

WHY DOES A LOVING GOD ALLOW HIS CHILDREN TO GO THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES?

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In times of trial and heartache, many people ask, "If God is loving, why does He allow people to suffer?" Some people believe we struggle because the Father is not involved in the world He's created. Others say we are victims of fate or chance. However, the only accurate answer to this question can be found in the Word of God.

A. THE SOURCE OF OUR DIFFICULT TIMES

All difficult times are evidence that God is working in our lives. They can come from several sources.

1. Ourselves. Many times, we make decisions that are not wise or healthy. Anything not in keeping with God's plan and purpose in our lives is guaranteed to bring trouble.
2. Other People. Sometimes, others can be responsible for our difficult times. Peter warns us that we shouldn't be surprised by the "fiery difficult times" that come our way in life (1 Peter 4:12).
3. The fallen world. Because sin entered into the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience, we must deal with the consequences of it in our lives.
4. Satan. Many people want to believe the Devil isn't real, but he is present throughout in the Bible. He tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-8), placed betrayal in Judas Iscariot's heart (John 13:2), and continues to cause trouble in our lives as well.
5. God. Some difficult times are sent by God, and some are allowed by Him. When we make choices that are not pleasing to our Father, we should expect a trial. However, He may also send them when we are being obedient to give us wisdom and discernment. This is why we should "count it all joy" because difficult times are evidence God is working in our lives.

B. WRONG RESPONSES TO OUR DIFFICULT TIMES

We must be careful to avoid wrong attitudes and responses to difficult times.

1. Feeling helpless and defeated. If we believe we have to survive with our own strength, we begin to feel inadequate. Only if we rely on God's power can we experience victory.
2. Experiencing false guilt. Sometimes, God sends adversity to engineer something for our good, not because of something we have done. That is why it is essential to seek out wisdom in God's Word and in prayer.
3. Believing difficult times are unnecessary or meaningless. We should never assume things in our lives have no purpose. That only leads to frustration and anxiety rather than joy.
4. Blaming God or others. A common response to difficult times is to place blame. This occurs because we don't fully understand His ways and are "driven and tossed by the

wind" because of doubt (James 1:6).

5. Seeking relief in the wrong places. Many people turn to alcohol, drugs, or extramarital affairs for relief when facing difficult times. However, when we use the world's solutions, we end up doing the wrong thing.
6. Misunderstanding the purpose for difficult times. Christians should see difficult times as a chance for God to work in their lives and take joy in the knowledge they are maturing in their faith.
7. Feeling like a victim. God is in absolute control of everything, so it is impossible for us to be victims. God will always enable us to overcome our challenges.

C. GOD'S PURPOSES IN DIFFICULT TIMES

What are God's purposes for difficult times? With every one, He is...

1. Testing our faith and proving it to be genuine.
2. Testing our devotion to Christ and gauging our obedience.
3. Purifying and making us like Jesus Christ in our character.
4. Giving Himself the opportunity to show His love and power.
5. Producing Christlike character in us.
6. Equipping us to be a blessing to others.

D. RESPOND TO DIFFICULT TIMES WITH WISDOM BY REMEMBERING...

1. God controls their length and intensity.
2. God has a specific purpose for them.
3. God designs them for specific purposes.
4. They will prove to be good if we respond in faith.
5. They can strengthen our faith.
6. They allow us to display perseverance under pressure.
7. They will develop Christlike character in us.
8. They help us measure our spiritual progress.
9. God will walk with us through them.
10. Through His grace and power, we will overcome them.

E. DON'T GIVE UP!!!

Struggles and hurts are unavoidable while we're on earth, but we can choose how we respond to them. We can react negatively, or we can trust the Lord and see His hand at work in our lives for good. As believers, we always have the Father to see us through all our hardships.