



INTRODUCTION

WERE YOU AWAY THEN?

I stood motionlessly by her graveside, asking the inescapable question: Why?

When life hurts, helplessness often takes over the helm and routine and pleasure jump ship. The loss of a beloved child, a soul mate, a sacrificing parent, or an endeared grandparent abruptly halts the mellow voyage of life, transforming the shimmering waves of happiness into towering waves of sorrow. Nothing we do, nothing we say, nothing we possess can bring our loved ones back. Memories both comfort and pain us. Questions both flee and haunt us. Answers both calm and anger us.

Often it isn't long before we find ourselves overboard, fighting to stay afloat amid the dark and foreboding waters of despair. Sometimes the waters are familiar to us, but no friendlier. We've survived them before. We've gone down time and again . . . and somehow found the strength to resurface—gasping for answers. But each time is a little different. Every crashing wave of grief pounds us into the ocean floor a little differently, contorting, spinning, and tumbling us head over heels, stopping just long enough to allow us to resurface so it can pound us again.

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Perhaps you've never experienced the heartrending loss of someone close to you. But make no mistake, in life's game of hide-and-seek, suffering will eventually find you; it's only a matter of time. The only place one can safely hide is in the grave, and for those who have rejected God, even this is an illusion. Your unutterable suffering may be a devastating divorce, a child with cerebral palsy, an unrelenting ache deep in your back, abandonment by your mother or father, the ruinous loss of your cherished possessions in a fire, or the painful memories of abuse suffered as a child. Professor and author Dr. Edward Kuhlman (no connection to the faith healer, Kathryn Kuhlman), who lost his sixteen-year-old son to cancer, bared his soul in his book *An Overwhelming Interference*. "No one escapes life without experiencing pain," wrote Kuhlman, "although many become preoccupied with attempts to alleviate it. Pain is the overriding, inexplicable condition of life."²

Indeed, pain and adversity hold no prejudices. A good friend of mine, in his capacity with the Canadian government, had the rare opportunity to meet Princess Diana on one of her last visits to Canada. Shielded from the press, he met with the Princess and described her as personable, shy, soft-spoken, down-to-earth—yet restless. She asked my friend and his fiancée about their upcoming wedding plans, making the comment about how expensive weddings are these days (a bit funny considering the cost of her own wedding). And she laughingly joked about sneaking away from the press outside to get a few beers with him and his officers. My friend said she came across as a "very normal person," and he remarked, "In hindsight, I wonder if at some level, in her genuine desire to discuss our 'boring plain lives,' she wasn't longing for that."

Maybe the Princess really was just like the average person in many ways. The world's favorite Princess battled bulimia, wrestled with feelings of insecurity, experienced family feuds, and lived through a broken marriage. And at the age of thirty-seven her seemingly "fairy-tale life" reached the final line in the final chapter in a tragic Paris car crash. Even the most popular of England's royal family—the most popular and well-loved person in the world at that time—could not escape the vice-grip of pain, suffering, and death.

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As I stood by my grandmother's graveside, staring blankly at her suspended coffin, the question was grinding through my head: *Why?* Toward the end of her life, my grandmother's final dream was to hold in her arms her first great-grandchild. When my sister became pregnant for the first time, you can imagine just how excited my grandmother became. She knew that her dream would be realized in a matter of months. But less than two weeks before my sister gave birth to her first baby boy, Joshua, my grandmother, at the age of seventy-two, died of cancer.

The minister at her funeral remarked that one life was ending and in a short time another would be beginning. The words left an indelible mark on my consciousness, and I wondered to myself, *Why, God? My grandmother faithfully served and worshipped you for decades, and you couldn't give her just two more weeks to see her first great-grandchild? You allowed Simeon, the righteous and devout saint, to live until he could hold the Messiah (see Luke 2:25–35). Why, God, couldn't you have spared her life for just fourteen more days? It would have meant so much to her. We weren't demanding a miracle—just two weeks. How hard would that have been?*

But, as in Job's situation, God never answered our questions. My grandmother courageously battled breast cancer, undergoing a mastectomy and the painful aftermath of radiation—only to find later that she was filled with more cancer from an unknown source. The explosively dividing cancer cells finally won out. The pain and abdominal bloating grew intense. And she spent her final days on morphine in the hospital where I had trained during medical school.

She was my last living grandparent, and there was nothing she wouldn't do for me. But in the end, I couldn't even be there for her. I was isolated three thousand miles away in Los Angeles, working day and night in my surgery residency. One summer evening, my uncle called to tell me she had passed away. The director of the Cedar's Sinai Medical Center surgery program kindly allowed me some time off, and I flew back to Canada for her funeral.

When one life is suddenly cut short, unanswerable questions inevitably surface. When millions of innocent lives are quickly snuffed out—as in a holocaust—someone has to be blamed. I remember visiting the site of the World War II Nazi Mauthausen concentration camp in the Austrian

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countryside where an estimated 120,000–180,000 men, women, and children died in one of history’s ugliest scenes. I walked up the 186 stone steps, known as “The Stairs of Death,” where undernourished prisoners were forced to march up with huge granite blocks on their backs, some weighing more than seventy-five pounds. Sometimes the blocks would slip off their backs, crushing the bones of those struggling behind. The tortured prisoners were forced to climb up and down the steps until they died. I gazed down into the rock quarry where many prisoners were pushed to their death from the jagged cliff 100–150 feet above. Even Auschwitz captives were horrified at the thought of ending up at Mauthausen.

I stood in the basement gas chamber where the SS had herded 120 people at a time to be gassed to death. I ran my hands over the dissecting table where SS doctors performed grotesque “experiments” on live patients. I gazed into the crematorium where tens of thousands of bodies were disposed of. I stood on the roll-call square where men, women, and children were shot and clubbed to death—some mauled by dogs. Selected individuals were stripped naked, doused with icy water, and left to freeze to death in the bitter cold.

Most of those who died at the hands of the Nazis were Jews, numbering approximately six million in total. Since the holocaust, convicting fists have been shaken at God for allowing one of the most heinous crimes in history to unfold. The Jews were God’s chosen people—his selected ambassadors to the world; but where was God in their suffering? Where was God in these horrible, unimaginable atrocities? Where was Jehovah when the SS officers were clubbing, gassing, shooting, and torturing millions of Jews to death—exterminating them like ants with the goal of developing a “Master Race”? No wonder little Cindy Ellen wrote to God in her letter, “Did you know about this? Were you away then?”

Most of us probably have never sat down to write an actual letter to God. But if we did, I think a good number of us would pour out our hearts to the Almighty like the patriarch Job, telling God how much we are suffering and that we’ve done nothing to deserve it. And like Cindy Ellen, we might ask God the very same questions: “Did you know about this? Were you away then?”

Where is God in my suffering? Perhaps no other question has

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bewildered, disheartened, and angered saints more. Maybe this is the one unanswered question you've been asking all along on your journey. How can we reconcile in our minds an all-powerful, loving heavenly Father who would allow his children to suffer to such awful extremes? Why would God take the life of my loved one? And why does God seem so distant when I need him the most? These tough questions could very well have been the catalyst that led you to pick up this book series.

The questions surrounding God and our suffering represent some of the most personal, heartrending, and difficult questions ever asked in all of history. In arranging our stepping-stones it will take all the spiritual wisdom, understanding, and determination we can muster to advance on our journey. Again, I don't have all the answers, but someone infinitely wiser and more knowledgeable than me does—and many of these answers are provided for us throughout the pages of Scripture.

God often shares with us in an intimate manner what he is thinking. The problem is, we sometimes behave like little children, holding our hands over our ears, pretending we can't hear him. More often, though, we act like grown adults. The answers in God's Word are so contrary to our humanistic reasoning, we automatically assume they can't be right. But these are all reasons why God lovingly gave us the Bible. If we could intuitively figure out all the answers to the really tough questions on suffering, why would we need his supernatural revelation?

I must forewarn you that the upcoming material may be a little disturbing. You may even find yourself becoming rather irritated or even downright angry with me. I totally understand. Rather like the patriarch Jacob, I wrestled with these truths for several nights before God finally humbled me to the point where I could see life more through his eyes and less through mine. God's truth surrounding suffering is certainly not easy to comprehend. The message of this book will be very difficult to accept ... but ultimately freeing. For the truth will set you free from the guilt, discouragement, anxiety, bitterness, anger, and confusion you may be experiencing in your suffering.

We may not get all the way across this particular raging river in this book; but I think if we can get far enough across to see the other side more clearly, I believe it will have all been worthwhile.

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*The fact of suffering undoubtedly
constitutes the single greatest
challenge to the Christian faith.¹*

—JOHN STOTT



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SUFFERING: GOD'S WILL OR THE DEVIL'S?

As I write this, my friend Andrew†, a young Christian man involved in our men's Bible study group, is experiencing devastating hardships. Married for less than a year, his wife, whom he loved deeply, suddenly walked out of the marriage, leaving him with a broken heart and thousands of dollars of debt. Nothing would change her mind. Nothing Andrew could do made any difference. Struggling to make ends meet while paying off hefty bills to lawyers, credit-card and car companies, he was forced to sell some of his possessions. He struggled to overcome demoralizing feelings of anger, bitterness, and loneliness. He shared with me one day, "The hurt is indescribable."

At the same time, his pastor was preaching on the topic of prosperity and happiness. "God wants you to be wealthy!" his pastor proclaimed. "It is not God's will or his plan for your life that you suffer in any way. God wants you to only have the best! Suffering is not part of God's agenda—but the Devil's."

† The name has been changed.

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According to this happiness theology (or party-life theology, as I call it), Andrew must have been doing something terribly wrong. He wasn't bubbling over with happiness; he was besieged in the unforgiving trenches of misery with debt, lawyers, feelings of bitterness, and incredible hurt. Andrew knew he hadn't done anything to deserve this vicious adversity in his life. But here was his pastor, up at the pulpit almost every Sunday, preaching that God wants every Christian to be only happy, healthy, prosperous, and free of all adversity. Instead of helping to remove the double-edged dagger lodged in Andrew's heart, his pastor drove another dagger in right beside it. Did this unwitting shepherd realize the added pain he was inflicting on his flock?

Every day around the world, from radio, television, books, and the pulpit, similar messages are pulverizing devastated Christians trying to get back on their feet. Couples struggling with the stigma of infertility or multiple miscarriages are being scolded because they "lack enough faith"—otherwise God would give them children. Families living in the shackles of poverty are told they must be sinning for God not to bless them financially. Believers suffering tremendously with heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and paralysis from a stroke are being told God is judging them for sin and their itsy-bitsy faith. A church leader told one heartbroken mother that the reason her teenage son tragically died of diabetes was that God was punishing her. Consumed with guilt, she and her husband were driven to despair by a pastor who "controlled her congregation with fear."² Another couple, grieving the loss of their stillborn baby, was told that their sin of fear was responsible for their baby's death, and that they "did not have enough faith to believe the baby could be risen from the dead."³

Hurting and grieving Christians all over the world are turning to the church for answers and comfort ... but are frequently being pushed away by unbiblical advice from fellow Christians who know very little about how to handle suffering—and by a fairy-tale prosperity theology that only inflicts further pain and guilt. Andrew, the young man whose wife walked out on him, shared with me that this theology being shoved in his face almost drove him to turn his back completely on God.⁴

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What a sickening tragedy this is! What a heartless, hateful, and unscriptural thing to do, preaching at those suffering deeply, “It’s all your fault!” or “Just trust God and all your suffering will disappear.” Instead of comforting fellow Christians who are in distress, we often castigate them. Where is the Christian love that Christ commands? Where is the kindness? Where is the goodness that our hurting brothers and sisters need? Where is the understanding of God? Where is the understanding of his Word? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23; see also 6:10).

Earlier in our journey we discovered that sickness and poverty are usually *not* the believer’s personal fault. When the disciples came across a man blind from birth (and likely dirt poor), they asked, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life’” (John 9:2–3).

James says,

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? (2:5)

Taking a journey through the Scriptures, we discover that suffering is par for life. The story of Job alone completely annihilates the popular party-life theology. God asked Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8). Job was such a godly man that every time his sons and daughters threw a party, he would offer a sacrifice, pleading with God to forgive his children of any sin, just in case they had cursed God in some way in their hearts (vv. 4–5). If Job was so diligent in appealing for God’s forgiveness for the secret sins he wasn’t even sure his kids committed, imagine just how diligent he would have been in ridding his own heart of sin.

Yet it was God’s will that Job suffer tidal waves of adversity—tragedies so awful that they are unfathomable to most of us. God gave

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Satan permission to strip away all the most precious possessions of Job, described as “the greatest man among all the people of the East” (v. 3). One day a messenger, out of breath, ran up to Job, “The Sabeans killed your servants and stole your thousand oxen and five hundred donkeys!” Before he could end his sentence, another messenger rushed up, “A fireball from heaven burned up your servants and burned your seven thousand sheep to a crisp!” While he was still speaking, another courier raced up, “Job, the Chaldeans swooped in, murdered all your servants and stole your three thousand camels!” Before the last syllable was off his tongue, a fourth messenger arrived, “A mighty wind swept down and blew in the walls of your eldest son’s home. Your seven sons and three daughters—Job, I don’t know how to say this ... *they’re all dead*. I’m the only one who escaped” (see vv. 2–3, 13–19).

Picture yourself for a moment in Job’s sandals. Imagine learning within the span of a couple of minutes that you had lost almost everything you owned, and that your seven sons and three daughters, whom you loved with all your heart, whom you earnestly prayed for every day, had all tragically died. Everything you loved and had worked for in life, except your wife, was now gone. And if that were not enough, you would soon find yourself covered from head to toe with painful, scaly, and worm-contaminated sores. Very few in this world have suffered so much loss so quickly. Was it God’s will that Job suffer deeply? Studying the Scriptures, we see that obviously it was.

Yet proponents of this party-life theology, particularly those in the Word–Faith charismatic movement, claim that Job was a bullheaded man with a “big mouth” who got what was coming to him. (Not even the tabloids could do a better job of trashing Job’s character.) Popular televangelist Benny Hinn has since relented from his position, saying that when he gets to heaven he’s going to apologize to Job for all the nasty things he has said about him.⁵

Similar trash talk has been hurled at God’s greatest and most influential preacher, the apostle Paul. After his conversion, we don’t read of one single sin that Paul committed. (Though I’m not saying that Paul was sinless.) Paul said he served God “with a clear conscience” (2 Tim. 1:3) that could be vouched for by the indwelling Holy Spirit (see Rom.

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9:1). Yet those who try to explain why Paul suffered the “thorn in the flesh” have dubbed the apostle a proud, faithless sinner. The superapostle pleaded with God to remove this thorn, but God instead replied, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Like almost all the disciples, Paul later died a martyr’s death, likely being beheaded in a Roman prison. Was it God’s will that Paul suffer? Obviously it was.

What about God’s own Son, Jesus Christ? Unbelievably, some Word–Faith teachers argue that God’s hands were tied when it came to Christ’s gruesome death. Another popular televangelist, Kenneth Copeland, says this:

I was shocked when I found out who the biggest failure in the Bible actually is.... The biggest one in the whole Bible is God.... Now, the reason you don’t think of God as a failure is He never said He’s a failure. And you’re not a failure till you say you’re one.⁶

This is utter heresy! No wonder Copeland believes “Satan *conquered* Jesus on the Cross.”⁷ In Copeland’s mind, God was a failure to begin with. Like so many other Word–Faith teachers, Copeland believes that it was never God’s intention for Christ to die. “In fact, many Faith teachers claim that Christ’s torture by all the demons of hell was a ‘ransom’ God paid to Satan so that He could get back into a universe from which He had been banished.”⁸ Is it any wonder, then, that these false teachers are the same ones preaching that all your suffering is *your fault*?

In striking contrast to Copeland’s comments, we read in Scripture that it was God’s plan from all eternity that his Son come to earth to suffer and die a grotesque and painful death on the cross (see 2 Tim. 1:9). God, not Satan, even raised to power the exact persons he allowed to murder Christ (see John 19:11; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28). God had planned down to the minutest detail how he would send his only Son to earth to die and suffer for our sins—long before he even created Satan. Furthermore, Jesus was not being punished for something *he* did. He took upon himself the punishment for something *we* did. Dr. Kuhlman

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asserts, “The startling aspect of suffering is that it is a vital part (*the* vital part!) of God’s redemptive plan.”⁹ Was it God’s will that Christ suffer such a heinous death? Clearly it was.

Regarding most faith healers’ party-life theology, John MacArthur writes in his book *The Power of Suffering*:

Such a theology of nonsuffering, if carried to its logical extreme, must claim that Jesus was out of God’s will when He died on the cross. That thinking is more than bad logic, it is downright heretical.¹⁰

From Genesis through Revelation, godly men and women viewed suffering as part of God’s will. With regard to Moses, the prince of Egypt, the writer of Hebrews says, “He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Heb. 11:26).

When Job’s wife urged him to “Curse God and die!” Job replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:9–10). Isaiah records God’s very words: “I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things” (Isa. 45:7).

The wisdom writer of Ecclesiastes says:

Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future. (7:13–14)

Christ even told his followers to expect suffering: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me” (Matt. 5:10–11). “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). “Remember the words I spoke to you,” said Christ. “‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20a).

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The believers in Tyre pleaded with the apostle Paul not to journey to Jerusalem, a city fraught with lurking dangers. Paul, flustered that his flock could not understand that this was the will of God (see Acts 20:22; 21:14; 23:11), replied, “Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13 NLT). At the very beginning, Christ said to Ananias, “I will show [Paul] how much he must suffer for my name” (Acts 9:16). And suffer he did!

Paul, who unbelievably survived thirty-nine lashes on five occasions, three shipwrecks, a stoning (being left for dead), several imprisonments, prejudice, hunger, thirst, and cold, didn't question his faith because he was facing adversity in life; instead, he used it as proof that he was doing God's will:

Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; ... dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. (2 Cor. 6:4–6, 9–10)

All suffering, no matter what it is, falls under the umbrella of God's permissive will. Satan may occasionally be used as a “hit man” or an instrument of such suffering, but in the end it is God who allows the tragedy as an integral part of his sovereign will.

The apostle Peter stressed this truth:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. (1 Peter 4:12–14)

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The writer of Hebrews praised the past heroes of faith for enduring great adversity—he didn't belittle them for their suffering:

Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. (Heb. 11:36–40)

Paul goes so far as to say that believers are “destined” for tribulations, trials, and afflictions (see 1 Thess. 3:3). The Scriptures are replete with verses speaking of adversity in a positive light, as part of God's will—expected troubles that we will face as we live for Christ in a fallen and sin-cursed world.††

Remember Jim Bakker, the former televangelist and founder of the PTL (Praise the Lord) empire who had a yearly income of thirty million dollars, a forty-room mansion, twelve cars, and an air-conditioned doghouse? Bakker for years taught this fairy-tale, health-and-prosperity theology, teaching that suffering is not part of God's agenda, that it is God's will for every believer to be perfectly healthy, enormously rich, and trouble free. But after studying the Bible (while spending five years in prison on fraud charges), Bakker reached a much different conclusion: “This used to be my motto: Make it happen. I was wrong,” he said.¹¹ In a commencement address, Bakker pleaded from the heart to the graduates, “Don't follow the world. Don't give in to materialism.... If you want to be a man of God, you're going to go through hell.”¹² Bakker was

†† See Gen. 3:16–19; 45:5–8; 50:20; Ps. 119:71; Matt. 5:10; 16:24–25; John 15:18–21; 16:2; Acts 7; 9:16; Rom. 5:3–5; 8:17–18; 1 Thess. 1:6–7; 2 Thess. 1:4; Gal. 6:2; 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:16–18; 12:10; Phil. 1:29–30; 3:10; 1 Peter 1:6–7; 2:20–23; 4:1–2; 5:8–10; 2 Tim. 2:3; 3:10–12; James 1:2–4; 5:10–11; Rev. 2:9–10.

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echoing the apostle Paul's words to Timothy: "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12).

"More Christians have died for their faith in the 20th century than in the previous nineteen centuries combined."¹³ More Christians than ever around the world are suffering persecution and adversity at this very moment.¹⁴ Muslims and hard-line communists outside the West are torturing, maiming, imprisoning, raping, burning, selling into slavery, and executing scores of Christians every single hour.

Paul Marshall, author of *Their Blood Cries Out*, estimates that "three-fourths of all Christians live outside the West. It may be the largest Third World religion."¹⁵ According to what many faith healers preach then, I guess their nonsuffering theology doesn't extend to most of our loyal brothers and sisters suffering the unspeakable atrocities of religious persecution on the other side of the world. I must have missed the Scripture verse that says only Christians *in the West* have the authority to "speak the word" and instantly drive away sickness, poverty, and evil.

Not only are such false teachers seemingly ignorant of the affairs of Christians on the other side of the globe, they are apparently ignorant of their brothers and sisters living in their own backyards. Stop and take an honest look around you. Millions of people, including numerous godly Christians, in North America and Europe are in poor health, living below the poverty line, or suffering some type of horrible adversity. If God promises every single believer only health, wealth, and happiness, my question is, *Where is it?* When is this divine agenda of untold riches and perfect health finally going to kick in around the globe? When is God going to get serious with his alleged promise that Christians will never suffer?

Jim Bakker hits the nail on the head when he admits:


I had gotten my sermons from other people. The Bible warns about the shepherds who get their messages from each other. I think today the reason we have another gospel and another Jesus being preached is because men have gotten their sermons from each other and from motivational teaching. A lot of what's being taught today is simply motivational teaching with a few Scriptures put to it.¹⁶

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Why is this erroneous “health and wealth” doctrine flourishing like an out-of-control weed in the church today? Because leaders, restless for the world’s “stuff” of fame, fortune, and TV ratings, have abandoned the Bible and started fertilizing the thoughts in their sermons, books, radio, and TV messages with the same old worthless manure from yesterday’s televangelists. In some movements we have the blind (famous faith healers) leading the faith-healer wannabes (church pastors) leading the disillusioned (the people hearing the pastors’ messages).

As a result, “We’ve trivialized God,” says Christian psychologist and author Larry Crabb. Regarding a roster of current best sellers, Crabb remarked, “Most of these books assume God is the butler who serves you for one reason: to give you a happy life. We’ve turned him into a divine Prozac.”¹⁷

Dear friends, if your pastor is trivializing God by rehashing from televangelists the same old health-and-wealth gospel and wrapping it all together in a motivational teaching shell, I encourage you to gently challenge your pastor with the verses presented earlier. Maybe you could even meet with the board of elders. If nothing works, I suggest finding a church that preaches God’s Word. (This is the route my friend Andrew finally took.) If your pastor is continually teaching that God, like some sort of “divine Prozac,” wants your Christian life to be only a bed of roses, leave your church and find a pastor who gets his material from the one true source—the inerrant and authoritative Word of God.



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