

# FIRES, FLOODS, EARTHQUAKES, AND EVIL

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT  
THE TRAGEDY AROUND US



# GREG LAURIE

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the Tragedy Around Us

**BY GREG LAURIE**

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## **Introduction**

A 3-year-old boy playing with the stove burners in a New York apartment accidentally sets fire to the building, resulting in 12 deaths.

A Category 4 hurricane drops a year's worth of water in just five days, displacing 60,000 people and crippling a major metropolis for months.

A magnitude 9.1 earthquake and its subsequent tsunami leave 227,898 people killed or missing and presumed dead, and 1.7 million people displaced.

A 64-year-old man armed with more than ten rifles shoots and kills 58 people enjoying a concert. Hundreds more are wounded.

The question that comes to mind at times like these is...  
Why?

Why does God allow such horrible things to happen?

## **Asking God Why**

A Barna Poll asked, "If you could ask God 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?" In talking to others about God, it won't be long before someone asks, "How could a God of love allow tragedy, pain, and suffering?"

More people point to the problem of evil and suffering as their reason for not believing in God than any other. It is not merely a problem; it is the problem.

So, why does God allow tragedy? If God can prevent terrible things from happening, why does He allow them to take place? Here's the classic statement of the problem: either God is all powerful but not all good, and therefore He doesn't stop evil—or He's all good but not all powerful, and therefore He can't stop evil.

The general tendency, of course, is to blame God for evil and suffering, transferring all responsibility to Him. So let's look closer at the core question: if God is so good and loving, why does He allow evil?

The first part of this question is based on a false premise. People who express those words are essentially suggesting (or saying outright) that God must meet their own criteria of goodness. But who are they to set standards for God? When did they become the moral center of the universe?

God isn't good just because that's my opinion of Him, or because I personally agree with His words or actions. God is good because He says He is! Jesus said, "No one is good—except God alone" (Luke 18:19 NIV).

God is good, whether I believe it or not. He and He alone is the final court of arbitration. As Paul said, "Let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). And what is "good"? Good is whatever God approves. And it's good because He approves it! "That's circular reasoning!" you say. Well, maybe, but everything begins and ends with God. I think of it more as biblical reasoning.

In Isaiah 1:18, God invites, “Come now, and let us reason together” or “Come. Sit down. Let’s argue this out” (MSG). You see, God’s thoughts are above our thoughts. There’s no higher standard of goodness than God’s own character—and His approval of whatever’s consistent with that character. So God is good. Period.

Now let’s come back to the second part of the question. Why does He allow evil?

Remember that mankind was not created evil. In their original state, Adam and Eve were innocent, ageless, and immortal. But from the very beginning—from the time that God gave life to Adam and Eve, man has had the ability to choose right or wrong. He made his choice (and then his choice made him!).

Had man never sinned, there would have been no resulting curse. But now it’s too late. When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

The point to keep in mind is that humanity—not God—is responsible for sin.

So why didn’t God create human beings to be incapable of sin?

If God hadn’t given us a free will, we would merely be puppets on a string, remote-controlled robots that bow before Him at the touch of a button.

God wants to be loved and obeyed by creatures who voluntarily choose to do so. Love cannot be genuine if there’s no other option. You and I can choose to love

God. And if we're realistic, we have every reason in the world to make that choice.

Most of us can accept the idea of suffering in general, especially when it happens as a consequence of bad behavior. When bad things happen to bad people it seems appropriate, fitting, understandable. So, it's not suffering that troubles us; it's undeserved suffering.

Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? Even more, why do bad things happen to godly people?

There are times I just don't know why God does or does not do certain things. I, like you, am mystified by a lot of it. So here is my answer: I just don't know!

### **Christians Suffer Too**

Listen, being a Christian does not mean you will not suffer. We may ask the question, "Why me?" but we could more easily ask, "Why not me?" As 1 Peter 4:12 tells us, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening you" (ESV). Our trials and sufferings should not be seen as strange but expected. Jesus Himself assured us that there will be suffering in our lives: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Here is what we need to know: we need to prepare for suffering. Suffering will come; it's not a matter of if but

when. If you are reading this and you do not have any suffering or tragedy in your life, I would say, “Rejoice, and enjoy it!” But know that hardship will come.

Here is the bottom line: you are either coming out of a storm or headed into another. “People are born for trouble as readily as sparks fly up from a fire” (Job 5:7 NLT). It’s just a matter of time. In this life, the only way to avoid suffering is to die. So like the diligent squirrel gathering nuts for winter, store these truths in your heart.

As Randy Alcorn says in his book *If God Is Good, Why?*, “Most of us don’t give focused thought to evil and suffering until we experience them. This forces us to formulate perspective on the fly, at a time when our thinking is muddled and we’re exhausted and consumed by pressing issues. People who have ‘been there’ will attest that it’s far better to think through suffering in advance.” In other words, be prepared ahead of time!

## **An Age-Old Question**

The question of why God allows suffering is not a new one. In fact, it was a question they were asking during the time of Christ Himself, and we find answers in the Bible. In John 9, we read the account of a blind man who was healed by Jesus. He also became a believer in addition to having his blindness healed. We’ve all heard people say, “Seeing is believing,” but in this man’s case believing was seeing—because he saw things he had never seen before. Not just faces of friends and family, not just the beauty of God’s creation, but he saw spiritually as well, and he discovered what the real purpose of life was because he saw Jesus. In fact

Jesus was the first person he saw when he was healed—and that is why he saw everything else in its proper perspective.

Let's look at the story:

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. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. (John 9:1-7)

So here's the question that the disciples are effectively asking: Why does God allow suffering? There must be a reason—a purpose. It must be somebody's fault.

They are asking, "Lord, who sinned—this man or his parents—that he would be in the state he is in?" In other words, why was this man born blind? And we can take that further and ask: Why are babies born



with disabilities? Why is there war? Why is there terrorism? Why is there tragedy? Why? Why?

C. S. Lewis once wrote, “The problem of pain is atheism’s most potent weapon against the Christian faith.” You know, sometimes you’ll meet people who claim to be atheists. I don’t know that some of them truly are. They say they are, but often they’re not. But there are true atheists out there and they say they have come to the conclusion that there is no God after careful study, and so forth. But I have found, by and large, that most people who become atheists do so because something traumatic happened earlier in their lives and thus they had to find a belief system, or lack thereof, that would help them to deal with the pain that they had to face.

An example is Ted Turner. He founded CNN. As a young boy, Ted wanted to be a missionary. But his sister came down with lupus and Ted prayed fervently that she would be healed, but she died. So from that day on Ted Turner was mad at God and has gone out of his way to mock Christians about their faith and mock the Bible, calling Christianity a religion for losers. He became an atheist because he experienced a personal tragedy and it made no sense to him. His problem was he couldn’t reconcile a loving God and human suffering.

As you read this, you may be struggling with these things as well. You were dealt a bad hand in life, so to speak. You were raised in a home that fell apart, or an abusive home, or an alcoholic home, or someone very close to you died when you were younger. You’ve been a victim of a horrendous natural disaster or a despicable act of terrorism. Someone you love has terminal cancer. Some tragedy has befallen you, even recently, and it makes no sense to you and you’re sort of angry at God.

The general tendency is to blame God for all of the evil and suffering in the world—effectively to pass all the responsibility on to Him. But as we read further in this passage about Jesus and the man who was born blind from birth, we will see that Jesus deals with the question of why people suffer.

## **The Curse of Sin**

Can physical suffering be a result of sin? The answer is yes and no. Let me say in a broad sense, all suffering is a result of sin and I don't mean personal sin (for example, if someone was born with a disability, I'm not suggesting they did something bad to deserve that). But suffering, aging, and death are all results of sin. It was never God's plan for us to get sick. It was never God's plan for us to get old. It was never God's plan for me to be bald. But because of the curse of sin, you and I are affected.

We are all affected by the curse that resulted from the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. You might say, "If I had been in the Garden, I would never have eaten that forbidden fruit." Shut up. Of course you would have. Have you ever sinned? If you are honest, you'll say yes. You would've responded to temptation just like they did. But if they had not sinned, the curse would not have come. Because they did sin, the curse did come. Romans 5:12 says, "Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (ESV).

"Well," we immediately think, "why did God make it that way?" Why didn't God create us so that we would not sin?" What you're really asking is why God didn't make us into robots.

I have a grandson, Christopher. At age four, he told me, “Papa, I want a robot with an arm.” I had no idea what he was talking about. He had seen some commercial. His mom or dad had no clue as to what this robot with an arm was, so I typed it into a search engine: robot with arm. I thought I found it, so I copied the link and sent it over to them. They said, “We think that’s it.” So I bought him the robot with an arm. You control the robot from your iPhone. It just has wheels and an arm that reaches out and grabs things and picks them up. That is pretty much the whole thing. But it’s kind of cool because it also records your voice. So Christopher put his voice in the robot and it is a cute little toy, but all of a sudden the Bluetooth disconnects and it just stops. It’s limited.

My point is, do you want to be a cute little robot with an arm and a prerecorded voice? Or do you want to have a free will?

You know, one of the best things about getting back from a trip is that people (hopefully) express that they missed you. Your grandkids, or your friends, or your wife—they give you a hug and they let you know that they missed you. They love you. It’s true affection that comes from the heart, not something robotic or preprogrammed.

God doesn’t want a bunch of robots. He wants us to love Him because we choose to love Him. But with that choice to say yes also comes the ability to say no.

## Placing the Blame

And so we come back to this question about suffering. Why does it happen? We always want to find cause and effect. I remember when 9/11 happened and some said that it was the judgment of God on America. I thought, “Really? Why the World Trade Center in particular? Aren’t there more wicked places in America than the World Trade Center? Aren’t there more wicked places on earth than New York City?” When we begin to rationally think through these assertions of blame, we realize they don’t make sense.

I think it’s always a big mistake to find cause-and-effect for tragedy. “That bad thing happened because they were wicked.” Really? Jesus actually told a story in the Book of Luke, chapter 13, about a tower that fell on a group of Gentiles. It was a well-known news event at the time. A tower fell and killed some people. And so Jesus asked the rhetorical question, “Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem?” And then He said, “No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too” (verses 4-5 NLT). Christ is addressing this idea of bad things happening that make no sense. And what He’s essentially saying is that things happen. People die. There are not always explanations. Sometimes we see evil people do evil things and paying the consequences. And sometimes we see terrible things happen to godly people and there doesn’t seem to be any reason.

A bus full of people going to a church retreat are killed by a drunk driver that pulls out of his lane and hits them, and he survives. We say, “Where’s the justice in that?” We don’t understand that. Bad things happen that are inexplicable this side of Heaven.

Here was Christ's point: You think they were the worst sinners? Actually they weren't, and unless you repent you will perish. In other words, guess what? No one gets out of here alive. Everyone's going to die.

You are probably thinking, "Greg, this is the most depressing thing I've ever read." Let me finish. It'll get better, but I want to lay this foundation because we need to understand this. Bad things happen. Christians get cancer. Believers are killed in automobile accidents. Godly people are gunned down. They face fires, and floods, and earthquakes, and evil. This is not always something we can explain. But the most important thing is that followers of Jesus Christ can have hope—because there's more than life on this earth. There is life beyond. That's the key.

## **What Suffering Can Teach Us**

So let's consider some ways suffering can work in our life. First of all, there is corrective suffering. This is the idea that God will allow or send some pain in our lives to get our attention. Sort of a wake-up call. To quote C. S. Lewis again, "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." By the way, this was not the case in the story we read of the blind man. There's no cause and effect there.

But sometimes sickness can come as a result of sin. There can be cause and effect in some instances. We read in John 5 of a paralytic man who was healed. He had been unable to walk. Jesus said, "You are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you"

(verse 14 NIV). You know, sometimes we bring misery on ourselves. Someone says, “My liver is destroyed. I need a liver transplant,” and it’s because they drank for their entire life. Maybe you went out driving drunk and you got in an accident or you got a DUI, and you say, “I don’t know why bad things are happening to me.” Well, it’s because you’re doing something stupid, that’s why. Or maybe you’re living an immoral life, and you get an STD or AIDS. It’s a result of you doing things you should not have been doing.

There can be cause and effect. But other times God will just allow something traumatic in our lives to wake us up. This happened to Jonah in the Bible. God told him to go to Nineveh and preach because God wanted to lay down the biggest revival in human history and God wanted to do it through Jonah. That was His plan, but Jonah essentially said, “No way. I am not going to Nineveh. I don’t want those people to repent because they are wicked and I would rather those Ninevites face judgment.”

God said “Go.” Jonah said, “No.” Then God said, “Oh?”

Listen, God will always have the last word. You know the rest of the story. A storm came. Jonah got thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish and was then barfed on the shores of Nineveh. Finally (and reluctantly I might add), he did what God called him to do. The result was the greatest revival in human history. About a million people effectively believed and turned to God. So you see, God disciplined Jonah through hardship.

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 12 that the Lord disciplines those who are His, and that you shouldn’t be discouraged when He corrects you; it’s a reminder that you are His child. So you shouldn’t be concerned if you

cross the line and the Lord gives you a “swat.” You should instead be concerned when you cross the line and you feel no regret or guilt at all. You should be more concerned when you can sin with abandon and even feel like it’s OK with God.

But if your conscience is working and you go over the line and the Lord has something happen to wake you up, you should rejoice and be reminded that you are a child of God.

Another kind of suffering that God allows into our lives is constructive suffering. This would be when God wants to do a particular work in your life. We’re told in 2 Corinthians 4:17, “Our present troubles are quite small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!” (NLT). Paul mentioned that he had been given a “thorn in the flesh” in 2 Corinthians 12:7. Why? Why would God allow the great apostle to be afflicted? Well, sometimes with great blessings come great responsibilities and with those responsibilities can come a certain kind of pain. Paul had the privilege of dying and going to Heaven and being called back to earth again. He talked about it in Corinthians. He says he was caught up into Paradise and saw things he couldn’t even describe. But he says “to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time He said, ‘My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.’ So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NLT). That was constructive suffering.

## **God Can Be Glorified Through Suffering**

Another reason why God allows sickness and tragedy is to glorify Himself. The endurance of that suffering can bring glory to God. I've had the privilege of interviewing Joni Eareckson Tada—to me, one of the great heroes of the church—who has gone through untold suffering, starting with her diving accident as a young lady. Since then she's been a quadriplegic and has also had to deal with breast cancer and so many other hardships. But she is so honest. She is so truthful. And she honors the Lord. God has used Joni sitting in that wheelchair to bring hope to millions of people around the world. So God is glorified through her suffering.

I think also of my friend Nick Vujicic, who was born without arms and legs and yet he is taking this powerful testimony and sharing it to bring encouragement to people all around the planet. One place that Nick is very effective is with young people and he'll do rallies at high schools and he talks to kids who are depressed, who think life is so hard, for whatever reason—their boyfriend broke up with them or their parents took their cell phone away or something. And there is Nick without arms or legs speaking of his hope and his joy in the Lord. He radiates joy. And just his being there is a testimony. And then when he begins to speak it is even more powerful.

So God can be glorified through the endurance of your suffering. But listen to this: God can also be glorified by removing that suffering. Sometimes the Lord will allow it and then He will say, "I am going to be glorified by removing it. I am going to be glorified by answering your prayer where everything looks bleak and I'll show you My power."



Coming back to John 9, we see God glorified. Let's re-read verses 3-4. Jesus says, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." In other words, instead of telling why this man ended up blind, Jesus essentially says, "Don't worry about that. Here is what is going to happen. I am going to heal this guy right here, right now."

By the way, God is still in the healing business. Did you know that? You don't need a televangelist to throw his coat at you. You don't need to go to some so-called miracle service. But you do need to pray. Here is what the Bible says: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:14, 16). So we pray and we ask God to intervene. I always believe we should pray for healing.

There is a promise of healing in Isaiah 53. "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (verses 4-5 NIV). Peter, commenting on the same verse, says in 1 Peter 2:24, "'He Himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed'" (NIV). So God can heal.

Does God heal everyone? The obvious answer is no. But He does heal some. So let's pray for that. If I'm called to pray for somebody in a hospital room or facing some other physical challenge, even if the odds are against them and things are looking bleak, I pray for a miracle.

And I've seen miracles. I have seen amazing answers to prayer. But we always say, "Lord, if You have another plan, not our will, but Yours be done." Our Lord modeled this for us in Gethsemane when He said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). Jesus Himself prayed those words, so don't ever be afraid to say, "Thy will be done." But having said that, pray in faith and pray for God to heal and leave the results in His hands.

### **Have You Called Out to God in Your Hardship?**

I do believe there could be some who are sick that don't have to be and if they would just pray for God's touch, they would find it. James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask." I believe there are financial needs that can be met if perhaps you would just pray about it. Maybe the Lord is actually waiting for you to say, "I need help from God. I've tried everything I can to make this work myself. Lord, would You help me?" You have not because you ask not. Think of all the things that God may want to do in your life that He's simply waiting for you to ask Him about.

I love the way Jesus healed this man in John 9. It is just classic. Before we consider it, let's review the way Jesus healed other people. Sometimes people would touch him. There was a woman who had a physical problem where she was always bleeding. She couldn't stop the bleeding and she reasoned, "If I can touch the hem of His garment, I'll be healed." So one day Jesus was walking by—there was always a crowd around Jesus—and she managed to get her hand through the crowd and touch a little edge of His robe. Jesus stopped and said, "Who touched Me?"

His disciples probably thought, “Who touched you? Everybody touched You. They are grabbing You. They are pushing You.” Jesus says, “I perceive that power has gone out of Me.” The crowd parts and there is that woman and Jesus commended her for her faith (see Luke 8:43-48).

Other times, Jesus touched people and His touch would heal them. Sometimes He would just speak a word and they would be healed. But this one in John 9 is classic because we read that He spit in the dirt and wiped it in the guy’s eyes. Can you imagine?

Why does the methodology of healing change from person to person? Jesus changed His methodology so people would not focus on that but would focus on Him. And so He spit in the dirt and wiped it in the man’s eyes. “Here’s mud in your eye,” as the saying goes. Then He said, “Go wash in the pool of Siloam,” and the man did. For the first time in his life, he could see. Imagine that. This guy has been blind his whole life—never had sight. For the first time, he sees the face of our Lord. He sees the blue sky. He sees flowers. He sees beauty. What a moment that must have been.

So what was the reaction? In John 9:10 the people asked him,

“Who healed you? What happened?”

He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!”

“Where is He now?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!”

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?”

The man replied, “I think He must be a prophet.”  
(John 9:10-17 NLT)

This is really interesting. He doesn’t even know what has fully happened and he doesn’t know if he’ll ever see Jesus again. He could have easily said, “I don’t want to get into your religious debate, guys. I don’t even know what I think about this Man.” No. He just owns it: “I think He must be a prophet.” He was effectively speaking up for the Lord. He knew they were angry. He knew he could incur their wrath and be banned from worship and effectively ostracized. He could have decided to be very careful in his answers. But he thought, “I can’t deny what has happened to me” and he stood up for Jesus. I love that.

And I also love what happens next, in John 9:24. “A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give

glory to God by telling the truth,' they said. 'We know this man is a sinner'" (NIV). The man who had been blind basically says, "I don't know whether He is a sinner or not. All I know is, once I was blind but now I see" (see John 9:25).

## **Your Testimony Can Point to Jesus**

I love that verse. "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." Do you know that much? I think a lot of us are afraid to share our faith because we're not theologians and we don't have the answers to all the hard questions. That may be true, but let me ask you this. Could you say, like this guy, "Once I was blind but now I see. Once I was lost but now I am found. Once I was filled with guilt and emptiness but now I have purpose and forgiveness"?

You are the greatest authority on what has happened to you. No one is a greater authority on what has taken place in your life than you are. You may not have the answers to everyone's questions, but I would suggest you know more than you think you do. And if you hang on to what God has given you and never share it, that can be hurtful to your spiritual life. God did not give us the gospel to hoard it. He gave us the gospel to share it. And as you share it, you find that the Lord will bless you and use you and it can be exciting.

But put yourself in this man's shoes. He's completely blind. He's never seen the sky, a tree, a sunset, and now his eyes are open and the religious leaders just want to argue with him. But he stands up for his faith. And look at what Jesus does for this guy, even better than healing him of his blindness:

When Jesus heard what happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.”

“You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”

“Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

Jesus then told him, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”

Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”

“If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.” (John 9:35–41 NLT)

I love how this worked out. Religion had turned the man away, but Jesus took him in.

Please know this is not about religion. I’m not into religion. I don’t want to be a religious person. I think religious people are just weird. But I do want a relationship with God, and I want it to be real. And I want other people to have a relationship with God.

## **Jesus Cares**

He cares about every person—every man, woman, and child. He cares about every unborn baby, every elderly person in the last moments of their life, and everyone in between. He cares for us. He loves us. He has a purpose and plan for us. And He can change your life. Think about this. This man who was born blind had his world rocked by Jesus. In a moment, everything changed for him.

And God is still in the life-changing business. The same Jesus that changed this man can change you. He can forgive you of all of your sin. What you need to do is come to Him. Jesus is asking the same question He asked that man: do you believe in the Son of God?

If you want to believe, Jesus will accept you and forgive you and He will change you. You don't have to clean your life up and come to Him. You just come to Him and He'll clean your life up. You can learn more about how to receive His forgiveness at [KnowGod.org](http://KnowGod.org).

## **Fires, Floods, Earthquakes, and Evil**

Coming back to the problem of pain, suffering, disasters, and hardship in our world, let's summarize a few points:

- Sometimes we just don't know why bad things happen, and we may never know, this side of Heaven—but it doesn't change the fact that God is good.
- God can use our suffering: to get our attention, to shape our character, to lead others to Himself, and to ultimately bring Him glory.

- The way we react to our suffering is a choice we make. Will we be like the religious leaders, focusing only on ourselves, or will we turn our circumstances into a testimony of God's goodness?

As natural and manmade disasters occur, our hearts go out to the victims and families of those that are killed, lost, or injured. We need to pray for them. We thank God for the courageous first responders who bring help, and we pray for the wounded. May God extend His comfort to them.

Events like these remind us that life is short and eternity is real and very close. This is why all of us should always be ready to stand before God. And the only way to be ready is by having put your faith in Jesus Christ. Again, if you have never done that, I encourage you to take the next step at **KnowGod.org**.