

She said to me, “Pastor, my husband and I want to, but can’t have children; and all around me I see unfit mothers who are “baby-making machines”. If we have a question and don’t tell God (who already knows it), we aren’t being honest, and:

We might as well kneel down,  
And worship gods of stone;  
As offer to the living God,  
A prayer of words alone.

The Psalms are full of this. A man named Asaph wrote Psalm 73 (a prayer) because he looked around and saw many good and godly people suffering while those who did not follow God were always doing fine (v.12). He said he found peace when he went to church (the Temple) and realized their “**latter end**” (final destiny). This Psalm should teach us to never envy non-Christians whose prosperity and health are better than ours. Remember:

This life is as close as a Christian will ever get to Hell; and it is as close as a lost person will ever get to Heaven.

(And remember also that we learn this because Asaph was honest and asked God “Why”.

After asking “Why me?” we need to ask, “**Why not me?**” Alex Trebeck told his viewers, “I have just learned that I am one of 55,000 Americans who will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this year.” Suffering is part of being human. Also, Jesus did not tell us to pray “my” Father, but “**our**” Father. When we go to Him with our suffering and say “our”; on that same day, we know, across the world, hundreds or even thousands of His children are lifting up the same burden we are.

### The Ministry of Suffering

“We rejoice in our sufferings because suffering produces perseverance; *perseverance* produces character; and *character* produces hope.”

(Romans 5:4)

### Suffering Can Draw Us Closer to God

“It was good for me to be afflicted; because I learned more about Your teachings in the Bible, and the teachings from You are better to me than a thousand pieces of gold or silver.” (Psalm 119:71-72)

After asking why not me, we should ask God, “**What now?**” Suffering will make us BETTER or BITTER; and the choice is ours. It is not what ***happens*** to us that make us the kind of person we are; it is what we ***let happen*** to what happens to us. One man’s wife leaves him and he becomes an alcoholic. Another man’s wife leaves him and he writes, “The Tennessee Waltz” and becomes a millionaire.

Suffering can draw us closer to God. Almost everybody prays in emergencies. When Jonah’s boat ran into a storm at sea, we read, “**All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god.**” It is hard for most of us to pray for two minutes after we tell God what we and others need and thank Him for His blessings. But when life crashes in, we can talk to Him all day.

We glance at heaven but most of us never really look up with interest and intensity until life knocks us down. The very fact that we say, “Why me, Lord?” means we have been driven to God and to a deeper level of communication with Him. Even lost, unreligious people go to God in pain, if only to curse Him. C. S. Lewis says God “whispers to us in our pleasures but shouts to us in our pain”. We may look up to accuse Him; to bargain with Him; to shake our fist at Him; to ask why; or to ask for help – but we look up!

A pilot told the passengers an engine was on fire and they might have to land on a highway or in a field. One man yelled - “Somebody do something religious.” A Catholic pulled out her beads. An Episcopalian pulled out his prayer book and a Baptist took off his hat and *took up an offering*.