most of our current situation.

In God there is always a way forward and he has promised us that all things work together for good. When faced with this kind of situation Christians are often at a loss to know what to do. The answer is very simple. Do what is right and just in God's eyes now.

**3** Sometimes things go wrong as discipline from the Lord.  
Read Hebrew 12v4-13

Some things that 'go wrong' don't go wrong at all, God just has a plan that we haven't understood. Hebrews says treat hardship as discipline. These 10 reasons why things go wrong are not mutually exclusive, often there is a combination of reasons. What the enemy means for harm God means for good. Even hardship that is not discipline needs to be treated as discipline. Everything God does is only ever for our best.

Why do we need discipline?

Discipline has two meanings; correction for where we are wrong and constrains that help us learn.

**?** How should we respond to God's discipline?  
How should we not respond?  
What will discipline achieve in us?

**4** We learn through suffering.  
What can we learn through suffering?  
We can learn to trust God and we can learn to sympathies with others.  
In light of this, how should we respond to suffering?

**5** Sometimes suffering is intended to strengthen us.  
Read Romans 5v3-5  
How does suffering strengthen us?

Mountain top experiences are very encouraging and it is where everyone wants to be, but it is in the valleys that we learn and develop and grow stronger. Suffering may come because God wants to change us. Often we pray for a situation to change when God put it there so that we would change.