

# Who Am I? (Part 1)



# Finding Meaning In Our Broken World

What is my identity, my origin, my purpose, my significance, and my destiny?

Who am I? Where did I come from? Why do I exist? Do I have meaning? Where am I going?

Why are we asking these questions? To find answers!

Our hearts yearn for answers to these questions because we sense it in depths of our souls that we were made for more. Having a purpose in life motivates us and makes difficulties easier to handle.

- The answers come from God alone. Apart from God, no other answer will satisfy. Jesus said the following:  
*Jn 15:5* “apart from me you can do nothing”
- 1. We were created by God – This is our starting point in answering these questions.
  - a. We can't give ourselves purpose, because we did not create ourselves. You don't get to choose your purpose.
  - b. This life is not about me, it is about God and neighbor.
  - c. We were created for relationship
    - i. First with God, “Let us make man in OUR image and likeness” (*Gen 1:26*)
    - ii. then with one another (*Gen 2:18* – Not good for man to be alone . . .)
  - d. We are *persons* not objects or mere animals
- 2. Why did God make us?
  - a. We are made by God, *for* God who is Trinity (a communion of persons - 3 persons in 1 God). Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
  - b. The fact that God wills our very existence gives our lives meaning and purpose. God does not make mistakes.
  - c. We are made for eternal communion with God. God speaks to Adam and Eve. (*Gen 1:28, 2:16, 3:8ff*) There is an intimacy with God.
  - d. We glorify God by fulfilling our purpose – that is, to give of ourselves out of love (*Gen 2:21-24* “one flesh”)
  - e. For us on this , the Eucharist is the ultimate form of this union, this communion (*Jn 6:56*)
  - f. We were made to fit into God's larger, cosmic plan of love and communion

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3. We were created to be children of God through Jesus Christ. Through him, we are brought into the family of God.

- a. **Gal 3:26** "for in Christ Jesus **you are all sons of God**, through faith. For as many of you as were **baptized** into Christ have put on Christ."
  - b. **1 Cor 12:13** "For by one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body** -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free -- and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
4. We were made to participate in Christ's mission as . . .
- a. **Priest - 1Pet. 2:9** But you are "a chosen race, a royal **priesthood**, a holy nation . . . who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
  - b. **Prophet - Joel 3:1** I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall **prophesy**, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;
  - c. **King - 1Thes 2:12** . . . conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his **kingdom** and glory. **Rev. 1:6** who has made us into a **kingdom, priests** for his God and Father . . .

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5. When we receive the Holy Spirit, we become . . .
- a. **Partakers of the Divine Nature – 2 Pet. 1:4** he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to **share in the divine nature**, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.
  - b. **Temples of the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor. 6:19** Do you not know that your body is a **temple of the holy Spirit** . . . and that you are not your own? **2Cor. 6:16** we are the **temple of the living God**; as God said: "I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people."
  - c. **Children of God – 1 John 3:1** See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God, and so we are. **Jn 1:12,13** "all who . . . believed in his name, he gave power to **become children of God**; who were **born**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but **of God**."
6. The mystery of God is that he is an eternal exchange of love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and **he destined us to share in that exchange of love in the Trinity**. This is what we were made for . . . **this is the meaning of human existence!**
- a. **The meaning of life** then, is to love as God loves. We were created to love and to be loved. (*See Mt 5:44, Jn 3:16*).
  - b. In the end, nothing else really matters . . . love of God and love of neighbor is the ultimate goal of human existence. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord, you God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." **Lk 10:27, Mt 27:37**

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7. We are made to imitate the Trinity
  - a. Love of God and love neighbor (*Lk 10:25-37*)
    - i. We are called to “die to self” and live for others  
*Lk 9:23* If any man would come after me, let him deny himself  
and take up his cross daily and follow me.
  - b. Through the sacrament of Marriage (*Mt 19:3-6*)

As members of the Body of Christ, the Church is united to Christ and one another (*1 Cor 12:12-13, Col 1:24*)

Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer “fully reveals man to himself”.<sup>1</sup>

# Who Am I?

## Part 2



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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II. (1979). [\*Redemptor Hominis\*](#). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

# How Do I Find Meaning?

Why is life unfair? Why are my prayers not granted? Why am I dissatisfied and discontent with life at times? Why do evil persons prosper and righteous people suffer?

We learned in Part 1 that we have meaning and purpose. We were made for relationship – love and intimate communion with God and each other.

- This life is not about me. It's about God and others.

Knowing that we are created by God for love and relationship and if God really loves me . . . Does it make sense that he lets me experience difficulties, disappointments, sorrow and suffering?

- The answer is that it may not make sense to us, but God works in us knowing that this world is not our ultimate home. Since we were created for heaven, we feel that our life should be “heavenly.” When it is not, then we experience the result of “the fall” when sin entered our world.
- This sorrow makes it seem like God has failed in his promises of the love and life for which we were created.
- Why do we experience failed prayer requests and why can't I hear his voice?
- Why does he allow the injustice of others to hurt us and they seem to get away with it?

Our hearts yearn for answers to the question of suffering, because we sense it in depths of our being that we are created for perfection . . . and we are. That is why some things can only be fulfilled when we get to heaven.

- In order for us to focus on our true home, we cannot be so attached to this world. This is why the Lord allows us to feel discontent and dissatisfied in this life. The longing in our hearts will never be fulfilled on this side of eternity.
- We are not completely happy in this life, because we were not supposed to be! The joys we do experience in life are meant to entice us into desiring to be with the Lord in heaven for all eternity. In heaven, ALL our longings and desires will be fulfilled beyond human comprehension.
- Our tendency towards sin will keep this world from being the heaven we desire.

How do we get there? It is a journey, a life-long journey. Our goal in this life is to make it to heaven and to bring as many people with us!

Let's start this journey . . .

## ***Step 1      Never focus on temporary crowns***

*Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the **crown of life** which God has promised to those who love him.*

It is a mistake to assume that God's goal for you in life is material wealth or worldly success.

- Millions have been martyred for their faith, have lost everything or have reached the end of their life with little material wealth to show for it. *But the end of life is not the end!*
- The moment you enter heaven, you will cry out, “Why did I spend so much time on things that were temporary?!” Focus on building treasure in heaven! (*Lk 18:22*)
- When things get tough and you are overwhelmed with life’s problems, remember that you are not home yet! When you die, you are not leaving home, you are *going* home!
  - *Heb 13:12–14* Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. For here we have no lasting city, but **we seek the city which is to come.**

Remember that we were created for *relationship*. It is the time, effort and work that we put into loving God and building our earthly relationships that will last forever. Only persons last forever. Everything else in this world will fade away. More on relationships later . . .

## **Step 2 Give glory to God and Worship Him - Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam: For the Greater Glory of God**

*Jude 25 to God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen*

- We are commanded to recognize his glory, honor his glory, declare his glory, praise his glory and live for his glory.<sup>2</sup>
  - The universe manifests the glory of God – glory is inherent in his nature. All creation exists to give him glory and honor.
  - *Col 1:16* for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and **for him**.
  - *Is 43:6-7* “bring . . . everyone who is called by my name, *whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.*”
- As human beings, we fail at times to give him glory – we call this failure *SIN!*
  - *Rom 3:23* all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
 More on sin later . . .

### **Worship Him**

- The greatest form of worship is the Sacrifice of the Mass. Don’t miss it!
- Worship is not for you, it is for God!
- Prayer – spend time everyday talking and listening to the Lord. This is how good relationships work.
- Scripture – read the Word of God if you want to hear God speak to you. We complain that we can’t hear God speak to us, but he has written an entire book to communicate with you!

## **Step 3 Love One Another**

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<sup>2</sup> Catholic Biblical Association (Great Britain). (1994). [\*The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic edition\*](#) (**Ps 29:1; 66:2; 96:7**). New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

- Love as God loves – unconditionally.
  - *1 Jn 3:10* By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother.
  - *Jn 13:34–35* A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
  - *Mt 25: 41–46* Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ . . . ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

#### ***Step 4      Become Another Christ***

- Receive the Eucharist – In receiving the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus, we become what we eat.
  - *Jn 6:56* He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him
- Self-sacrifice – This life is not about me . . . it is about others.
  - *Jn 15:12–13* This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

#### ***Step 5      Be A Servant***

- Jesus came to serve not to be served (*Mt 20:28*)
  - *1 Pet 4:8–11* Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another . . . whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that ***in everything God may be glorified*** through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and honor forever. Amen.
- Find a church
  - This is where you build relationships with the **community** after you have worked on your family and friends.
  - My best friends and “brothers” in Christ have come from my church community. This is where more love flourishes from relationships.
- Find a ministry to serve
  - Do something! Anything in your church! This is how you discover your passion and gifts the Lord has given you.
  - If you don’t serve, you don’t build relationships. Loneliness is not far behind.

#### ***Step 6      Evangelize***

- Share the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

- *1 Cor 9:22–23* To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.
- Teach others about Christ and his Church
  - c. Begin with your spouse
  - d. Then your children
  - e. Then your immediate family and friends
  - f. Then your community
  - g. Then the world
- Share your story
  - The experiences of suffering in your life, the things you regret the most . . . these are the things God wants to use to help others.
  - For God to use your painful experiences, you must be willing to share them. We have to admit our faults, failure and fears.
  - Share how the Lord has changed your life! If there is no conversion in your life, then maybe that is a good starting point. We have to love God so much that it shows. You can't give what you don't have.

*2 Cor 4:14–15* knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, **to the glory of God.**

## *Step 7      Be Holy*

- Develop the character that God desires
  - *1 Pet 1:14-16* As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, **be holy in all your conduct**; since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
- Growth is often painful and scary. We must “die to self.”
  - *Lk 9:23* If any man would come after me, let him **deny himself** and take up his cross daily and follow me.
- Conversion of heart and mind
  - *Rom 12:1–2* I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. **Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- Develop the virtues. Virtue is defined as a good habit – Habits take time to develop. Be patient (it is a virtue!)
  - *Gal 5:22-24* the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**
- Surrender to God through **obedience** and **trust**
  - *Ps 37:7* Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him; do not fret over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!
- Genuine surrender acknowledges my pain and problems may be needed to fulfill God's purpose and glory. We accept these with trust like St. Paul and Joseph (son of Jacob)



- **2 Cor 12:7–10** And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh . . . Three times I begged the Lord that it should leave me; but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, for the sake of Christ, I am content with **weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities**; for when I am weak, then I am strong.
- **Gen 50:19-20** But Joseph said to them, “As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive”

## **Step 8      Pray, Fast and Meditate on Scripture**

- **The seasons and days of penance** in the course of the liturgical year (e.g. Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and charitable and missionary works.<sup>3</sup>
- Fasting helps to gain control of the passions through self-denial
- Prayer is our conversation with God.
  - Pray in the morning and evening for sure. Add prayers throughout the day for all occasions – work, family, before meals, etc.
  - Don’t just ask for things, praise God and “in all circumstances, give thanks.” (*1 Thes 5:18*)
- Prayer and fasting is powerful
  - **Mk 9:28–29** his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it [demon] out?” And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting.”
- Read the Word of God
  - The scriptures are a primary way in which God speaks to us. If you want to hear what God has to say about your life, family and relationships, etc., read the Bible every day.

## **WHY DOESN’T GOD HEAR AND HELP SOME PEOPLE?**

**Ps 34: 13-18** Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, and **his ears toward their cry**. The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. When the **righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles**. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

- Because we don’t love one another as Christ commanded

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<sup>3</sup> CCC 1437-1438

- *1 Jn 3:17–18* But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.
- Because we don’t reconcile with one another
  - *Mt 5:23–24* So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; **first be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and offer your gift.
- Because we are jealous, impure, gossipers and envy others – we are grave sinners
  - *Gal 5:19-21* Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you that those who do such things **shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**
  - *Rom 1:29–31* They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.
- Because we sin and don’t repent and confess it
  - *2 Cor 12:21* I fear . . . I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned before and **have not repented** of the impurity, immorality, and licentiousness which they have practiced.
- Because we give in to the passions of the flesh
  - *1 Pet 2:11* Beloved, I beg you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.
- Because we don’t know God. He is not a “prayer vending machine.” He is our Father.
  - *Jas 4:2–4* You desire and do not have; so you kill. You do not have, because you do not ask. **You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.**
- Because we lack faith
  - *Mt 8:24–26* And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he [Jesus] was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” And he said to them, **“Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?”**

## WHY WE SUFFER

### Why are we no longer in Paradise?

- Man ushered in this world of pain and suffering, disease and death through sin. God did not want this for us. Since we are now in it, He must find ways to redeem us and work with what we have chosen - to live in sin.
- One of God’s greatest gifts to mankind was the **freedom to choose**. The freedom to choose is existential to the freedom to love. Without freedom, authentic love cannot exist.
- We are also in need of reconciliation with God. This reconciliation happens via the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We must be liberated from sin and this requires conversion of heart.
  - *Ps 51:17* The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

### Why do we struggle to find the meaning of life?

- Because we lack the **grace** necessary to achieve it. We are not acting like and being like what we were created to be; lovers of God and neighbor.
- We depend on our own strength and intellect to get us through each day. We think that if we try harder and pray harder, things will get better.
- In reality, nothing is possible without God's grace. St. Therese of Lisieux said, "Everything is Grace." God either allows or commands all things to happen. He allows "evil" in this world such that good **can** come from it. If no good can come of some "evil," he does not permit it.

### How do we obtain the grace to achieve our purpose for existence and meaning?

- By God's own design, we obtain sanctifying grace through the **sacraments**. Additional graces can be had through **prayer, fasting, acts of charity** and by **avoiding sin**.
- Sin is the only thing that can keep us from getting to heaven.

## INTERIOR PENANCE

"Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the **Church** which they have wounded by their sins."<sup>4</sup> (*1 Cor 12:26-27* – the whole body suffers)

- The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart. Conversion is first of all a **work of God's grace** who makes our hearts return to him.
- Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return to God with all our heart, an end of sin and a turning away from evil. It includes the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his **grace**.<sup>5</sup>
- The Sacraments are the primary means of grace. Receive them often! (confession and communion). Live a sacramental life, set apart for God's work.

### How Do We Attain Conversion?

The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, **fasting, prayer, and almsgiving**, which express conversion in relation to **oneself**, to **God**, and to **others**.

- Conversion is accomplished in daily life by acts of charity such as
  - concern for the poor
  - admission of faults to one's brother
  - revision of life
  - spiritual direction
  - exercise and defense of justice,
  - fraternal correction,
  - examination of conscience,
  - acceptance of suffering . . .

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<sup>4</sup> CCC 1422

<sup>5</sup> CCC 1431-1432

In other words, **humility**. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus<sup>6</sup> is the surest way of penance and conversion of heart.

- Daily conversion and penance find their source and strength in the **Eucharist**. It makes present the sacrifice of Christ, which has reconciled us with God. Through the Eucharist we are fed and strengthened. "It is a remedy to free us from our daily faults and to preserve us from mortal sins."<sup>7</sup>

## Why Do We Suffer?

*Some Reasons Why We Suffer*

Life has caused us to ask some of the deepest and most profound questions. One of the most prevalent is the question of suffering. Why do we suffer? Does suffering have a purpose?

- All suffering is ordered towards our end – it is teleological. This world is not our ultimate home. We were made for heaven.
- God's initial plan did not include suffering, but as a result of sin, death and suffering entered into our human existence. (**Rom 5:12**)

The following are CLUES as to why we may be suffering:

### **As consequences of our own actions**

Many of our sufferings are self-induced. We gossip and fight with one another. We have bad eating habits and take smoking and alcohol to excess. We allow our desires to control us and this can lead to addiction.

**Rom 13:12–14** Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

### **For Spiritual Growth and Maturity**

The Lord knows we need an increasing in humility, faith and other virtues. We grow when we do God's will. The journey through this growth process that brings joy in this world.

The removal of pride, which prevents the growth in all of the virtues, creates humility, spiritual strengthening and preparation for the difficulties in our life.

**Rom 5:3–5**. . . we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

### **To repair what is broken**

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 16:24

<sup>7</sup> CCC 1435-1436

Our sins cause a rupture in what is true, good and beautiful. To repair the damage our sin has caused, sometimes God has to cause us to suffer to fix it.

Example: Someone jumps from a tree and breaks their arm, but refuses treatment. Later, the arm is deformed because of the break and person has a doctor repair it. The doctor must first re-break the arm, thereby causing suffering, to carry out the repair.

### **For Discipline**

When a child needs correction or guidance, it may be necessary to carry out punishment when the need arises, especially if the offense is serious or life threatening. God is the same with us – when sin becomes life threatening to our soul, God can intervene to keep us from falling into sin so that we may be saved.

*Heb 12:7–11* It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

### **As a result of persecution or at the hands of others**

Many suffer because of the free will act of others that inflict pain and suffering to others.

*Mt 5:11–12* “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **As a redemptive act**

We are called by Christ to participate in HIS saving work. We are to bring others to salvation through our love and the Gospel message.

***Participatory Theonomy*** – we are co-workers with Christ

*Col 1:24* Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church

*1 Co 9:19, 22-23* For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, **that I might by all means save some**. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

### **Answer to prayer; God’s justice**

God’s act of justice by the prayers of someone we have hurt because of our sin.

**Rev 6:9–10** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?”

**Rom 3:5–6** But if our wickedness serves to show the justice of God, what shall we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? By no means! For then how could God judge the world?

### **To give meaning to life**

Things/actions/accomplishments don't have much meaning if we did not have to work and struggle to gain them. These difficulties produce the joy of having Christ in your life instead of material possessions.

**Phil 3:7–8** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ.

**Gal 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

### **To keep us from sinning**

When suffering enters our life, we begin to understand that a continual acceptance of suffering is incompatible with a proneness to sin. It is difficult to be sinning in the flesh (licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry) if other difficulties occupy your time and thoughts. Sin is the enemy that will prevent us from gaining eternal life with God.

**1 Pet 4:1–2** Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions but by the will of God.

### **To redirect our lives to the right path during our life and eventually to salvation**

God desires our good. If our direction in life is leading us to eternal damnation, God may redirect our lives through suffering, if necessary, so that we may find the path he desires for us in this life. His ultimate goal setting our path to heaven. Paul's conversion is a great example.

**Acts 9:3–22** Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground . . . Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

And the Lord said to [Ananias] . . . “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine . . . for *I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.*”<sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he

regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized . . . But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

### **Obtains for us a higher place in Heaven**

When we choose to accept whatever suffering comes our way, through the power of Jesus' grace working in us, we show how we can love authentically by continuing to love amidst the pain and suffering. Our reward is the ability to love greater and more profoundly. This is how we gain a higher level in heaven . . . to whatever measure our hearts are enlarged to love, the greater reward He gives us for loving as He loves, even unto death.

*Rom 2:6–8* For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.

### **That we may be glorified in heaven / to save us**

We are called to imitate Christ. This means that our journey to the Father is the same as Christ's – through suffering and ultimately the cross. We will suffer, but we will gain the same reward that Jesus first gained for us – union with the Father.

*Rom 8:16–17* it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

*2 Cor 7:9–11* I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment!

### **Affirmation that we were made for more**

We know in the very depths of our being that we were not made for suffering. Especially the ultimate suffering – Death. We “feel it in our bones” that this is not our home and that we were not made for death. If his earth were our home, we would feel at home, but we don't. We “feel” like we were made for more . . . perfection and eternal life . . . and so we are.

*Jn 15:18–19* If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

### **To show our dependence on God for everything**

If we never had to suffer, we would rarely call out to God. Suffering at times, is God's way of reminding us that we are not meant for this world and that we have to trust him. We need to understand that we are not invincible or powerful, but that we can do nothing apart from Christ.

*Phil 4:13* I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

*Heb 4:15–16* For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

### **As punishment for sin**

Disobedience to God's commands bring about punishment because sin has consequences.

*2 Thes 1:6–9* since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might

### **To give glory and honor to God**

Through our sufferings, we witness to Christ, his mercy and his saving grace. In this manner we help others to know Christ. Even though we have not seen Jesus, we love him nonetheless. It is this faith in the midst of suffering that brings joy to our lives and gives the Lord glory and honor.

*1 Pet 1:6–7* In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ

*1 Pet 4:14–16* If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God.

### **To please God through our endurance of righteous suffering**

God is pleased and we receive his approval if we endure suffering for righteousness sake.

*1 Pe 2:18–21* Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle but also to the overbearing. For **one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly.** For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you **do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval.** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

### **Because we are not living out the “Purpose” for which He made us**



God made us for Himself. Our purpose is to be in intimate communion (love) with Him and when we are not in communion with Him, because of sin, then we fail to fulfill our purpose and we suffer.

If a time watch decided it wanted to be a hammer instead, it would break at once when used to drive nails. It was not meant to drive nails! In the same way, we were made for love and when we fail to love, we break – our relationships break, our hearts break!

### **To learn obedience**

If Christ learned obedience through suffering, who are we to despise and reject suffering if the Lord wills it to make us more like Christ.

*Heb 5:7–9* In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. <sup>8</sup> Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him

### **To live as Christ lived, to imitate Christ in his suffering**

*2 Tim 3:10–13* Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, **my sufferings**, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted**, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived.