
How Suffering Can Save People

“To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering.” This brilliant quote by Friedrich Nietzsche reflects how Christians view suffering as something that can be beneficial. This essay provides an in-depth explanation of how suffering follows the example of Jesus, how fortitude helps with the acceptance of suffering, how suffering can save people, and how suffering can help people go to Heaven. Followers of Christ make voluntary sacrifices and confront inexorable suffering because in order to become one with Jesus, they have to suffer alongside him.

It is important to understand why Christians attempt to imitate Christ before they find out how. Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, explained the importance of reasoning behind actions when he said, “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.” Nietzsche articulates the crucial nature of understanding the motivations for an action before the action itself. This idea is projected in Saint Paul’s writings. “So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2). This verse concisely and brilliantly explains why Catholics should imitate Christ. The simple answer is because Jesus is love, and to love is to be like him. Any act of selflessness is an imitation of Christ, and striving to be like Christ is a common goal within Christianity. Of course, this raises another question. How would a person attempt to emulate Christ? They would love everyone to the best of their ability because Christ shows infinite love to all people. They would accept their suffering and bear it since Christ experienced an unfathomable amount of suffering. By suffering alongside Christ, Christians feel a sense of solidarity with God. This feeling of unity is only fully understood when someone has endured the same pain as Christ.

Suffering itself is a frightening and dreadful experience, something that takes bravery to withstand. The Holy Spirit’s gift of fortitude is the ability for someone to have courage when facing adversity. Fortitude not only helps individuals confront inevitable suffering forthrightly, but it helps them accept the axiomatic nature of suffering itself. Life is suffering, contaminated by malevolence. The acceptance of this statement is the first step to the confrontation of life’s miseries. A problem cannot be resolved if it is not first identified, and the Holy Spirit’s gift of fortitude helps with this identification. A lot of people believe that suffering can be avoided in this world, or at least they act as if that is the case, regardless of if they articulate it or not. The first step to transcending this suffering is accepting the inevitable nature of it. For example, if there is a person experiencing the loss of a loved one, fortitude would give this person the ability to have strength when they most need it. This strength would help with the recognition of the loss, and the gradual overcoming of the grief. This is certainly better than running from these tragedies that are bound to happen. The Holy Spirit’s gift of fortitude would help this person accept the pain’s existence, confront it, and ultimately overcome it.

Jesus does not take away suffering, but rather he transforms it into our salvation. This is an idea that is difficult for most people to grasp. Saint Paul explains how humans do not fully understand suffering in 1 Corinthians. “But we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom,

and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1 Corinthians 1:23-25). This passage explains how one could perceive Jesus’s crucifixion as his weakness, and the event occurring as the world’s foolishness. This is not the case at all. Jesus’s crucifixion is not foolishness or weakness, but it is the infinite power and wisdom of God. This event that can easily be seen as weak and foolish is actually the event that saves humanity. Jesus’s crucifixion is an example of God’s power and wisdom seen as mere chaos. Suffering is the same way. Christians believe that suffering can be transformed into a saving quality for people. They believe that bearing suffering can be a form of reparation for their sins. This is when it is crucial for a Christian to take a leap of faith, for the concept of redemptive suffering cannot be logically proven.

Christians believe that Christ’s suffering and death give them the ability to go to Heaven. Jesus’s death mended the relationship between God and man, allowing humans the ability to go to Heaven. They also believe that the suffering they endure on earth helps with the cleansing of the effects of sin. This suffering and pain ultimately helps Christians grow closer to God.

Followers of Christ make voluntary sacrifices and confront inexorable suffering because in order to become one with Jesus, they have to suffer alongside him. Christians believe suffering follows the example of Jesus, fortitude helps with the acceptance of suffering, suffering can save lives, and suffering can help people go to Heaven. Christians believe suffering can be beneficial. The quote, “To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering,” reflects this idea.

Work Cited

1. Scripture, <http://www.usccb.org/bible/ephesians/5>
2. Scripture, <http://www.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/1>
3. “The Sacrifice of Suffering.” Desiring God, 2 Dec. 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-sacrifice-of-suffering>