suffering

You often hear people say if there's an all powerful God and He's all loving, there wouldn't be any suffering. And that kind of makes sense because if there was an all powerful God, He could end suffering. If there were an all loving God, it sort of makes sense that He would end suffering. But we don't know that for sure. How do we know? The philosophers have worked this through for centuries. How would we know that a God of infinite wisdom could not have loving reasons for allowing pain to continue? So you can't use suffering to disprove God's existence.

▶ JOHN DICKSON

JOHN DICKSON ◀

We're all formed, shaped by our life experiences. For some people it turns people away from faith, for others it turns them to faith.

I think if we're saying as Christians that actually God is all powerful, that He's omnipotent, He can step in and do whatever He likes. He can stop suffering if He wants to. And yet He chooses not to. I think for some people it's a really understandable concern to question whether or not that God is worth trusting.

▶ VINCE VITALE

SHARON DIRCKX ◀

God has given people real freedom and that means freedom to choose many different things about their life and also freedom to choose whether they will follow God or not. And it's freedom to be able to love. But that's a very costly freedom because real freedom means real choice and some people make choices that are wise and other people make choices that are not. And we can all be capable of both in the same lifetime many times. And much of the suffering that we see in the world can be a result of the unwise decisions or choices that people make – not that that explains all suffering.

If our choices are to be serious choices, if they're really to be open to us which way we choose, we're going to choose badly sometimes and people are going to suffer. And that is the first reason of why there's suffering – because God has given free will to people and that's a blessing. But the suffering is an unfortunate consequence of the blessing.

▶ RICHARD SWINBURNE

STANLEY HAUERWAS ◀

I never asked why was this happening to me because I just thought that if you read the Psalms that's a silly question. The idea of why do bad things happen to good people, I take it to be a thoroughly bourgeois question of people who haven't ever faced the complexity of life.

towards ▶ belief

Without God, everything in this life really is headed for injustice and death. And what could be more senseless than that? And so ... I take great comfort and great joy in knowing that there's a promise of a time when there will be, as the Bible says, no more mourning or death or crying or pain.
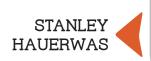
VINCE VITALE

SHARON DIRCKX

Sometimes the only explanation that can be given is that we live in a world that is fundamentally broken because people are out to kilter with their maker and sometimes that is the only reason that can be given.

How can you believe in God in a world of suffering? I asked my wife how she would answer that and what she said was, 'We couldn't have made it without God. We wouldn't have had the strength to go through those sufferings if we hadn't had trust in God."

CRAIG KEENER

STANLEY HAUERWAS

Prayer doesn't come easy for me. But it was during that time that I really began to understand intercessory prayer. I knew people were praying for me and I couldn't get through a day without those prayers making a difference in my life.

It's the fact that God entered into this world in the person of Jesus, suffered betrayal from friends, physical torture, injustice and eventually crucifixion. That for me is not so much the answer to the question of suffering but it tells me what God is like. God entered the world and did that for me. He knows my pain, not just because He's all knowing but because He's experienced it first hand. And I can cry out to this God with all of my doubts, with all of my anger and know that He is that kind of God – not distant in the corner of the universe, watching us or mocking us, but here with us, suffering with us. And that makes the difference. I can trust Him with all the other stuff because I know what His heart is like. His heart is like someone who would give Himself for me.

JOHN DICKSON

NOTES