

# Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## Does God Cause Suffering?

It's easy to take cheap shots at God for allowing suffering and pain in our lives. But it doesn't take much thought to recognize a deeper purpose in play.

*"So the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?'" (Ex. 4:11).*

*"Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him'" (Jn. 9:1-3).*



The presence of evil and suffering in the world is an obstacle to belief for many people. Passages like these reinforce the perception that God causes suffering in the human race. So how can we believe in an all-powerful God who, by His own admission, inflicts hardship upon His creatures?

It's a difficult question, but not as difficult as it's made out to be. Let's reason through this for a moment.

First, it's ironic that those who complain about God being responsible for suffering are the same ones who complain about injustice in the world. "If

there really was a just and all-powerful God, he would fix all the injustice in the world!" We'll pass over the question of where these folks get their concept of "justice" in the absence of God. Instead, let's consider the role of suffering *as a natural corrective to human folly*.

Much of the suffering that plagues mankind is the direct result of our own stupidity. Our decisions either bring us into conflict with the laws of nature—and nature almost always wins—or our decisions bring us into conflict with others who don't appreciate our antisocial behavior, so they take steps to put us in our place. Review human history and you'll see that injustice is almost always answered by suffering. Criminals are punished by civil magistrates; tyrants are defeated on the battlefield; gossips are shunned; drug addicts meet an early death. It's patently unfair for humans to blame God for troubles we bring upon ourselves. God "inflicts" suffering in these circumstances, only in the sense that He made the world with that built-in corrective mechanism. Shame on us for failing to cooperate with that reality.

But what about suffering that has absolutely no connection to our behavior? God has admitted that He makes the mute, the deaf, the blind, and other physical defects. Why would He do such a thing, if He really loves us?

In their more rational moments, even atheists will admit that these hardships can serve as opportunities for growth, either in ourselves or in others who are in a position to help. Adversity builds character. Strength through weakness. What doesn't kill me makes me stronger. These and a host of other maxims capture the simple truth that the inexplicable difficulties of life can actually make us better people—if *we are disposed to accepting that discipline*. Of course, that's usually the problem, isn't it? Some people are too self-centered to recognize the potential for growth in the hardships that come their way, and turn to anger and bitterness instead.

Jesus saw a blind man as an opportunity for displaying God's handiwork through an act of mercy. We should train ourselves to look at all of life's struggles through that same lens.

— David King



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