



How could a good God allow suffering?

Video Discussion Guide

Video

Don Carson, *How could a good God allow suffering?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cksr6amsDHM>

Aim

- Don Carson's video is a very long lecture, full of some big words and ideas!
- Don does not give easy answers, but proposes 6 Biblical insights that together help give us God's perspective on suffering.
- It is a very helpful way to think more slowly and deeply about suffering, on your own, with a friend, or small group.
- You could individually watch 1 section of the video at home, and then meet up online (or on the phone) to discuss and pray about it. You could chat about 'what stood out for you' or use the questions below.

Insight 1: From the beginning of the Bible's story line [Gen 1-3]

Watch 00:00 - 12:28

- How did suffering start?
- "By in large, the Bible is not surprised by bad things that happen to us, but by the patience of God". Is that how we look at suffering?

Insight 2: From the end of the Bible's story line [Rev 21-22]

Watch 12:28 - 33:08

- How does eternity help Christians to "die well"?
- How does war make death real to us? How do we often stop being shocked by suffering?
- "I'm not suffering from anything that a good resurrection can't fix". How is Frank wise?

Insight 3: From the place of innocent suffering [Job]

Watch 33:08 - 45:02

- How did the "comforters" have an awful simplistic view of the universe, without any "mystery"?
- How is Job 42 like the end of the Bible?

Insight 4: From the mystery of providence [Gen 50:20; Acts 4:27-28]

Watch 45:03 - 54:17

The Bible holds 2 things together:

- (1) God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never mitigates human responsibility.
 - (2) Humans beings are morally responsible creatures (we choose and are held accountable for our actions). But this never makes God absolutely contingent (ie he's not reactive to us).
- How do we live with these 2 tensions until the very end?

Insight 5: From the centrality of Jesus

Watch 54:17- 1:05:56

- Do we think of God as a "God who suffers"?
- How does this help us when we don't have all the answers? "To our wounds, only God's wounds can speak. And not a God has wounds, but though alone".

Insight 6: From the persecuted global church [Acts 5:41]

Watch 1:05:56 – 1:35

- “Genuine disciples of Jesus go to their death”. How is this true?
- “Man’s soul is restless until it finds its rest in God.” How does this lead to Jesus’ followers being willing to take on suffering?
- “Living 70 years with as few complaints as possible ... is not the ultimate goal ... [Our] ultimate goal is to be like Jesus”. How does this change everything?

Q&A

1. Did God create sin, and then present Himself as the answer to that problem?

Watch 1:16-1:18

No: Sin is not a created thing, but creatures rebelling against God.

2. Why was the God of the Old Testament so full of wrath, adding to people’s suffering?

Watch 1:18-1:24:27

No: The 2 Testaments do not have 2 different Gods. But as you move from the Old to New Testaments, the picture of both God’s wrath and God’s love is revealed in more detail until they meet together in climax in the Cross. “God’s wrath and mercy kiss each other in the Cross”.

3. If natural disasters are not punishment, and don’t fit into “suffering for His sake”, and God is sovereign and not malicious ... what are they?

Watch 1:24:27 – 1:26:59

Natural disasters are not personal punishment, but anticipations of the ultimate judgment at the end.

4. I’ve been living with major physical pain and I know God can heal me and His will is for me to be healed. Why won’t He or why doesn’t He?

Watch 1:26:59 – 1:32:26

Ongoing pain is incredibly debilitating. It’s true all Christians will be healed on the last day, but healing is not promised in this life (by medical or other means). It may

5. Why did God create the potential for evil to be manifested in the first place?

Watch 1:32:26 – 1:35:55

“I don’t know.” But the Bible always presents God as good and sovereign. Romans says God displays his grace. But I go back to the ultimate demonstration of God’s grace in the Cross.