

There is Hope Radio
Why Not Become a Christian-Part Two, Transcript
PreacherRichD

Welcome to There is Hope Radio, our radio host is the Let's Get Real PreacherRichD of Creating Futures.
is the Let's Get Real Preacher Rich D. of Creating Future. Welcome to There is Hope Radio.

PreacherRichD: This is your radio host PreacherRichD., and I have two guests on the line. I have a friend that's from Arkansas and a friend that's Seattle, and we'll introduce them in just a moment. But I want to let you know right off the bat, the topic of today is going to be Why Not Become a Christian, Part 3. We're going to cover objection number five, which is people rejecting Christianity because of the concept of suffering, and I'll explain that more in detail in just a moment. But first, Bobby, why don't we start with you? Bobby, why don't you give a real quick introduction, how we got to know each other. You know a little bit about suffering.

Bobby: of course, I live in Issaquah, Seattle. I got in touch with Rich because I spent my life as a drug addict and an alcoholic, and I came up here to one of his recovery homes, and I found God through the midst of that. My story is just literally, I suffered in a way that I just suffered from the human condition, and you know, trials and tribulations happen, and that is life, and you know, I've just kind of grown in my walk with Christ to learn how to navigate that, and so this is really just an absolute learning experience. I'm just here to learn.

Marty, you know a little bit about suffering, and why don't you just give kind of an intro?

Marty: All right. First, thanks again for having me. I am Marty. I live in Greers Ferry, Arkansas, just know Rich from the small community we're in. We did some worship time together. We spent some time together in church. My background also is as an alcoholic who's been sober for a few years now. My suffering is more recently. Last January, we had our son shot and murdered, so dealing with the grief of all that and the pain of losing a child kind of is what landed me here today.

PreacherRichD: I'll go ahead and give just an intro for myself in regards to this concept of suffering is I would say that I was not a drug addict, was not an alcoholic, have not lost anybody that's been killed or murdered, but a lot of my suffering in the past was my own doing by my own choice and decisions, and then I dealt with suicidal thoughts for, I don't even know, probably four or five, six, seven, eight years, something like that. I've learned many things because of what I was going through. I think each of us will end up going into it, I'm sure, that as we answer the question why not become a Christian when there's all this suffering in the world, if God is a loving God, why is He allowed suffering? I don't know if we'll answer it completely, but I think we can answer for ourselves that in spite of our sufferings, we are very thankful for the relationship we have with Christ, and I think we'd all would say that without a relationship with Christ, we don't know how we would have dealt with some of the suffering that we've gone through.

So what I want to do first off is that, again, one of the objections is the reason people don't become a Christian is because if God is a loving God, why would He allow suffering? I want to give a statement right off the bat, and then I want both of you to give some input on it.

I heard this the other day, and this is the first time I heard it. So if somebody says, if there is a God, why does He allow suffering on the earth, especially if He's a loving God? And the person asked the question, if there was no God, would there be suffering? Would the answer be yes? If there is no God, there is no God in the universe, there's no God in control, is there suffering on the earth? And we know the answer, right? Right.

Of course.

Yeah, definitely. There's suffering.

PreacherRichD: So if there is no God and there's suffering, and what do we think the number one reason why there's suffering on earth, get God out of the picture, get the idea of a loving God out of the picture, pretend there is no God, so we can't give any Christian answer. But why is there suffering on earth? Who wants to share? Why do you think there's suffering on earth?

Marty: I think suffering on earth would come with chaos with no God to start. I mean, if we take God out of it, I just, I think it'd be complete chaos. I don't think that there'd be law, there'd be any rule. I mean, I think in that you would just see greed that people have. I mean, there's still greed in the world today, and there is even with God.

So, yeah. Okay. So it'd just be a total collapse of society if there was no God at all in the picture.

Marty: I would believe so.

PreacherRichD: Okay. Bobby, what about you? If there is no God, and we're all wrong, there's no God on this earth, is there suffering? And why is there suffering?

Bobby: Because there's free will. There's nothing to stop. I mean, there's free will, and there's sickness, and there's, you know, no matter what, everything lives and everything dies. Just no matter, I mean, that's just what's going to happen. It's the natural law of things, it's the natural order. I mean, you know, you just look at, you could look at the animal kingdom, and I mean, I just got done watching a grizzly bear attack a moose, you know, I mean, and that's just what happens. There's a big bad grizzly bear, and he's hungry, and he's going to go get it.

Bobby: And I think, you know, touching on the no law or no order, I mean, the bigger, that's going to happen. The bigger dog is always going to go get the little dog.

PreacherRichD: Okay, so suffering is not caused by God, then, correct? No matter how you think of God, no matter how you think of Him, whether you see Him as good, bad, evil, or anything else, if there is no God, there's suffering. So we can't blame suffering on God, can we?

Marty: No, and actually, I was, if we're talking about suffering, obviously, I went in and read a little bit of Job. At the beginning of Job, in Job 1.7, this was when the angels came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan. Then in 1.7, it says, The Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from? Satan answered, I'm roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it. So Satan definitely, they're involved in the suffering. I mean, that was his purpose in this, in Job, actually, was just to cause suffering.

PreacherRichD: I think we could say that the reason there's suffering is because it's a fallen, broken world with fallen, broken people, and without a God, without any controlling power whatsoever, that it just literally leads to chaos, suffering, destruction. Then if we throw in there is a demonic power that's involved in that, that just makes it worse. But again, for some of our listeners, if they're saying there is no God, there is no devil, I think we can still all acknowledge that there's going to be suffering.

Marty: I have to question, if there is no God and there is no evil, but yet there's still suffering. Isn't that interesting? I mean, that's the counterpoint, I guess, is if there's suffering because I believe in a God or is there suffering because you don't? I mean, it's a question you got to ask.

PreacherRichD: Yeah, and there's suffering whether I believe in a God or not. Right? There's suffering if there is a God, there's suffering if there is no God. And so my point I'm making, and I want to make it very clear, is that whether there's a God or not, there is suffering. So the argument, if there's a God and He's a loving God, why is there suffering? We'll get to that part.

But if there is a God, whether He's loving or not, if there is no God or He's not, there's suffering on the roll. And we can't deny that. Bobby, did you want to jump in before we go further?

Bobby: I just was thinking, posed a more challenging question, and I suppose this would go to the way that I felt, you know, 10, 15, 20 years ago, was that, what if I frame the question in this light? Was that, okay, with all the suffering going on, why doesn't God intervene? You know, why does He allow suffering? If you have an all-powerful God, why doesn't He cure the cancer? Okay, there we go.

PreacherRichD: So that is where we're going to head. We're going to head to, if there is a God that's in control, why doesn't He stop suffering? And if there's a God that's in control that is a loving God, why doesn't He stop suffering? We're going to tackle that, which there is no right or wrong answer to that. The Bible doesn't say specifically, God allows suffering because, God doesn't allow suffering because. It doesn't address it in a black and white way, but I think the Bible very much addresses it. But this goes back to, if there is no God and there's suffering, and there is a God, can it be there is a God that suffers Himself seeing the suffering? In other words, when somebody says, if the God is a loving God, why does He allow suffering? If there is a God, why does He stop the suffering? Can we acknowledge that if there is a God, that God probably feels the pain and the suffering that we feel? Is that a fair statement? Am I made sense of what I said?

Marty: Completely. I'll address it this way. We are all children of God, as you know, and I'm a parent. I've had to discipline my children. There was suffering involved in that from both sides. I mean, when we have to discipline our children to correct them, not only did it affect our children, but it was parents that affected me. And I kind of think sometimes that that's what some of the suffering is, is discipline, because when everything's all peaches and cream, milk and honey, there's not a lot of growth.

Great point. And so if there is a God and there is suffering on the earth, then just maybe, again, we're addressing this to people who are really skeptical and really questioning, they're finding every excuse not to become a Christian. And this is the suffering, one of the big excuses. But we could say if there is a God and He allows suffering, there's a reason for it.

And we're going to cover some of those reasons why He might allow it. But if there's a God on earth and there's suffering, one, He would feel some of that pain, some of that suffering, but He's a very distant God that doesn't care, then, of course, He doesn't do anything about suffering.

But we think He addresses the suffering and we're going to talk about how He addresses suffering. But just again, go to there's a God and He sees the suffering, so He feels the suffering. And then we have to say, why does God allow suffering if He is all-powerful, all-knowing and ever-present? Why does God allow suffering if He's a loving God? And I think we've covered that, some of that already by just a couple of things here.

One is that Bobby said we have free will. So if we have free will and there is a God, then that God obviously is going to allow people to have a free will to some extent. And we could debate how far He lets people go. But if man has a free will and there's a God, the only way He could stop suffering would be to make us robots and take away our free will. Is that a logical assumption that we can make? That if God is real and He's all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, and there's suffering, the only way He could stop suffering completely would be to take away the free will of man. Would that be safe to say?

Bobby: Yeah, as if He was an author of a book. So Ernest Hemingway, he controlled all the characters. They did exactly what he wanted them to do. So that would be life. That would be life. Right.

Do you agree with that, Marty?

Marty: I do. I mean, free will, we have choices, you know, but choices are also consequences.

PreacherRichD: Yes, and so I would say for those who argue, if there is a God, why does He allow suffering? I would say the first answer is because He decided to give man free will. And I want to know anybody who's listening to this show who would like their free will taken away from them completely. And I don't think anybody would say yes.

Marty: I would say none of us three would probably say yes.

PreacherRichD: None of us would say yes, right. And so we want our free will. We want to be able to make choices. We don't want to be robots. And sadly, as long as man has free will and God allows that, there's going to be good and there's going to be bad. There's going to be good. There's going to be evil. There's going to be joy and there's going to be suffering. There's going to be peace and there's going to be war. There's going to be health and there's going to be sickness. Because as long as there's free will, all those things that we would call negative things have the ability to take place. And so if you want to have no suffering, then I guess we need to all get chips put into us to just behave just like God want us to be so everything be perfect and beautiful. But the only place I know that's going to be like that is heaven. It's not going to be here on earth. And so the first reason there is suffering is because of the fact of man as a free will.

Now the next one and this one what we're gonna I'm sure we have to go into the next show to really cover this. But the next thing would be if there is a loving God that's all-powerful all-knowing never present. Why does a loving God allow suffering? Why doesn't he manifest his love in such a way that it overcomes suffering? That suffering can't take place because there's so much love. So the question is as a parent Marty you loved your son with all of your, well more than your son, your children with all of your heart. And to this day you love your children with all of your heart. But as much as you love them are you going to intervene in such a way that they absolutely do not suffer?

Marty: I'm going to intervene and sometimes that causes them more suffering.

That's a good one. That's a good one. Sometimes you intervene and it causes them more suffering. And so I want us to look at that a little bit because again if God's a loving God we think that somehow his love can intervene to stop suffering. One, we already said there's a free will man but we're operating from a concept that we believe then that suffering is always bad, always evil and there's not one single good thing in suffering. Because if God's a loving God and then he would get rid of all the suffering that means suffering must be bad somehow.

And so the question is, is there ever a time that suffering is a good thing? And if it is, then a loving God can allow suffering. So is there ever a time that suffering is a good thing?

Bobby: Well yeah the the verse that we read last week, I mean that's was that's probably one of the most powerful things I've ever read and it helped me. We could talk forever about what it's done for me the last week. But you know I think it was what did we read? James 2? 1? No James 1, 2.

PreacherRichD: Yes James 1, 2. Consider all joy my brethren. Yeah consider all joy my brethren you encounter various trials because it brings it into completion ultimately is what it's saying.

Bobby: Well yeah and then it went on to say I text you that too was we kind of get a command there says that we must be grateful, we must be like joyous during suffering.

PreacherRichD: Consider it all joy in the midst of your suffering, your tribulations, your trial. It says trials and tribulations doesn't say suffering but we know trials and tribulations bring suffering. So consider it all joy.

Now we're going to talk about in the next show how can we find joy in it because that's really going to tie into Marty's story, it's going to tie into Bobby's story and my story is that you can find joy in the in the midst of it.

Can we say that suffering can be good, suffering can be bad and can we say that some of that is our own perspective about suffering?

Bobby: That was all it. I mean because I mean when it comes down to it there's a I mean we have a choice and I've learned this so many times throughout my struggle and but there really is two ways to go and I mean I can literally look at and I've been in the same, I've had the same circumstances exactly and I've lived months and months and months inside of me making a choice of this is bad, this is terrible, this is no good. I mean if that's my mindset then it's really really a struggle but when I when I read a Bible verse like that and I hear that okay you know be grateful because I only need to look at my own past and I understood fully that my past what and I did I have struggled a lot but that today has made me into a much stronger person and I use that path to help other people and it brings me so much joy to do so. So that pain has become a strength and something that makes me feel so good. So knowing that and I could cite a thousand examples of that but knowing that when next time I'm in a little pain or suffering instead of having the attitude of poor me this is so bad I can't believe this is happening to me to change that and say thank you God thank you for this I can't wait to see what's going to happen because I know that I'm going to come out I know that if I trust you and I rely on you I'm gonna this is going to come out better and I just I don't have any anything ever of my past to make that statement not true.

PreacherRichD: Okay so your argument would be is that suffering can be good suffering to be bad it's a based upon mindset and we're actually that's going to be our next topic in the next podcast but Marty how about you do you think that some of what suffering is about is our mindset when it comes to suffering whether it's good or bad?

Marty: Oh our approach to it is always going to affect how we you know our mindset going into it is always going to affect it. Overall I just think again back to the that you know we're not growing any when everything milk and honey you know when everything's perfect and in our lives and all that most people are usually pretty content.

When everything was good in my life which granted hasn't always been all a lot of the time there's always something going on but you know the only way you get out of that when you when it's not going right is you gotta I have to have faith and know like he said you know that God's plans bigger than my plans.

PreacherRichD: And so what we as we wrap up this show we've actually prepped it for the next one because we're going to talk about why they're suffering as far as the that there's actually benefits from suffering. Isn't that crazy. So just maybe let me answer the question if there is a loving God that's all-powerful why would he allow suffering and because he allows suffering I cannot believe in him or trust him. I think we're kind of made it very clear that

just maybe suffering can be a good thing a beneficial thing and that the reality is as long as there's broken human beings there will be suffering on the earth but again something good can come out of that and in the midst of that good we can actually touch other people's lives.

PreacherRichD: So in our next podcast we're going to talk about how suffering can be beneficial and actually lead to you being an agent of change because of suffering and that you can be an agent of hope because of suffering that you could be an agent that reflects the love of God in the midst of suffering. That in the end those who know Christ really don't struggle as much with the concept of suffering doesn't mean they don't suffer we all have suffered we all suffer sometimes Christians suffer more than others but we have learned through our relationship with Christ how beneficial suffering can be and how that God is good in the midst of suffering. When in the natural sense it doesn't seem like any good could come out of it and so those who say I won't become a Christian because of suffering the world and because of a loving God allows suffering I would argue because there is suffering and God allows suffering and there's a loving God that's the greatest reason to come to Christ. I want to touch that real quick.

PreacherRichD: What about the concept that instead of using suffering as a reason not to come to Jesus that suffering is a fantastic reason to come to Jesus.

Marty: I'll hit on it real quick Richard I tell people all the time when I went through this. They're like the question you know how can you have faith and all that going through this. I'm like how can you my answer really is how can you not I mean the word says that our peace and joy come through him you know to give him our burden and all that and really I have to lay a lot of it at his feet you know there is peace in that.

PreacherRichD: For those who may have tuned in late we're talking about a father whose son was murdered, ultimately three people were in prison now because of that and it was a ordeal going through the the trial process and everything else. You're going to talk a whole lot more about that in the next broadcast but the reality is when you say that you can find peace and joy you're talking about finding peace and joy in a tragic situation that came into your life.

PreacherRichD: So I would argue that if suffering is stopping you from coming to Christ that's actually irrational, that the rational thing is if there's suffering in this world the rational thing is to grab hold of a God who can carry you through the suffering.

PreacherRichD: Bobby you want do you want to give the last statement on the fact that just maybe we should trust in Christ when they there is the suffering in the world instead of rejecting Christ because there is suffering in the world

Bobby: Well I could I could go on and give a hundred examples but you know there's probably this is probably one of the most extreme examples that I've ever used. I have a spiritual advisor you could say and he's not living anymore but he has tapes and they're on YouTube and he talks about in a matter of a three-week span he lost both his daughters. One to murder a senseless murder in her driveway when she was getting out of her car

shopping for food for the family and the other one died of alcoholism three weeks later. He talks about how he saw a woman in a courtroom, her son was murdered and the first thing she said to the judge was I've forgiven him I want you to as well. You know going forward as he was able to he thought of that instantly and he instantly forgave that man who killed his his daughter. So when when I hear that just has helped me so much in my life. Because what I was going through you know fails to compare to that and so I thought well if he could do it I can do it and then I've gone on to use that so you know I hear Marty's story and it's just got me you know I mean how can you not like that's just that's a very very powerful thing that those kind of tools those kind of stories have helped me. I've never met these people in my life but and I've gone on to use that to really really do some some good and and that's really helped me.

PreacherRichD: I would say for me that the during those suicidal depression all that time during that time there would seem to be no good in that but ultimately Bobby and I would have never known each other if it wasn't for that because that suffering gave me a compassion that I did not have and it transformed my whole mindset when it came to anybody whomever it was that was going through suffering, how do I help them to not go through what I went through, how can I help them to get out of what they're going through at the moment. I don't think that would have come in the power that it's coming to my life that would not have happened if it wasn't for what I went through. So all three of us have stories about suffering has actually work not only for good for us but for the good of helping others. So that's what we're going to cover in the next segment so we are going to end this podcast.

PreacherRichD: If you want to receive the transcript of this show or get the podcast you can go to creatingfutures.org/thereishope that is creatingfutures.org/thereishope.

PreacherRichD: Thank you for tuning in.

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