

RANDY ALCORN

Best-Selling Author of *Heaven*

If
God
Is
Good

Why
Do We Hurt?

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MULTNOMAH
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IF GOD IS GOOD: WHY DO WE HURT?

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Contents

Introduction: The Search We All Share	7
How Is Suffering Related to Evil?	11
Where Do Evil and Suffering Come From?	13
What Causes Natural Disasters?	22
What Common Explanations Are Given for Evil and Suffering?	25
Doesn't the Reality of Evil and Suffering Expose God's Limitations?	32
Why Doesn't God Immediately Bring Evil and Suffering to an End?	39
Why Doesn't God Eliminate the Worst Forms of Evil and Suffering?	45
Can We Be Sure That Someday We'll Be Free of Suffering and Evil?	50

How True Are the “Health and Wealth Theology” Claims About Escaping Suffering?	56
Why Hasn’t God Made the Reasons for Our Suffering More Clear?	59
Can We Really Trust God to Use Our Suffering for Good?	62
Is Suffering Really Necessary to Build Our Character?	65
What’s the Right Way to Respond to Our Suffering?	67
Since Suffering Is Inevitable, How Can I Prepare for It?	69
<i>Jesus</i> —The Only Answer Bigger Than the Questions	71
Notes	76



I know the things that happen:
the loss and the loneliness and
the pain.... But there's a mark
on it now: as if Someone who
knew that way Himself, because
He had travelled it, had gone on
before and left His sign; and all
of it begins to make a little sense
at last—gathered up, laughter
and tears, into the life of God,
with His arms around it!

PAUL SCHERER

Introduction: The Search We All Share

YOU MAY BE READING this booklet because you long to make sense of the evil and suffering in this world. You might be seeking answers to a philosophical problem, or perhaps you've lived long enough to recognize that suffering is inevitable, and you want to be prepared to face it.

Or, if abuse, desertion, debilitating disease, or the loss of a loved one has devastated you, then your suffering isn't theoretical or philosophical. It's deeply personal; you need comfort, not intellectual answers.

Three weeks after his thirty-three-year-old son Christopher died in a car crash, pastor and evangelist Greg Laurie addressed a crowd of twenty-nine thousand at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, California: "I've talked about Heaven my whole life, and I've given many messages on life after death. I've counseled many people who have lost a loved one.... But I have to say that when it happens to you, it's a whole new world." The day his son died, he told them, was "the hardest day of my life."¹

When I spoke with Greg ten months later, his faith was strong, but his profound sense of loss remained. Pain is always local. It has a face and a name—in Greg’s case, Christopher. You and I can fill in our own names.

The way we view such suffering will radically affect how we see God and the world around us. The problem of evil and suffering is the most common reason people give for not believing in God. A Barna Research poll asked, “If you could ask God only one question and you knew he would give you an answer, what would you ask?” The most common response was, “Why is there pain and suffering in the world?”² This isn’t merely *a* problem; it’s *the* problem. And for the culture at large, it appears to pose a greater difficulty now than ever.

I’m a fellow traveler with you on this road of suffering: As a teenager, I watched my friend Greg die from a horrible accident. I had to tell my mother that her brother had been murdered. My mom and my best friend both died from cancer, and an unjust lawsuit cost me a ministry I loved. I held my wife’s and daughters’ hands as we watched

my shriveled father die. For twenty-five years now I've battled a disease that daily affects my body and mind, and will probably shorten my life.

But all in all, if I've suffered a little more than some people, I've suffered a great deal less than many others.

This booklet offers some of what I consider the most helpful perspectives discussed in my larger work entitled *If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil*. During the two years it took me to research and write that book, I read books by atheists and Holocaust survivors, and interviewed dozens of men and women who've endured extreme evil and suffering.

Along the way I've asked God to give me wisdom—and discovered that wisdom begins with the humility to say: *there's a great deal about this I don't understand*.

In my own personal search for answers, I've beheld the God who says, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people.... I have heard them crying out..., and I am concerned about their suffering" (Exodus 3:7). I revel in God's emphatic promise in the Bible that he will make a New Earth where

he'll come down to live with his people, "he will wipe every tear from their eyes," and "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4).

Often, as I've contemplated potentially faith-jarring situations and sought his truth, God has wiped away my own tears. While my journey hasn't unearthed easy answers, I'm astonished at how much insight Scripture offers. And after much wrestling with the issues, instead of being disheartened, I have hope. I'm encouraged—especially from seeing more of God's goodness, love, holiness, justice, patience, grace, and mercy.

That's why I frequently quote Scripture in these pages. As you read along, I urge you not to let your feelings—real as they are—invalidate your need to let the truth of God's words guide your thinking. Remember that the path to your heart travels through your mind. *Truth matters.*

So as you deal with suffering, by all means speak with a friend or pastor or counselor, or join a support group. Do not, however, ignore God's revealed truth about evil and suffering, or his character, purposes, and plans. Quick-fix feeling

adjustments will never sustain you over the long haul. But deeply rooted beliefs—grounded in Scripture and empowered by God’s Spirit—will afford you mental and emotional strength to persevere and hold on to a faith built on the solid rock of God’s truth, no matter how fierce the storms of suffering.



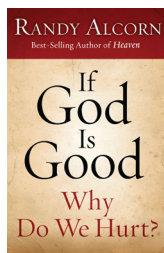
eternal perspective ministries

with author Randy Alcorn

More about the *If God Is Good* booklet

Out of the deepest hurts of the human condition, Randy Alcorn brings into clear focus our most pressing questions about evil and suffering—including those that wrench our souls when we or someone we love is victimized by evil or assaulted by disease. 78 pages.

[Purchase this book](#)



About Randy Alcorn

Randy is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries and the best-selling author of over 50 books (over nine million in print) including *Heaven*, *The Treasure Principle*, and the Gold Medallion winner *Safely Home*.



About Eternal Perspective Ministries

Eternal Perspective Ministries (EPM) is a nonprofit ministry dedicated to teaching principles of God's Word and assisting the church in ministering to the unreached, unfed, unborn, uneducated, and unsupported people around the world. You can order all of Randy's books and products through EPM's online store at www.epm.org.