



Questions from Our Culture: How Could A Loving God Allow So Much Suffering?

The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world is beyond all decent contemplation. During the minute that it takes me to compose this sentence, thousands of animals are being eaten alive, many others are running for their lives, whimpering with fear, others are slowly being devoured from within by rasping parasites, thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation, thirst, and disease. It must be so. If there ever is a time of plenty, this very fact will automatically lead to an increase in the population until the natural state of starvation and misery is restored. In a universe of electrons and selfish genes, blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.

- Richard Dawkins, [River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life](#)

Article taken from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/25/opinion/sunday/after-great-pain-where-is-god.html>

During 1940 C. S. Lewis wrote "The Problem of Pain." Lewis's answer to why an all-good and all-powerful God would allow his creatures to suffer pain was a bit too neat and tidy. Among other things, he wrote, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Now flash forward two decades to the publication of "A Grief Observed," which Lewis wrote after his wife's death. God's megaphone didn't just rouse Lewis, it nearly shattered him. In writing about his bereavement, Lewis described what it was like to go to God "when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence." He added: "Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like. Deceive yourself no longer.'"

Years ago I had lunch with a pastor and asked him about his impressions of "A Grief Observed." His attitude bordered on disdain. He felt that Lewis allowed doubt to creep in when his faith should have sustained him.



Discussion Questions

1. Do you think there's anything missing in the way we talk about suffering as a church?
2. What are some ways Christianity has been helpful in the way you think about suffering?
3. How would you go about answering the question of suffering to someone who's not a Christian?